

# Spring 2009 Referendum Issue

# Ripon School News

"We Invest in Learning Today for Our Tomorrow."

## From the Superintendent's Desk



Welcome to this special referendum issue of the **Ripon School News**. The Ripon Board of Education is committed to informing citizens about the issues by distributing this publication to all school district households in

preparation for the upcoming referendum on April 7.

In accordance with state election law, this district-produced newsletter regarding the upcoming school district referendum is intended to provide voters with factual information only. Advocacy for or against the referendum questions is left to community members or organizations that are not supported by tax dollars.

Since the State of Wisconsin imposed revenue limits in 1993 that restrict locally elected school boards from increasing school budgets enough to cover rising costs, the Ripon Area School District has been forced to cut annual operating expenses to comply with state law. Because Ripon was spending less per student than the state average in 1993, the law requires Ripon to continue spending less than the state average while other school districts are permitted to continue spending more than the state average.

The only way to exceed the District's revenue limit is by passing a local referendum. Many nearby communities have passed referenda to override the tax levy restriction in order to provide their school boards with enough money for budgets. Now it is Ripon's turn to make a decision.

Whatever your position is on the referendum questions, please take the time on April 7 to go to the polls and vote. If you will be out of town on Election Day, please cast your absentee ballot ahead of time. It is important for our citizens to indicate the direction that they want our schools to take in the future so that the Ripon Board of Education can make appropriate plans.

Dr. Richard Zimman  
Superintendent of Schools

## Ve a el dorso para español

### 3 Referendum Questions on April 7 Ballot

Faced with the state requirement to cut over \$2 million from the school district's annual operating budget in the next three years at the same time that more students are enrolling, the Ripon Board of Education has decided to place three referendum questions on the April 7 ballot that will authorize the Board to replace an old boiler and repair roofs, to perform deferred facilities maintenance, reinstate the cycle for replacing textbooks, computers, and vehicles, and to maintain current class sizes.

Here's a quick rundown on the three referendum questions:

**Question #1:** Authorization to issue general obligation bonds not to exceed \$500,000 to be paid within 10 years for a new boiler for Ripon High School and roof repairs for our school buildings. The estimated cost is 5 cents added to the equalized mill rate which translates to \$5 for the owner of a \$100,000 home.

**Question #2:** Authorization to exceed the District's revenue limit by \$500,000 annually, for six years, to pay for updating curriculum, replacing textbooks, updating technology and computers, performing maintenance, and replacing vehicles. The estimated cost is 75 cents added to the equalized mill rate which translates to \$75 for the owner of a \$100,000 home.

**Question #3:** Authorization to exceed the District's revenue limit in each year for three years to pay for classroom staffing and related instructional expenses as follows: \$575,000 in 2009-10, \$725,000 in 2010-11, and \$850,000 in 2011-12. The estimated cost is 88 cents added to the equalized mill rate which translates to \$88 for the owner of a \$100,000 home.

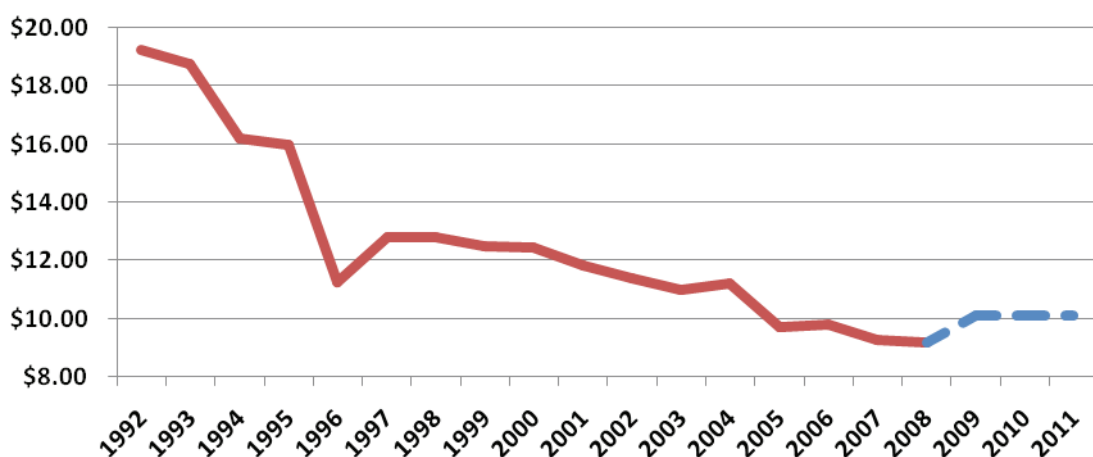
**Refinancing Savings:** The Board recently took advantage of its outstanding A+ bond rating and lower interest rates by refinancing some of the District's debt to save taxpayers more than \$336,000 over the next seven years. This financial management strategy will lower the equalized mill rate by 75 cents which translates to a decrease of \$75 for the owner of a \$100,000 property.

