



## Frequently Asked Questions

### Q. Why would the Ripon Area School District consider renewing the operational referendum?

A. The State of Wisconsin has set unequal revenue limits that restrict the amount of local taxes that can be raised per pupil. Because RASD was a low-spending district in 1993 when the revenue limits were determined, the district is currently locked into a comparatively low revenue limit. Below is a comparison of other districts.

2019-20 Revenue Limit and Annual Operational Referendums

	Per Pupil Revenue	Annual Oper. Referendum
<b>South Shore (highest K12)</b>	<b>\$17,581</b>	<b>n/a</b>
Green Lake	\$12,600	\$650,000
<b>Chetek-Weyerhaeuser (90th percentile)</b>	<b>\$11,692</b>	<b>n/a</b>
New Berlin	\$11,480	n/a
Whitefish Bay	\$11,452	n/a
Verona	\$11,013	n/a
Mequon-Thiensville	\$10,915	n/a
Middleton-Cross Plains	\$10,855	n/a
Campbellsport	\$10,702	n/a
Waupaca	\$10,605	n/a
Kohler	\$10,355	n/a
Arrowhead UHS	\$10,254	n/a
<b>State Average (2018-19)</b>	<b>\$10,076</b>	<b>-</b>
Appleton	\$10,061	n/a
Mayville	\$9,924	n/a
<b>Ripon Area</b>	<b>\$9,838</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>
<b>Oshkosh (10th percentile)</b>	<b>\$9,700</b>	<b>\$7,950,000</b>
New London	\$9,700	\$1,300,000
Markesan	\$9,700	\$1,095,000
Princeton	\$9,700	\$475,000

Chilton (lowest K12)	\$9,679	n/a
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**Q. How common are referendums to exceed the revenue limits?**

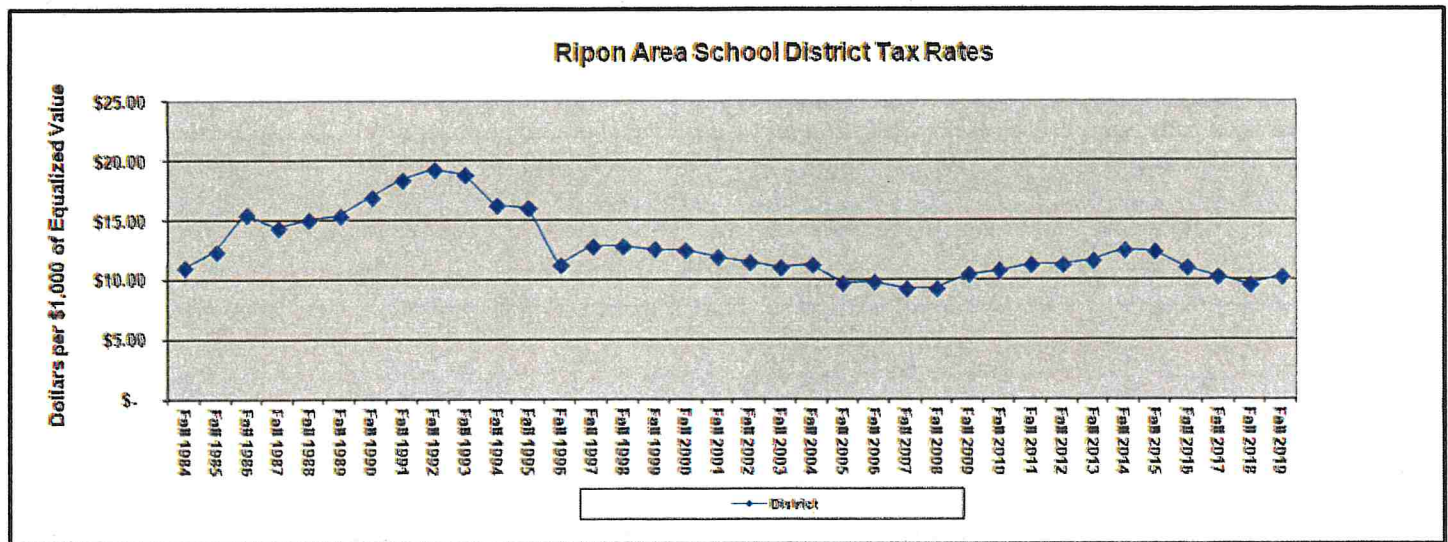
A. In the past five years (since February 2015), Wisconsin taxpayers have approved 216 school district referendums.

