

A SCORECARD OF INDIANA SCHOOL PROPERTY TAX REFERENDUMS

(2008-2025)



By Adam VanOsdol, ISBA Communications Specialist/Content Strategist

A record number of school corporations have placed referendums on the November 2026 general election ballot seeking voter approval to raise additional property tax revenue to fund basic school operations. The single biggest factor in the surge is Senate Enrolled Act 1 (SEA 1), passed in 2025, which increased homestead deductions and other tax breaks, resulting in fewer property tax dollars flowing to public schools. SEA 1 also limits when referendums can appear on the ballot. Indiana now requires school referendums to be held only during November general elections in even-numbered years, meaning districts have only one ballot opportunity every two years. The following scorecard examines school referendum outcomes in Indiana since the enactment of property tax caps in 2008.

INDIANA SCHOOL REFERENDUMS BY THE NUMBERS

FROM 2008-2025



294

TOTAL Property Tax
Referendums Proposed

188

TOTAL Property Tax
Referendums Approved
(64% pass rate)



194

Operating Referendums
Proposed

135

Operating
Referendums Passed
(70% pass rate)



96

Construction Referendums
Proposed

51

Construction
Referendums Passed
(53% pass rate)



4

School Safety
Referendums Proposed

2

School Safety
Referendums Passed
(50% pass rate)

OVERALL ACTIVITY

From 2008–2025, voters decided 294 school property tax referendums in Indiana:

- 194 operating referendums
- 96 construction referendums
- 4 school safety referendums

Of these, 188 were approved, for an overall pass rate of 64%:

- 135 operating referendums (70% pass rate)
- 51 construction referendums (53%)
- 2 school safety referendums (50%)

RECENT TRENDS

Approval rates peaked between 2016 and 2020 but have come down since. The referendum pass rate for the most recent five years (2021 through 2025) is 15 percentage points lower than during the peak years. More than 80% of school referendums passed in four out of five years from 2016–2020, but the pass rate has been under 70% in every year since then.

- (2016–2020): 82 out of 105 passed (78%)
- (2021–2025): 39 out of 62 passed (63%)

RENEWALS VS. NEW REFERENDUMS

The lower pass rates in recent years reflect divergent outcomes between new requests and renewals. While referendum renewals sit on relatively firm ground, requests for new referendums face an uphill battle. Since November 2022, 86% of school referendum renewals in Indiana have passed, suggesting that when the fiscal ask is framed as preserving existing services, voter friction is low.

In contrast, only one out of the past 11 new requests has prevailed.

- Renewals: 24 out of 28 passed (86%)
- New referendums: 1 of 11 (9%)

MOST IN A SINGLE ELECTION

The most school corporations with a referendum in a single election was 18, occurring in the 2010 general election. The most school corporations that won a referendum in a single election was 12 in the 2020 primary election.

SCHOOL CORPORATION PARTICIPATION

Just under half of school corporations have tried a referendum, but less than one-third have been successful.

- 144 school corporations (49.7%) have attempted a referendum
- 88 corporations (30%) have passed at least one referendum
- 70 corporations (24%) have passed an operating referendum

Breakdown of operating referendum success:

- 1 school corporation has passed 4 operating referendums
- 20 have passed 3
- 22 passed 2
- 27 passed 1

Of the 135 successful operating referendums, the average approved tax rate was 27 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation.

REFERENDUM PASS RATES:

2016–2020

78%

PASSED

2021–2025

63%

PASSED

144

School corporations have **ATTEMPTED** a referendum

88

School corporations have **PASSED** at least one referendum

86%

Renewal referendums **PASSED** since November 2022 (24 of out 28)

18

Most school corporations with a referendum in a single election (November 2010)

27¢

Average approved tax rate per \$100 of assessed valuation

KEY TAKEAWAY

While referendums have become a common tool for school funding in Indiana, recent election results suggest growing voter resistance to new operating referendums, even as renewals continue to pass at very high rates. 🗳️