**Total Tax Impact:** If all three referendum questions are passed, the estimated impact for the owner of a \$100,000 home would be an increase of \$7.75 per month over the owner's 2008 taxes. That translates to \$93 a year and takes into account the refinancing savings that would be reinvested into our schools.

### Tax Rate Would Remain Lower than 2004

The 1993 school tax rate in Ripon was \$19.23 which was \$1,923 for a \$100,000 home. The 2008 school tax rate in Ripon had decreased to \$9.20 which was \$920 for a \$100,000 home. The following graph shows the steady decline in the Ripon school tax rate during the past sixteen years.

### Ripon Equalized Tax Rate with Referendum



The dotted line beginning in 2009 is the projected tax rate if all three referendum questions are approved by the voters. The new 2009 school tax rate would be \$1.10 less than in 2004 which is \$110 less for the owner of a \$100,000 home.

### REFERENDUM INFORMATIONAL MEETINGS

School officials will be present to answer your questions and provide information.

- **Thursday, March 19**, at 6:30 p.m. at Ripon High School room 167
- **Monday, March 23**, at 2:00 p.m. at Ripon Public Library
- **Tuesday, March 31**, at 6:30 p.m. at Ripon High School room 167
- **Thursday, April 2**, at 10:00 a.m. at Ripon Public Library

### VOTE ON APRIL 7

Polls are open for the General Statewide Spring Election at 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

April 7 is during Spring Vacation for Ripon schools. If you will be unable to go to the polls on April 7, you may use an absentee ballot.

An absentee ballot may be obtained from the municipal clerk of your city or town. Ballots will be available on and after March 17, 2009.

ECRWSS

POSTAL CUSTOMER

RIPON WI 54971

NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
RIPON, WI 54971  
PERMIT NO. 197

**Question #1**

Shall the following Initial Resolution be approved?

**INITIAL RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$500,000**

**BE IT RESOLVED** by the School Board of the Ripon Area School District, Fond du Lac, Winnebago and Green Lake Counties, Wisconsin that there shall be issued pursuant to Chapter 67 of the Wisconsin Statutes, general obligation bonds in an amount not to exceed \$500,000 for the public purpose of paying the cost of repairs and replacements consisting of replacing the high school boiler and repairing roofs on various school buildings.

YES  NO

**Ripon High School Boiler Nearly 50 Years Old**

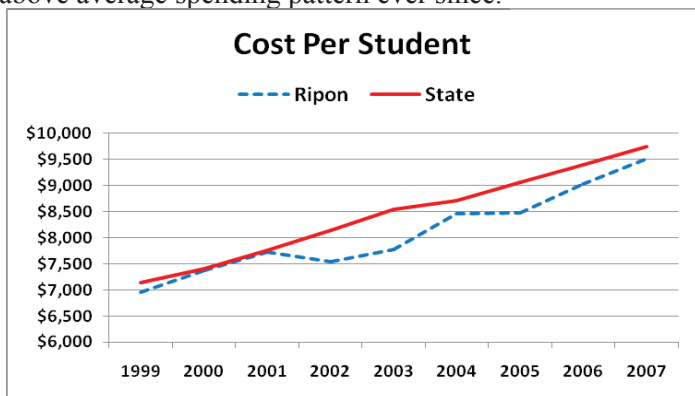
The Ripon High School boiler is approaching its 50th birthday. The boiler is expensive to operate and is very energy inefficient. It will need to be replaced.

This referendum question asks for authorization to replace the Ripon High School boiler before it breaks down at an inconvenient time when it will be more expensive and disruptive to replace. A new boiler will save money annually because it will cost less to operate. Annual fuel bills will also decrease because a new boiler will be more energy efficient.

Many homeowners have replaced their 50-year-old furnaces because they are more costly and more inefficient to operate than modern furnaces. The Ripon High School boiler is a similar situation.

