



NJDOE News

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Voter Support of School Budgets Holds Steady Despite Economic Crisis

New Jersey voters in the annual school elections yesterday approved 73.5 percent of local school budgets. Last year's statewide approval rate was also 73.5 percent.

"I think that the people of the State of New Jersey have always been committed to educating our children," said Governor Jon S. Corzine. "We are trying to have the best schools in the country to make sure that our kids have a great opportunity in the future. I think voters are expressing their priorities by how they voted in those elections.

"Today's approvals don't mean that people are unconcerned about how their money is spent, however," Governor Corzine continued. "We need to be protective of every dollar. More importantly, we have to be protective of each child."

In one of the most difficult economic years in modern times, Governor Corzine has proposed a state budget for the coming year that increases state aid to classrooms by \$304 million over the current year's budget, raising the total of direct state aid to schools to \$8.83 billion.

Commissioner of Education Lucille E. Davy hailed today's vote as a sign that New Jersey citizens are willing to invest in high quality education.

"We have sent the dual message in the last year that we must carefully be mindful of every dollar we spend, but to not sacrifice the quality of classroom instruction for any child," Commissioner Davy said. "I believe that over all, our schools have responded positively to this message, and it seems clear that yesterday's school budget vote shows that the public supports local efforts to provide the best possible education for their children."

Commissioner Davy also praised Governor's Corzine's commitment to making additional education funding a priority, "not just because it is the right thing to do but because it is one of several ways that we are trying to rein in property taxes, and voters seem to be responding to that."

The Commissioner called the approval rate "quite extraordinary" in light of the national economic crisis that in the last year has delivered sharp blows to the housing, automobile, and financial sectors and has shaken the public's confidence.

Voter turnout decreased this year, with 13.4 percent of New Jersey's estimated 5.4 million registered voters participating. Last year, 14.3 percent of the registered voters participated in the school elections.

The voters did appear reluctant to approve local school spending that exceed the 4 percent spending cap on local revenue for the budget. All 11 such questions were defeated.

The 11 second questions on the local ballots was the lowest number ever. In many past years, there would have been 70 to 100 second questions asking voters to approve additional spending. A 2007 law required a 60 percent super majority approval for these questions, and in 2008, there were 28.

Yesterday was also one of the five days during the year designated for voters to decide whether to raise local funds through the sale of bonds to support school construction projects. Seventeen of the 22 bond referenda on the ballot passed.

Successful referenda were reported in Atlantic City, Clearview Regional, Frankford Township, Galloway Township, Green Township, Hardyston Township, Hasbrouck Heights, Keyport, Kingsway Regional, Lakehurst, Mainland Regional (for a new roof and solar panels and for high school renovations), Northern Burlington County, Northern Valley Regional, Prospect Park, West Essex Regional, and Woodlynne.

Unsuccessful referenda were reported in Butler, Mainland Regional (for artificial turf), Mount Holly, and Riverside

(both proposals).

Please use the link below for details about the 2009 school elections.

<http://www.nj.gov/education/data/vote/09/>

Please Note: The election results reported today are preliminary; slight changes may be noted when the final tallies are calculated.