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**Voters Decide School Board Seats and School Questions in Nov. 5 Election**

**Trenton, Nov. 12, 2024** - New Jersey voters went to the polls Nov. 5, casting votes for the next president and U.S. congressional delegates. Most of them also had the opportunity to vote for local school board members.

In 527 New Jersey school districts, the annual school election takes place in November. This year, 1,512 board of education positions were on the ballot statewide. In addition, voters in 12 school districts acted on ballot proposals, including construction bond issues and questions seeking approval to increase the local tax levy above the state’s 2% cap.

Starting in 2012, communities were permitted to change the date of their annual school board elections from April to November. Over 90% of school districts now conduct November elections. Only 16 school districts hold their annual elections in April. (In addition, there are 40 districts in which school board members are appointed by the mayor or county commissioners.)

**Rate of Candidacy**

This year 1,937 candidates filed petitions to run for the 1,512 school board positions on the ballot. The ratio of candidates per open seat was 1.28.

This represents a slight increase from 2023, when 1,804 candidates filed petitions to run for the 1,487 school board positions on the ballot. The ratio of candidates per open seat for 2023 was 1.21 candidates per available seat.

Several boards of education had construction questions on the ballot – and in a somewhat rare occurrence – according to unofficial results – voters approved every single one of them. The amount of bonding and state funding is listed below.

**Statewide bonding amount proposed**: $131,628,603.  
**Statewide bonding amount approved**: $131,628,603.  
**State funding of proposed questions**: $49,702,729.20.  
**State funding approved**: $49,702,729.20.

Under the Educational Facilities and Construction and Financing Act of 2000, the state will fund at least 40% of eligible school construction costs through annual debt service aid.

Here are the statewide figures gathered from the offices of the county clerks. These results are not certified and are based on preliminary numbers.

**Bergen County**

**Woodcliff Lake – REJECTED —** The board of education sought authorization to exceed its tax levy limitation. The board asked voters to raise an additional $180,000 in school taxes for the 2024-2025 school year in addition to the regular budget. These taxes would be used to hire, equip, and train special law enforcement officers at Dorchester Elementary School and Woodcliff Middle School. Approval of these taxes would result in a permanent increase to the school tax levy.

The board of education anticipates the costs attributable to the wages and taxes for the special law enforcement officers would total $150,424.20, and the remaining $29,575.80 would be spent on equipment, training and related fees.

**Burlington County**

**Delanco – APPROVED —** The board of education sought authorization a) to undertake various improvements, alterations, renovations and upgrades to the HVAC system and a partial roof replacement at M. Joan Pearson Elementary School, including acquisition and installation of fixtures, equipment and any site work; b) appropriate $3,529,500 for such improvements; and c) issue bonds in an amount not to exceed $3,529,500.

The eligible costs for the projects approved by the New Jersey commissioner of education are $3,529,500. The state debt service aid percentage will equal 40% of the annual debt service due with respect to the final eligible costs of the projects.

**Total bonding amount:**$3,529,500.  
**State funding:**$1,411,800.

**Medford Township – REJECTED —**The board of education sought authorization to raise an additional $6,825,000 for the Medford Township Public Schools General Fund in the same school year (2024-2025). These taxes would be used exclusively for increased security measures and mental health support services across all district schools to include Class III officers, a district student resource officer, mental health clinicians, behavioral support staff, a supervisory staff member and an upgraded security platform and communication systems. Approval of $3,625,000 will result in a permanent increase in the district’s tax levy, and the remaining $3,200,000 will not result in a permanent increase in the district’s tax levy. These proposed additional expenditures are in addition to those necessary to achieve the New Jersey Student Learning Standards.

**Cumberland County**

**Downe – REJECTED —**The board of education sought approval to raise an additional $100,000 for the 2024-2025 school year, increasing the 2024-2025 tax levy from $1,934,475 to $2,034,475, for the purpose of hiring an armed security guard. If approved, there would be a permanent increase to the district’s tax levy.

**Hunterdon County**

**Franklin Township – APPROVED –** The board of education sought authorization to a.) undertake various improvements, alterations, renovations and upgrades at the Franklin Township School, including but not limited to renovations to restrooms, the main office and the school nurse’s suite, the acquisition and installation of an emergency generator, and improvements and repairs to the existing parking lot, including acquisition and installation of fixtures, equipment and any site work; b.) appropriate $2,823,592 for such improvements; and c.) issue bonds in an amount not to exceed $2,823,592.

The eligible costs for the projects approved by the New Jersey commissioner of education are $2,823,592. The state debt service and aid percentage will equal 40% of the annual debt service due with respect to the final eligible costs of the projects.

**Total bonding amount:**$2,823,592  
**State funding:**$1,129,436.80

**Middlesex County**

**South Brunswick – REJECTED –**The board of education sought approval to raise an additional $350,000 for general funds in the 2024-2025 school year. These taxes would be used exclusively to fund recreational usage for students and adults of certain district facilities Monday through Saturday, hire a facilities manager for rentals and facility usage, permit tennis courts with lights for community usage, permit the high school track to be available to the community and address costs associated with opening-up facilities and yearly upkeep. Approval of these taxes would result in a permanent increase in the district’s tax levy.