**Ripon Spends Below the State Average**

The State of Wisconsin’s 1993 revenue limits law restricts how much the budget can be increased by the school board. Ripon was spending less than the state average in 1993, and has been held to that requirement ever since. Meanwhile, other school districts that were spending more than the state average have been permitted to continue their above average spending pattern ever since.



Passage of a voter referendum is the only way to exceed the state imposed revenue limits that have resulted in Ripon spending less than the state average and eliminating more staff and programs each year. The three referendum questions will minimize staffing cuts and restore items such as textbook and computer purchasing to the annual budget.

**Other School Districts also Pass Referenda**

Many other nearby school districts have appealed to voters for approval of referendum questions to fund operational budgets. State legislators have indicated that this process lets voters decide the type of schools and the amount of taxes that they would like. Following is a chart of some comparable school districts that have approved referendum questions in recent years.

School District	Year	Referendum
Green Lake	2001	\$ 600,000 annual levy override—forever
Little Chute	2007	\$ 200,000 annual override—5 years for technology
Markesan	2006	\$ 1,000,000 annual override—3 years
Montello	2008	\$ 950,000 annual override—2 years
Oakfield	2006	\$ 300K/500K/600K/700K annual override—4 years
Princeton	2008	\$ 200K/300K/300K annual override—3 years
Rosendale	2005	\$ 640K/640K/680K/680K/800K/800K levy override—6 years
Winneconne	2008	\$ 880,000 annual override—2 years

**School Roofs Need Repairs**

Flat roofs in Wisconsin are difficult to maintain. Two of our schools—the high school and middle school—have large flat roof areas. Even our two elementary buildings that have sloped, shingled roofs—Murray Park and Barlow Park—have flat roofs covering their gymnasiums. Homeowners know that shingle roofs often need repairs prior to total replacement, and school buildings have similar roof maintenance issues.

The high school and middle school buildings, particularly, are due for some major roof maintenance. Even though the District uses a highly skilled roofing consultant to find the best deal, roofing repair is still very costly work.

Deferring roof repair may result in leaking roofs. Leaking roofs may damage the building’s envelope and interior furnishings and equipment. Leaking roofs may also cause mold issues that are health concerns and are costly to eradicate.

The Board is seeking authorization from the voters to fund a 10-year bond to pay for the roof repairs and the Ripon High School boiler.

**Schools and the Economy**

The Board of Education is sensitive to the fact that the recent downturn in the economy is making things tough for many Americans. Companies are laying off workers because people aren’t buying their products, their orders are down, and business has declined.

The opposite economic indicators are true for the Ripon Area School District. People are buying our “product” (education), our “orders” (students) are up, and “business” (enrollment) has increased. The following chart shows that we are anticipating our largest Kindergarten class in years.

School Year	Students at Kindergarten Screening	Actual Kindergarten Enrollment
2007-08	107	118
2008-09	115	127
2009-10	120	132 (projected)

Two-thirds of the District’s budget is invested in staff compensation. Enrolling more students usually requires more teachers. In these tough economic times, the Board is not asking for an increase in staffing; instead, the Board is trying to maintain the current staffing level because a decrease in staff would significantly raise class sizes.

**What Will Question #1 Cost a Homeowner?**

Question #1 seeks authorization to issue general obligation bonds for a 10 year period in the principle amount of \$500,000 to pay for a new Ripon High School boiler and roofing repairs on school buildings. The estimated cost of Question #1 is 5 cents added to the equalized mill rate, which translates to \$5 annually for the owner of a \$100,000 home for 10 years.

**What if Question #1 Doesn’t Pass?**

If Ripon voters do not pass Question #1, sooner or later the boiler will have to be replaced and the roofs will have to be repaired. The \$500,000 cost is the equivalent of six teacher positions. The loss of six teachers would result in significantly larger class sizes and the elimination of some courses and programs. Unplanned and unscheduled maintenance can be more costly than routine, scheduled maintenance which means that the final cost of a delay could be much higher than the \$500,000 being requested to perform the work now.

**Question #2**

Shall the following Resolution be approved?

