



Educate. Communicate. Motivate.

Ten Steps to a Successful November Referendum

MinnSPRA Gold Mine, April 2025

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What is a REFERENDUM?

OPERATING LEVY

Levies are for learning

- **Why:** Add programming, avoid budget cuts
- **When:** November, unless in SOD

BOND LEVY

Bonds are for buildings

- **Why:** New buildings, major renovations
- **When:** February, April, May, August, November

CAPITAL PROJECTS LEVY

Often called a tech levy

- **Why:** Buy books, equipment, security, technology
- **When:** February, April, May, August, November

1. Ten Steps to a Successful November Referendum

Start early, educate the community

Two years before the referendum

- Discuss the situation
- Share the decision making process for solving challenges
- Promote participation opportunities
- Build relationships with VIPs
- Put communications infrastructure in place

2. Engage Community Members

May 2025

- Hold meetings with staff, parents
- PTO meetings, boosters
- Discuss the situation, no plan yet, but likely referendum, we need your help

Sept - Nov 2025

- Come to us - 2-3 times
- Go to them - 2-3 x week!

3. Strong Communications Effort

May 2025

- Draft a plan for now until board vote
 - Communicate the situation

July 2025 - Board vote on ballot question

- What's on the ballot and why
- Mid-August - Nov. 4
- Robust information on the situation, plan and voting

4. Seek Help

May 2025

- Hire consultants
- Conduct survey
- Recruit volunteers

Aug - Nov 4

- Recruit volunteers
- Obtain testimonials, endorsements

5. Using a Variety of Communications Tools

Your usual toolbox + direct mail + MORE frequency

- Website
- E-newsletter
- Social media
- Video
- Direct mail (at least x2)
- Building posters
- Building signs
- Info tables in schools

6. Lean Into Digital

Short social media videos - multiple (can be professional or home made)

- Gifs
- Podcasts
- Webinars
- Facebook Live

7. Know Your Audience

- Demographics
 - Non-English speakers
 - Senior citizens
- Geography
 - City or country
 - Precincts or townships
- Voting history
 - Staff
 - Parents

8. Engage Teachers in Implementing Your Plan

- Awareness
- Input into plan
- Support level
- Building teams
- Yes committee

9. Avoid the Arguments

District

- Respond once to misinformation - you'll never have the last word

Yes Committee

- Ascertain level of support, move on

Why do opponents want you to argue?

- They know you want a chance to defend your great plan
- They want to distract you from your core communications plan
- They want you to talk about taxes, not educational outcomes
- They want you to share their messages for them
- They want to convince people there are other ideas that haven't been studied

10. Understand and Manage the Things You Can Control

- Work your plan – 80/20 rule (80% on your messages, 20% responding)
- How you developed the plan
 - Date of the election
 - Scope and price of the plan
 - Number of questions on the ballot
- How/where you communicate
- Whether people turn to you for answers to their questions

TROLLS!

SPECIES OF TROLLS

Frustrated families

Chronic complainers

Angry mobs (close schools, policy change, etc)

Culture warriors/activists

Conspiracy theorists

True Trolls - they are literally evil

RESPONSE

Go offline - Listen, respond with empathy

Respond once

Acknowledge error to the group, say what you're doing to fix

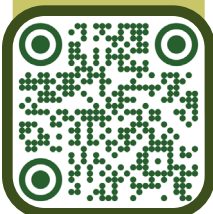
General statement of position on issue, no response to comments

As above

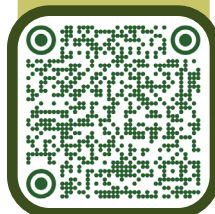
Evaluate, don't respond, urge supporters to not respond

Source: Jon Goldberg, Reputation Architects, Inc.

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