



# Voters Decide School Board Seats, Ballot Questions

New Jersey voters went to the polls Nov. 2, and, in addition to voting for the governor, state legislative and local officials, most had the opportunity to elect members of their local boards of education.

This year, 1,594 board of education positions were on the ballot statewide. Incumbents made up about 47% of candidates and 684 seats were uncontested.

In addition, voters in nine school districts acted on ballot proposals, ranging from construction bond issues, and requests to increase the local tax levy above the state's 2% cap, to proposed changes in the local school board composition.

In Montclair and Port Republic, voters approved proposals to reclassify the school districts from a Type I district, with members of the board of education appointed by the mayor, to a Type II school district, with members of the board of education elected.

Starting in 2012, communities were permitted to change the date of their annual school board elections from April to November. Over 90% of school districts now conduct November elections. Only 13 school districts hold their annual elections in April, according to the New Jersey School Boards Association's records. (In addition, there are more than 40 districts in which school board members are appointed by the mayor or the county board of commissioners.)

**Rate of Candidacy** This year's 2,174 candidates represented a ratio of 1.36 candidates per open seat. This was an increase in the number of candidates over 2020, when 1,915 candidates vied for 1,519 positions, for a ratio of 1.26 candidates per open seat, according to data gathered from the state's 21 county clerks.

**Ballot Questions** School boards may place special questions on the November election ballot, and this year at least nine districts did so. Note that all results are unofficial, pending certification by the county clerk.

- One district asked voters to approve spending outside of the state's 2% tax levy cap.
- Four school boards conducted bond referendums asking voters to approve borrowing for school construction or renovation projects. Construction proposals totaled \$118,703,688 million statewide.
- Four boards of education had other questions, including proposals to change from an appointed to an elected board; to reduce the size of the board of education or to expand the size of their board.

**Tax Levy Questions** School boards may place questions on the November ballot, asking voters to approve spending outside of the state's 2% tax levy cap.

There was one district with a tax levy question:

**Greenwich (Warren County) — REJECTED** — The Greenwich Township Board of Education wants to raise an additional \$600,000 in tax levy funds to hire six teachers to maintain class sizes. Since the implementation of the 2018 revised state school funding formula, the Greenwich Township School District realized a cumulative loss of state funding in the amount of \$1.9 million to date. This loss in state funding combined with fixed district expenses, including mandatory tuition payments for high school students and required out-of-district placements along with maintenance for buildings more than 20 years old, eliminate the district's ability to hire teachers for K-8 students while staying within the 2% tax levy cap. Current class sizes and student programs are in jeopardy because the district needs six teachers to meet the needs of its current K-8 student population. Six teachers equate to approximately \$100 per \$100,000 assessed valuation (not market value).

**Construction Proposals** The annual school election also serves as one of five dates during the year when school boards may ask voters to approve school construction proposals. On Nov. 2, voters in four school districts decided on proposed school construction referendums. Under the Educational Facilities and Construction and Financing Act of 2000, the state will fund at least 40% of eligible school construction costs through annual debt service aid.

**Statewide amount proposed** – \$118,703,688

**Statewide amount passed:** \$118,703,688

**State funding of proposed questions** – \$38,601,249

**State funding approved:** \$38,601,249

**Lenape Regional High School District (Burlington County) — APPROVED** — Various improvements, alterations, renovations and upgrades at Lenape High School, Shawnee High School, Cherokee High School, Seneca High School, the Administration Building, the warehouse building and the transportation building, including acquisition and installation of fixtures, furniture, equipment and any related site work.

**Total amount: \$66,628,944**

**State funds: \$24,432,536**

The final eligible costs for the projects approved by the New Jersey Commissioner of Education are \$61,081,339 (consisting of \$20,249,568 for Lenape High School, \$10,333,199 for Shawnee High School, \$22,962,546 for Cherokee High School, \$7,536,026 for Seneca High School, \$0 for the Administration Building, \$0 for the warehouse and \$0 for the transportation building). The projects include \$5,547,605 (consisting of \$1,807,619 for Lenape High School, \$383,537 for Shawnee High School, \$574,854 for Cherokee High School, \$1,625,270 for Seneca High School, \$394,797 for the Administration Building, \$418,460 for the warehouse and \$343,068 for the transportation building) for school facility construction elements in addition to the facilities efficiency standards developed by the commissioner of education or not otherwise eligible for state support. The board of education is authorized to transfer funds among the projects approved at this election.

**South Hunterdon Regional School District (Hunterdon County ) — APPROVED (after a court-ordered recount)** — The board is seeking to construct a new middle school to house grades 5 to 8 and to make comprehensive improvements to Lambertville Elementary School to provide upgraded facilities for its pre-K to grade four school building, including but not limited to HVAC, electric, plumbing, improvements to ancillary areas and construction of a new entry.

The vote was extremely close: Voters in Lambertville and Stockton overwhelmingly wanted the project to be approved, but voters in West Amwell were against it. The tally stood at 1,773 yes votes, and 1,771 no votes.

The vote was confirmed after a court-ordered recount.

**Total amount: \$33,412,944**

**State funds: \$6,703,993**

**Freehold Regional High School District (Monmouth County) — APPROVED** — The district is seeking approval to repair and to replace selected roofs and to repave and to repair selected drives and parking lots at Colts Neck High School, Freehold Borough High School, Freehold Township High School, Howell High School, Manalapan High School and Marlboro High School, including any related site work. The final eligible costs for the projects approved by the New Jersey Commissioner of Education are \$14,460,000 (consisting of \$4,352,000 for Colts Neck High School, \$588,000 for Freehold Borough High School, \$3,296,000 for Freehold Township High School, \$2,055,000 for Howell High School, \$1,631,000 for Manalapan High School, and \$2,538,000 for Marlboro High School). The board of education is authorized to transfer funds among the projects.

**Total amount: \$14,460,000**

**State funds: \$5,784,000**

**Hamburg Borough Board of Education (Sussex County) — APPROVED** — The board of education is seeking to provide for renovations, alterations and improvements at Hamburg Borough Elementary School, including acquisition and installation of fixtures and equipment, site work and related costs. The board is authorized to transfer funds among the purposes approved at this annual election.

**Total amount: \$4,201,800**

**State funds: \$1,680,720**

**Other Ballot Questions** In four districts, voters acted on questions related to school board composition and board type.

**Greenwich Township (Cumberland County) – APPROVED** –The Greenwich Township Board of Education is asking voters if it should decrease the number of its membership from the current nine-member board of education to a seven-member board.

**Port Republic (Atlantic County) – APPROVED** — The board is asking voters if it should change to a Type II elected board with five members from being a Type I district with members of the board of education appointed by the mayor, pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:9-4*.

**Edgewater Borough (Bergen County) — APPROVED** — The Edgewater School District Board of Education is asking if it should increase the size of its board from five members to seven members to better serve the community by having a greater and more diverse group of representatives.

**Montclair (Essex County) — APPROVED** — The Montclair Township School District has a question on the ballot asking voters if it should be reclassified from a Type I School District, with members of the board of education appointed by the mayor, to a Type II school district, with members of the board of education elected by township voters during regularly-scheduled annual November elections, pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:9-4*.

*This story has been updated to reflect the latest election results.*

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## Quick Links

### Mission Statement

The New Jersey School Boards Association, a federation of boards of education, provides training, advocacy and support to advance public education and promote the achievement of all students through effective governance.

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