**Q. How will the referendum affect local tax rates?**

A. The proposed renewal of the operational referendum would be levy neutral, meaning that it would not increase or decrease taxes. This is true because local taxpayers have paid for this operational referendum since 2009. In 2019-20, the operational referendum cost \$68 annually for a local taxpayer with \$100,000 in property value.

**Q. What have Ripon school tax rates looked like?**

A. In 2019-20, the mill rate (tax per \$1,000 of property value) was \$10.25. The average homeowner with \$100,000 in property values paid \$1,025 in support of the school district. This amount includes the operational referendum, and was the 6th lowest rate over the past 36 years.



**Current:** \$10.25      **High:** \$19.23 (1992)      **Low:** \$9.20 (2008)      **Average:** \$12.64

**Q. I heard that the referendum costs taxpayers less than \$500,000. How is that possible?**

A. The Ripon Area School District is positively aided by the state for every local dollar spent. As the district's local spending increases, state aid also increases. In 2019-20, the operational referendum was calculated to cost local taxpayers approximately \$351,000 as the state offered tax relief (equalization aid), helping to offset the full amount.

**Q. What would happen if the operational referendum were not approved?**

A. The district would reduce spending on technology, curriculum, and facilities maintenance. However, reductions would likely extend beyond those three departments.

**Q. What has the district done lately to manage its spending effectively?**

A. The Ripon Area School District actively seeks to lower operational expenditures. In the past two years, the district has lowered the cost of its insurance for health, liability, property, and worker's compensation. Changes have also been made to lower expenses for phones, copiers, paper supplies, cleaning supplies, background checks, and financial products - including HRA fees. The district has also reduced expenses for natural gas by purchasing through a co-op, rather than from Aliant. Further, the district has reduced electricity costs by replacing indoor and outdoor lighting with LED bulbs; replacing failing boilers, air conditioners, water heaters, and freezers with more efficient units; and installing variable frequency drives on electric motors for its air handlers and other HVAC equipment. These changes have had positive results. In December and January of the 2019-20 school year, electricity usage at Murray Park Quest Elementary School has been reduced by more than 20% compared to the prior year. In a similar way, the district has changed its food service contract with A'viands so that the district pays a fixed price per meal. The food service program (Fund 50) is now self-sustaining, no longer requiring taxpayer funding.

All of these efficiencies were done with the purpose of making the district stronger financially while supporting our educational mission. With the savings that the district has achieved, we have increased the number of teachers and added a counselor in our elementary schools and lowered our student-to-teacher ratios. In many ways, our actions have also resulted in better outcomes. For example, the food service program is not only self-sustaining but also, through federal funding now includes the Summer Food Service Program, which offered 13,427 meals to local children at no cost throughout the summer.

Additionally, in the past, the district taxpayers approved a referendum to set aside funds for the replacement of the artificial turf surface at Ingalls Field. Over the next few years, the district anticipates being able to set aside enough funds into investments in Fund 46 so that a future referendum will not be necessary to establish an endowment for the track resurfacing or future turf replacements.

**Q. If the district is so financially sound, why does it need an operational referendum?**

A. The district is financially sound because of the operational referendum. Local taxpayers have made a commitment to making RASD an exceptional organization with high-quality materials, technology, and facilities. Because of this commitment, the district is able to avoid short-term debt and make many financial decisions that are best for the long-term future of the district (e.g., avoiding computer leases and other costly short-term solutions).