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET TO EXCEED REVENUE LIMIT FOR SIX YEARS FOR NON-RECURRING PURPOSES**

**BE IT RESOLVED** by the School Board of the Ripon Area School District, Fond du Lac, Winnebago and Green Lake Counties, Wisconsin that the revenues included in the School District budget for six years beginning with the 2009-2010 school year and ending with the 2014-2015 school year be authorized to exceed the revenue limit specified in Section 121.91, Wisconsin Statutes, by \$500,000 a year, for non-recurring purposes consisting of replacing textbooks, updating curriculum, updating technology, performing maintenance and replacing vehicles.

YES

NO

**Why 6 Years for Question #2?**

The normal replacement cycle that the District has been using for revising curriculum, purchasing new textbooks, and updating technology/computers is six years. The replacement cycle for all these expenditures was put on hold and the money was removed from the annual operating budget in the past few years so that teacher positions would not have to be cut and to maintain lower class sizes.

Question #2 asks for authorization to restore the 6-year cycle for one full replacement cycle. Authorization expires at the end of six years, and the Board would need new voter approval to continue.

Maintenance is also part of Question #2 because the maintenance budget has been cut along with curriculum, textbooks, and computers. Although there is not a formal 6-year cycle for all maintenance and vehicle expenditures, the District has a growing list of deferred maintenance projects for its buildings. Approval of Question #2 would permit the District to stop deferring maintenance projects and to give the school buildings appropriate upkeep.

**Replacing Vehicles**

The District owns several vehicles for transporting student groups, teams, and staff to events, workshops, and competitions. The District also owns several vehicles for maintenance staff to use for a variety of job duties from snow plowing to hauling to inter-school deliveries. The District's practice has been to purchase used vehicles on a regular basis to replace well-worn vehicles. Due to budget constraints the vehicle replacement cycle has been suspended in recent years. The vehicles continue to age and will need replacement.

Question #2 authorizes up to \$15,000 per year, for six years, to pay for replacing school vehicles.

**Updating Curriculum & Replacing Textbooks**

Ripon uses a 6-year cycle for rewriting curriculum in each subject area. After the teachers revise and rewrite the curriculum, the Board approves the new curriculum, and new textbooks are purchased to match the new curriculum. With many high school textbooks costing more than \$90 each, there is a substantial cost for adopting a new K-12 curriculum for each subject. The textbooks are rented to students for a fee that recovers some of the cost.

Question #2 authorizes up to \$200,000 per year, for six years, to pay for updating the curriculum and for replacing textbooks.

**Restrictions on the \$500,000 Expenditures**

Referendum law protects taxpayers from unauthorized use of approved funds. First, funds may only be used for the stated purpose. Second, the funds are not automatically spent. The referendum authorizes the Board to spend the money for the stated purposes only if needed and upon a vote of the Board.

**What if Question #2 Doesn't Pass?**

If Ripon voters do not pass Question #2, sooner or later the textbooks will be worn beyond use and will need to be replaced, the computers will be so old that they will be beyond use, the deferred maintenance will have to be performed, and the vehicles will not be feasible to continue to operate. The \$500,000 cost per year for 6 years is the equivalent of six teacher positions. The loss of six teachers would result in significantly larger class sizes and the elimination of some courses and programs. Each year that the Question #2 expenditures are not taken care of it will be more difficult to provide consistent quality and will be more difficult to make the necessary updates in a timely and cost-effective manner.

**Why Will it Cost \$500,000 Each Year for 6 years for Question #2?**

Question #2 seeks authorization to exceed the District's revenue limit by \$500,000 in each year for six consecutive years for the following expenditures:

Textbooks & Curriculum	\$200,000
Technology/Computers	\$160,000
Maintenance	\$125,000
Used Vehicles	\$ 15,000

**Performing Maintenance**

The current maintenance budget has already been cut by \$66,000 annually from the 2000-01 school year even as buildings age and costs increase. This has resulted in a growing list of deferred maintenance projects.

Question #2 authorizes up to \$125,000 per year, for six years, to pay for performing maintenance projects approved by the Board.

**Updating Technology & Computers**

Nearly half of the District's computers are five years old or older. Many students are coming to school to prepare for careers in the 21st century with technology that is inferior to what the students have at home. The replacement cycle for computers and technology was placed on hold a few years ago rather than eliminate the equivalent of two teacher positions which would have increased class size.

