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## **New Proposal Would Limit Opportunities for Voters to Approve New Resources for Schools**

State lawmakers have proposed making it more difficult for school districts to go to referendum, a change that could have reduced or delayed new resources for schoolchildren by nearly \$200 million in recent years, according to a [new analysis by the Wisconsin Budget Project](#).

Under a proposal advanced by state lawmakers, school districts would be prohibited from asking voters for new resources for a period of two years after a referendum failed to pass. School districts go to referendum to get voter approval to borrow money for large projects such as the construction of new schools, and to raise the spending limits imposed by the state.

The Wisconsin Budget Project [reviewed the results of school referenda](#) since July 2011, and determined that if the proposed restrictions had been in place:

- 36 referenda in 31 different districts might not have been able to pass when they did;
- Those referenda represented \$196 million in new resources for children in public schools: \$143 million in borrowing for large projects, and \$53 million to lift the spending caps; and
- School board members and other representatives from several of the 31 districts said that without a successful referendum, officials would consider dissolving the school district or combining it with another district.

“Wisconsin residents who value their public schools should have the opportunity to vote for new resources for schoolchildren,” said Tamarine Cornelius, author of the analysis. “Tying voters’ hands reduces local control over public schools and makes it harder for communities to invest in educating their children.”

[The analysis includes a list of every successful school referendum since July 2011 that was passed within two years of an unsuccessful referendum](#), with amounts, type, and purpose of each referendum. [This map shows the geographic location of the school districts](#) that have passed successful referenda within two years of an unsuccessful referendum.

The proposal includes other limits on school districts that were not included in this analysis, including a prohibition on using a variety of financing methods in the two-year period after a failed referendum, and a requirement that the referenda elections be held at the same time as the annual spring elections or as the fall elections in even-numbered years.

New Analysis: [Proposed Limits Would Make it More Difficult for Voters to Approve New Resources for Schools](#)