



Association of Metropolitan School Districts

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Position on School Board Renewal of a Capital Projects Referendum

State policymakers should bring greater stability to Minnesota's education funding system by allowing locally elected school boards to renew an existing capital projects referendum at the same level after a public hearing.

AMSD BELIEVES

- Capital project referendums provide critical resources for technology, equipment, improvement and upkeep of facilities, as well as safety and security infrastructure.
- The 2023 Legislature entrusted locally elected school boards to renew an existing operating referendum at the same level one time.
- Referendum elections are expensive, costing thousands of taxpayer dollars and countless hours of staff time.

BACKGROUND

A school district may conduct an election to approve funds for certain capital projects. If approved by the voters, the school district may levy the amount approved by the voters for the designated capital projects for a period not to exceed 10 years. The proceeds of the levy must be placed in a special account and can only be used for the purpose outlined in the referendum.

Capital Project Referendum Revenue Provides Critical Resources

In 2023, 59 Minnesota school districts in Minnesota had approved capital project levies totaling nearly \$166 million.¹ The revenue from these referenda provide critical funding for a variety of initiatives from facilities upkeep to critical technology infrastructure to protecting private student data.

Much like the operating referendum, the expenses related to a capital project renewal election, such as printing and mailing the mandated informational materials, can run into the tens of thousands of dollars. These are resources that could otherwise be allocated to funding that would benefit the safety and well-being of students.

Minnesota Capital Project Levies

Fiscal Year	Capital Project Levy Certified	Number of Districts
2025*	\$165,929,000	59
2024	158,203,000	59
2023	148,190,000	58
2022	129,583,000	55
2021	121,354,000	53

*Estimated

School Board Renewal of a Capital Projects

Public Supports Operating Referendum Renewal

Public opinion surveys conducted by the Morris Leatherman Company over years have shown a strong majority of Minnesotans support allowing locally-elected school boards to renew an existing school referendum. The approval rate of recent capital referendum renewal elections provides further evidence of public support.

As the chart below demonstrates, over the last six years Minnesota school districts have placed 23 capital project referendum renewals on the ballot. Since 2017, all 23 have passed – often with overwhelming majorities.²

Capital Project Referendum Renewal Rates

Year	Approval
2017	2 of 2 renewed
2018	No projects up for renewal
2019	1 of 1 renewed
2020	No projects up for renewal
2021	4 of 4 renewed
2022	8 of 8 renewed
2023	8 of 8 renewed

ENDNOTES

References:

¹ [Minnesota School Finance: A Guide for Legislators](#), Minnesota House Research

² [Minnesota Secretary of State Election Results](#), Minnesota Secretary of State Office