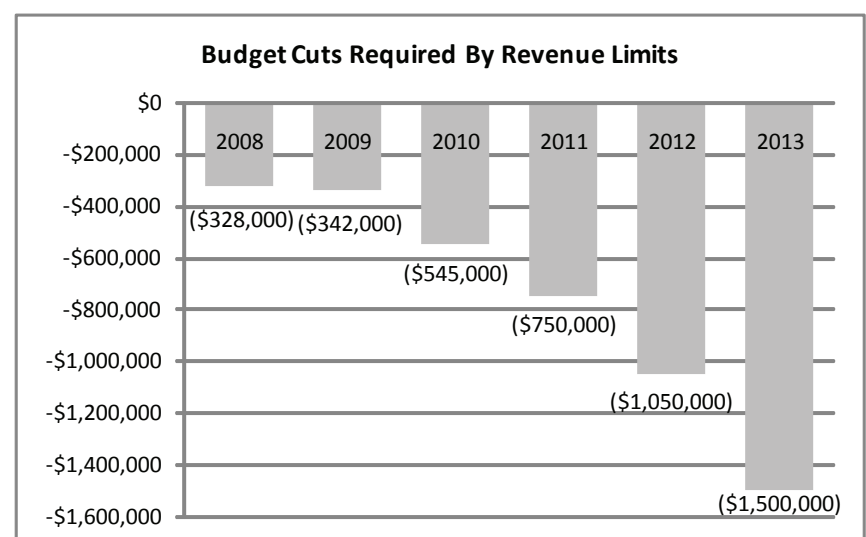
Question #2 authorizes up to \$160,000 per year, for six years, to pay for updating computers and technology.

**What Will Question #2 Cost a Homeowner?**

Question #2 seeks authorization to exceed by \$500,000 in each year, for 6 consecutive years, the District's revenue limits to pay for updating curriculum, purchasing textbooks, updating technology, performing maintenance, and replacing vehicles. The estimated cost of Question #2 is 75 cents added to the equalized mill rate which translates to \$75 annually for the owner of a \$100,000 home for 6 years.

**State Law Requires \$4.5 Million in Budget Cuts**

The following chart shows the budget cuts that state law will require Ripon to make in six years totaling over \$4.5 million. Each budget is based on replicating the previous year's budget, so any item that is cut from the budget for one year is removed forever.



Budget cuts for 2011-13 could total the equivalent of 41 teacher positions which represents nearly one-third of the current teaching staff. Cutting one-third of teacher positions in three years could result in significant class size increases and the elimination of many programs and courses. Only a District voter-approved referendum can authorize exceeding the District's revenue limit established by state law that requires such cuts.

### Question #3

Shall the following Resolution be approved?

#### RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET TO EXCEED REVENUE LIMIT FOR THREE YEARS FOR NON-RECURRING PURPOSES

BE IT RESOLVED by the School Board of the Ripon Area School District, Fond du Lac, Winnebago and Green Lake Counties, Wisconsin that the revenues included in the School District budget be authorized to exceed the revenue limit specified in Section 121.91, Wisconsin Statutes, for the 2009-2010 school year by \$575,000; for the 2010-2011 school year by \$725,000; and for the 2011-2012 school year by \$850,000 for non-recurring purposes consisting of paying for classroom staff and related instructional expenses.

YES  NO

#### Classroom Staffing and Related Instructional Expenses

Question #3 seeks authorization to exceed the District's revenue limit each year, for three consecutive years, for classroom staffing and related instructional expenses in the following amounts:

2009-10	\$575,000
2010-11	\$725,000
2011-12	\$850,000

#### What Will Question #3 Cost a Homeowner?

Question #3 seeks authorization to exceed the District's revenue limit each year, for three years, to pay for classroom staffing and related instructional expenses. The estimated cost of Question #3 is 88 cents added to the equalized mill rate, which translates to \$88 annually for the owner of a \$100,000 home for 3 years.

#### What Will Happen in 3 Years?

Question #3 authorizes money for only three years. The situation would be reassessed at that time and a new plan would be developed. Depending on action that the state legislature takes, that plan may or may not require another referendum.

#### Why Does Question #3 Have a Different Amount Each Year?

The result of the state law which mandates revenue limits is increasing budget cuts each year as shown in the chart on the previous page. Since the budget cuts of previous years have eliminated numerous non-staff annual operating expenditures, budget cuts in future years are likely to eliminate staff positions. Question #3 authorizes money to stabilize classroom positions with adequate funding for the next three years.