**Monmouth County**

**Neptune – REJECTED –**The board of education asked voters if they approve removing the name of “Woodrow Wilson” from the Neptune City School Building. If approved, a new name for the school building and all associated references would be decided at a later date.

**Manalapan-Englishtown – APPROVED –** The board of education of the Manalapan-Englishtown Regional School District sought authorization to a.) undertake various improvements, alterations, renovations and upgrades at John I. Dawes Early Learning Center, Clark Mills School, Lafayette Mills School, Milford Brook School, Pine Brook School, Taylor Mills School and Wemrock Brook School, including acquisition and installation of fixtures, furniture, equipment, and any site work; b.) undertake various improvements, alterations, renovations, and upgrades, and to undertake the construction of an addition at Manalapan-Englishtown Middle School, including acquisition and installation of fixtures, furniture, equipment and any site work; c.) appropriate $115,378, 211 for such improvements; and d.) issue bonds in an amount not to exceed $115,378,211.

The eligible costs for the projects approved by the New Jersey commissioner of education are $108,006,431 (consisting of $1,294,150 for John I. Dawes Early Learning Center, $14,502,540 for Clark Mills School $12,490,842 for Lafayette Mills School, $8,603,790 for Milford Brook School, $12,919,725 for Pine Brook School, $13,994,539 for Taylor Mills School, $10,896,795 for Wemrock Brook School, and 33,304,050 for Manalapan-Englishtown Middle School). The state debt service aide percentage will equal 40% of the annual debt service due with respect to the final eligible costs of the projects.

**Total bonding amount:**$115,378,211.  
**State funding:**$43,202,572.40

**Morris County**

**Florham Park – APPROVED –**The board of education sought approval to raise an additional $459,548 for the general fund in the same school year of 2024-2025 for the purposes of creating additional positions for basic skills instruction and to create a supervisor of mathematics instruction position for the Florham Park School District. Voter approval of this proposal would represent a permanent increase in the tax levy of 2.15%, meaning the tax levy will increase by 2.15% and the dollar amount of $459,548 would become a permanent part of the general fund base budget moving forward.

**Passaic County**

**North Haledon** – **APPROVED** – The board of education sought authorization to raise an additional $525,000 for general funds in the same school year (2024-2025). These taxes would be used exclusively to provide, enhance and maintain school district security systems, equipment and personnel. With this increase in funds, the board of education would be able to maintain security staff such as school resource officers at each of its school buildings. Approval of these taxes would result in a permanent increase in the district’s tax levy.

**Sussex County**

**Hopatcong Borough – APPROVED –**The board of education sought authorization to a.) provide for renovations, alternations and improvements at Hopatcong High School, Hopatcong Middle School, Durban Avenue Elementary School and Tulsa Trail Elementary School, including acquisition and installation of equipment, site work and related works and costs; b) to appropriate $9,897,300 for such purposes and c) to issue bonds of the school district for such purposes in the principal amount of $9,897,300.

The final eligible costs of the projects approved by the commissioner of education are $9,897,300 (with $5,942,600 allocated to Hopatcong High School, $699,300 allocated to Hopatcong Middle School, $459,400 allocated to Durban Avenue Elementary School and $2,796,000 allocated to Tulsa Trail Elementary School.). The state debt service aid percentage will equal 40% of the annual debt service due with respect to the final eligible costs of the projects.

**Total bonding amount:**$9,897,300.  
**State funding:**$3,958,920**.**

**Union County**

**Mountainside – APPROVED –**The board of education sought authorization to raise an additional $396,000 for general funds in the same school year (2024-2025). These taxes will be used exclusively for the addition of three teachers and benefits in the amount of $289,000, one part-time curriculum coordinator in the amount of $60,000, contracted mental health support in the amount of $30,000, and after school academic support in the amount of $17,000. Approval of these taxes would result in a permanent increase in the district’s tax levy. These proposed additional expenditures are in addition to those required to achieve the New Jersey Student Learning Standards.

**Additional Questions**

Beyond the questions detailed above, there were three municipalities that posed questions to voters that would have a direct impact on school districts.

**Monmouth County**

**Sea Bright**: Voters were asked to support  exploring educational opportunities and property tax relief available to Sea Bright by having students from Sea Bright attend the Henry Hudson Regional School District. **Voters APPROVED**.

**Highlands:** A related question was on the ballot in Highlands, which asked voters if they support the borough exploring tax relief for Highlands by having students from Sea Bright attend the Henry Hudson Regional School District. **Voters APPROVED.**

**Union County**

**Berkeley Heights – APPROVED —**The town asked voters to support a long-term lease of Lower Columbia from the Berkeley Heights Board of Education to the Township for $1 for the purpose of making improvements to the park, creating a more community-based space, and making it more usable for a broader spectrum of teams and residents.

For more than 50 years, the township has maintained and improved the property commonly known as Lower Columbia, and a long-term lease of the property by the township with the Berkeley Heights Board of Education would allow the township to apply for additional grant funding not available to the Berkeley Heights Board of Education. This arrangement would also give the township the opportunity to utilize current and future grant funding to pay for the field, which otherwise would not be available to the board of education.

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The New Jersey School Boards Association, a federation of district boards of education, advocates the interests of school districts, trains local school board members, and provides resources for the advancement of public education.