



NJDOE News

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### **Information on Preliminary School Election Results**

#### **Question: Does time remain to save jobs and programs if teachers accept wage freeze?**

**Answer:** Although many school budgets were defeated in yesterday's election, Education Commissioner Bret Schundler today reminded teachers, school boards and taxpayers in all districts that they can continue to work together to reduce layoffs and save important academic programs.

"This year, whether local school budgets were defeated or not, we will be encouraging all school boards and teachers' unions to continue negotiating until the state budget is adopted at the end of June. If more teachers accept a one-year wage freeze, there is still time to save the jobs of their colleagues and preserve important programs for children," Commissioner Schundler said.

According to preliminary figures, 58.4 percent of the school budgets, statewide, were defeated this year. For the past two years, 26.4 percent were defeated. Eight districts requested additional spending in separate ballot questions, and all were defeated.

Budgets fared much better in districts where teachers accepted wage freezes. Voters approved 13 of the 19 budgets in wage freeze districts for an approval rate of 68.4 percent – much better than the statewide average.

Voter turnout, statewide, increased sharply, from 15 percent last year to 26.68 percent this year. Last year, 728,414 people cast votes. This year, voter turnout increased by nearly half a million people, with 1,250,436 going to the polls.

"Taxpayers have spoken, and their voice should be respected," Commissioner Schundler said. "They want relief. The teachers' union, school boards and local governments should work together to reduce taxes while minimizing layoffs and program cuts."

#### **Question: What happens to defeated budgets?**

**Answer:** In districts where voters defeated the school budget, boards of education must submit their spending plans to the local government for review, and town councils or committees should examine budgets to see if cuts can be made.

"School budgets consume the greatest share of local property taxes. Mayors should consider the will expressed by voters as they examine whether it is proper to make cuts that can trim property tax bills," the commissioner said.

Unless they appeal the decision, school districts must reduce spending by the amount recommended by the local governments. The governments may make suggestions about which programs or personnel should be eliminated, but school boards can make their own decision about what to cut, as long as the same amount of money is saved.

#### **Question: Can budget cuts be appealed?**

**Answer:** If school boards feel the cuts are too deep or important programs are being hurt, they can appeal budget reductions to the commissioner.

"I will review budget cuts submitted to me in an impartial manner, with input from executive county superintendents," Commissioner Schundler said. "If the proposed cuts would actually harm school districts or eliminate essential programs, we will support the school district's appeal."

Commissioner Schundler finished his remarks by thanking all the voters who participated in Tuesday's

elections, while supporting reforms that would increase turnout.

"It is my hope that, next year, school elections will be held in November, as Gov. Christie has recommended. I agree with the governor that moving the elections to November would increase voter turnout even more, and on a continuing basis," Commissioner Schundler said, "so that a larger number of people can decide who will be elected to school boards and what will happen to future tax bills."

The following links provide data on yesterday's election results:

- Vote Summary by County ( [PDF](#) | [Microsoft Excel](#) )
- Vote Summary by District ( [PDF](#) | [Microsoft Excel](#) )
- Voter Turnout Totals (Statewide, Minus Type 1 Districts) ( [PDF](#) | [Microsoft Excel](#) )
- Teacher Wage Freeze District Results ( [PDF](#) | [Microsoft Excel](#) )
- Statewide School Budget Results â€” 10 Year Summary ( [PDF](#) | [Microsoft Excel](#) )
- FY2010 and FY2011 School Tax Levies ( [PDF](#) | [Microsoft Excel](#) )