#### Why Is Question #3 Needed?

Classrooms in Ripon schools are full of students. Fewer students do not come to school when the economy declines. Ripon's enrollment is increasing and teachers are needed for these students. The following chart shows current class sizes and what would happen if just five teacher positions would be eliminated—one teacher per elementary grade level per year for 3 years.

Grade Level	Current Class Size	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
Grade 1	21	24	30	41
Grade 2	21	27	35	53
Grade 3	24	29	36	48
Grade 4	23	27	34	45
Grade 5	25	31	42	67

As shown in the above chart, elementary class sizes would significantly increase if just one teacher would be cut from each elementary grade level each year. The amount of Question #3 is the equivalent of more than 26 teacher positions during the next three years.

#### What if Question #3 Doesn't Pass?

The total amount of the money being requested in Question #3 is the budgeted equivalent of more than 26 teacher positions. If Question #3 doesn't pass, the equivalent of these 26 teacher positions would need to be eliminated to remain within the state's revenue limit law. The elimination of these teacher positions would mean a significant increase in class sizes and the end of many courses and programs.



#### Ripon Board of Education

President: David Scott  
 Vice President: Barb Schultz  
 Clerk: Joe Hatcher  
 Treasurer: Sherry Muskavitch  
 Members: Andy Lyke  
 Stephen Meyer  
 Tom Stellmacher  
 Dale A.J. Wszalek

#### Board Meetings

Regular board meetings are held on the third Monday of each month in Ripon High School's multi-purpose room 167 at 6:30 p.m. Any additional meetings are duly posted in the local newspaper and at the Ripon City Hall. For additional information, contact the school district administrative office at 748-4600.

The Ripon Area School District does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, national origin, ancestry, creed, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, or physical, mental, emotional, or learning disability or handicap.

### Resumen de noticias escolares para nuestros residentes de habla española

#### Tres Preguntas de Referéndum para la votación el 7 de abril

Enfrentados con los requerimientos del estado para cortar más de \$2 millones del presupuesto anual que opera en el distrito escolar en los próximos tres años y al mismo tiempo que las inscripciones de estudiantes aumentan. La Junta Directiva de Educación de ha decidido poner tres preguntas de referéndum en la votación del 7 de abril, la cual permitirá la Junta reemplazar el viejo calentador, reparar los techos, dar mantenimiento algunas facilidades y reinstaurar el ciclo para reemplazar los libros de texto, computadoras, y vehículos, y mantener el presente número de estudiantes en la clase.

Las siguientes es un resumen de las tres preguntas para el referéndum:

**Pregunta #1:** Autorización para girar bonos de obligación general sin exceder a \$500,000 para pagar en 10 años nuevo calentador para Ripon High School y reparación de techo en nuestros edificios escolares. El costo aproximado es de 5 centavos agregado a una tasa de igualdad, lo que significa a \$5 para los dueños de casa valorada en \$100,000.

**Pregunta #2:** Autorización para exceder el límite de entradas del Distrito por \$500,000 anualmente, por seis años para pagar la actualización del currículo, reemplazar libros de texto, actualizar la tecnología y computadoras, mantenimiento, y el reemplazo de vehículos. El costo estimado es de 75 centavos agregado a una tasa de igualdad, lo cual significa que \$75 para el dueño de una casa valorada en \$100,000.

**Pregunta #3:** Autorización para exceder el límite de entradas del Distrito en cada año por tres años para pagar el personal para las clases y gastos relacionados a la enseñanza como sigue: \$575,000 en 2009-10, \$725,000 en 2010-11, y \$850,000 en 2011-12. El costo estimado es de 88 centavos agregado a una tasa de igualdad, lo que significa que \$88 por dueños de casa valoradas en \$100,000.

**Ahorros de Refinanciamiento:** La Junta recientemente tomó ventaja de su excelente tasa de bono A+ y bajas tasas de interés para refinanciar algo de la deuda del Distrito ahorrando a los contribuyentes más de \$336,000 en los próximos siete años. La estrategia del manejo fiscal bajará la tasa de igualdad a 75 centavos lo que significa que bajará \$75 para los dueños de propiedad valoradas en \$100,000.

**Impacto Total de Impuesto:** Si las tres preguntas de referéndum pasan, el impacto estimado para el dueño de una casa valorada en \$100,000 será de un incremento de \$7.75 por mes sobre los impuestos de 2008. Lo que significa que \$93 al año tomando en cuenta los ahorros de financiamiento que serán reinvertidos en nuestras escuelas.