



## WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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### **School Referenda Reform Bill Provides Certainty to Voters & Taxpayers**

**(Madison, WI)** Representative Michael Schraa and Senator Duey Stroebel testified today in support of AB 481, legislation they authored to reform the school district referenda process statewide.

“We all have a vested interest in great public schools for students across the state. Making sure they are funded is important. Since joining the legislature in 2013, I am proud to have voted for the last two state budgets, which helped increase state funding support for K-12 education by 4.7% and 5% respectively,” said Representative Schraa. “Whether it’s the children in our own family or others, we want the best for their education. It is also important, as legislators, to balance the needs of K-12 education with the increasing demands on taxpayers across the state.”

This bill as amended does two things. First, a school board may only schedule a referendum concurrently with a spring or fall general election. Second, if a school board adopts a resolution to borrow money or increase revenue through the available mechanisms and it is rejected by voters, the school board may not use any of the available borrowing mechanisms for one year. School districts that have natural disasters or fires that occur would be exempt from the provisions of the bill for six months. This gives them an opportunity to go to referendum for funds to address costs associated with the disaster/fire if needed. Additionally, our amendment exempts the short-term borrowing sometimes needed by school districts in the summer, from the provisions of the bill.

“The best practices contained in AB 481 require that school districts seek the most public buy-in as possible by focusing on general elections and respect the will of the voters by waiting a year before asking in many cases the same referendum question,” commented Sen. Stroebel. “I’m proud to stand by these common sense reforms with Rep. Schraa and our co-sponsors.”

Vibrant schools are important to prepare the next generation for an evolving and competitive world. School districts must realize that local taxpayers are already burdened by federal and state income taxes, local property taxes, sales taxes, and a plethora of fees. The least we can ask of our school districts is to respect taxpayers by asking for additional revenue at times when taxpayers are paying the most attention and if a referendum fails, giving taxpayers a reasonable amount of time between subsequent referendum elections. This bill accomplishes this important balance.

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