**Q. How does the current revenue per pupil compare to prior years?**

A. Accounting for inflation, revenue is down by \$1,170.38 per pupil compared to the 2010-11 school year. See the a 20-year history here: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Vk4sa8Fu8s8NZ2JpJy5\\_yDbELqoDawYq/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Vk4sa8Fu8s8NZ2JpJy5_yDbELqoDawYq/view?usp=sharing)

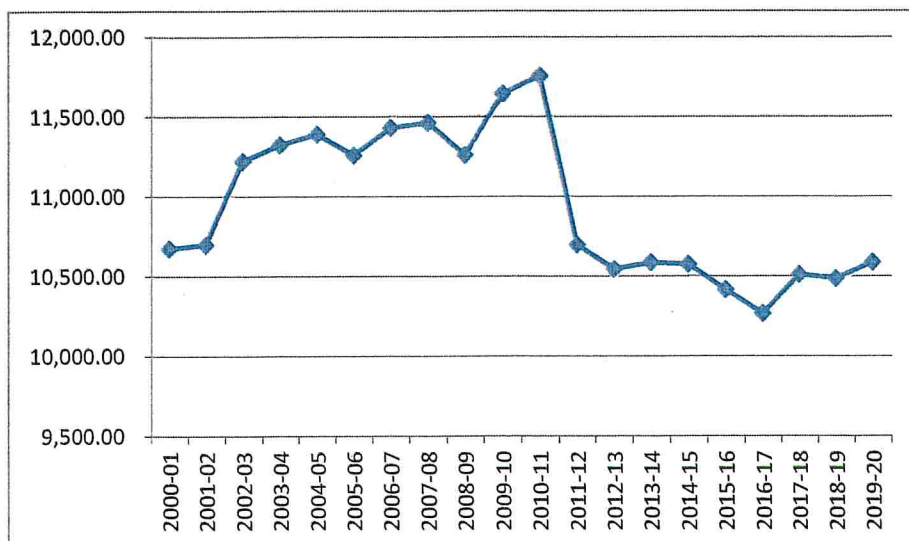
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Ripon Area School District  
 20-Year History of Revenue Per Member

	Base Revenue Per Member	Per-Member Increase	Per Pupil Aid	Maximum Revenue Per Member	Inflation-adjusted Revenue Per Pupil
2000-01	7,216.26	220.29	-	7,436.55	10,666.90
2001-02	7,423.69	226.68	-	7,650.37	10,690.41
2002-03	7,674.89	230.08	-	7,904.97	11,213.66
2003-04	7,925.35	236.98	-	8,162.33	11,316.15
2004-05	8,178.44	241.01	-	8,419.45	11,383.73
2005-06	8,462.28	248.48	-	8,710.76	11,250.33
2006-07	8,769.94	256.93	-	9,026.87	11,423.02
2007-08	9,037.74	264.12	-	9,301.86	11,455.40
2008-09	9,314.54	274.68	-	9,589.22	11,253.70
2009-10	9,589.22	200.00	-	9,789.22	11,638.11
2010-11	9,796.61	200.00	-	9,996.61	11,750.28
2011-12	9,996.61	(549.80)	-	9,446.81	10,690.49
2012-13	9,446.80	50.00	-	9,496.80	10,537.23
2013-14	9,496.80	75.00	75.00	9,646.80	10,578.32
2014-15	9,571.80	75.00	150.00	9,796.80	10,567.60
2015-16	9,646.80	-	150.00	9,796.80	10,409.56
2016-17	9,646.80	-	250.00	9,896.80	10,259.38
2017-18	9,646.80	-	450.00	10,096.80	10,503.42
2018-19	9,646.80	16.10	654.00	10,316.90	10,477.08
2019-20	9,662.90	175.00	742.00	10,579.90	10,579.90

Note: Inflation adjustments based on September of school year compared to the September of 2019.  
 Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI Inflation Calculator. Retrieved February 12, 2020 from  
<https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>

CPI Inflation-Adjusted Revenue Per Member



Using the three-year rolling average for resident pupils (1,572) multiplied by the inflation-adjusted maximum revenue per pupil in respective years, district revenue from state and local sources is down \$1,839,837.36 compared to the 2010-11 school year.