



# PORTAGE COUNTY **DEMOCRAT** - SPECIAL EDITION

*Getting Together, Moving Forward Together*

Voters will be asked to vote on five referenda on the November 6th ballot. The Portage County Democratic Party Executive Board voted to endorse all five referenda and to provide information on all five to their membership.

**Notice: You will need to flip the ballot over as 4 of the referenda questions are on the back side.**

## **Referendum #1: Vote Yes to Save the Health Care Center**

Meleesa Johnson

The following story boils down to this: Are you willing to give \$24.48 to save the Portage County Health Care Center?

Two and a half years ago I hadn't a clue about skilled nursing, nor did I fully understand the value that the Portage County Health Care Center (HCC) provided to our central Wisconsin community. I simply knew it as that nursing home atop the small knoll at Water Street and Whiting Avenue. Then I was elected to the County Board and appointed to the Health Care Center Committee. Now I am part of a group fighting to save this critical public service, for not only the elderly and disabled it serve, but also for the jobs of 90 County employees.

A frequent question I get is, "Why does the Health Care Center need saving?" Here is my response:

The HCC (a.k.a.: Portage County Home) has provided skilled nursing & long-term care for over 100 years. It has been in its current location since 1931. It serves 55-65 elderly and disabled residents every day of the year. And over half of those receiving 5-Star rated services are the poorest of our community...they have expended all their Medicare benefits, have no assets and are on Medicaid. This fact, is at the heart of the financial challenges facing the HCC.

Wisconsin is one of the lowest Medicaid reimbursement states in the nation...a terrible distinction. What this means in real dollars is that Medicaid pays just over \$156 per patient per day. The cost of providing sometimes complicated medical care is around double that sum. Historically, that has created a deficit and that deficit has been paid for with county tax dollars. At times over a million dollars of tax dollars were used to cover this funding gap. However, the past several county budgets reduced the amount of tax dollars to just \$100,000...a move that has placed the HCC in grave financial peril.

Since 2001 the County has studied the challenges associated with providing skilled nursing, from understanding the impacts on nursing home beds given more and more seniors "aging in place" to evaluating the degree of taxes used to support our elderly. While some operational recommendations were implemented, very few long-term policy decisions were made.

Fast forward to 2018...indecision, inaction and a diminishment in levy funding has moved the situation of the HCC to a crisis. Some have advocated to wash our hands of providing skilled nursing by selling to a private firm...the private sector can do it faster, cheaper, better they say. Others say a private-public partnership is the answer, but that is just another form of privatization; a system that balances the books on the backs of the workers. But based on a recent St. Norbert's survey, there is a majority of residents in Portage County who support and want to save the HCC.

Recognizing the voices of the majority, the County Board voted unanimously to go to referendum...to ask the voters for their approval to increase the tax levy by \$1.4 million dollars each year for the next four years. The dollars would be used expressly for the operations of the HCC and give the HCC Committee time to develop a sustainable plan for the future of the HCC, some of which is already occurring.

The direct impact to households will be \$24.48 per \$100,000 of assessed value. Imagine paying just \$24.48 to support hundreds and hundreds of our most vulnerable elderly. Just imagine spending the cost of a tank of gas or a manicure to save this jewel, this valuable public service for now and well into the future. With the community connecting its collective resources, we will Save the Portage County Health Care Center. Vote yes on Referendum #1!

## Stevens Point Area Public Schools - Two Referenda

### Wondering what the Stevens Point Area Public School District is up to with two referendum questions on the November ballot?

Since back-to-back failed referendums in 2009 and 2010, the Stevens Point Area Public School District has been systematically and strategically addressing ongoing needs of students, our teachers and our buildings. Beginning in 2016, the District began working with an engineering firm to comprehensively identify the needs of our 20+ facilities that serve over 7,300 students each school day. What the District quickly learned was that the operational and facility needs far outpaced available dollars. We identified over \$150 million in needs. For two years we cut projects out based on feedback from staff, parents, and our community. In late spring 2018 our district administration presented a two question solution to address the identified needs. The School Board voted unanimously to endorse these two questions by sending them to the voters on the November ballot:

#### Question 1: An operational question requesting to exceed the revenue limit on a recurring basis for \$3.5M.

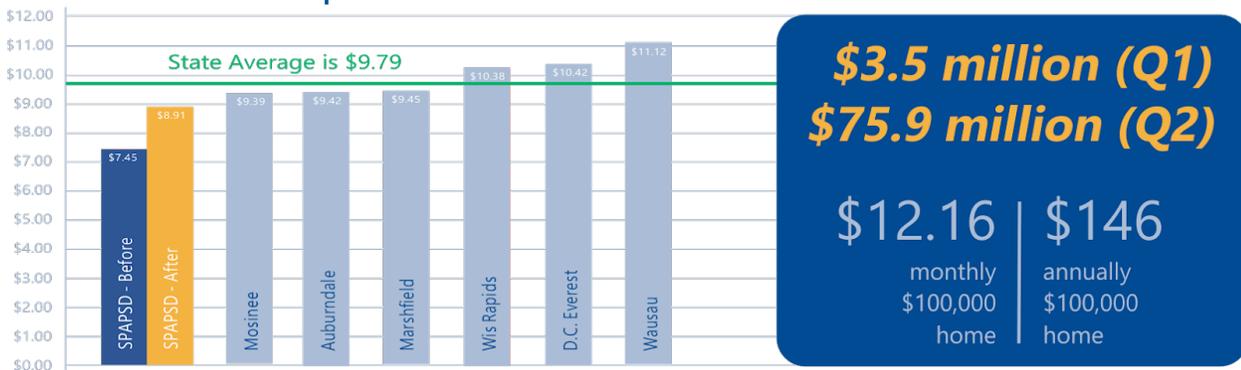
- Fund educational programs and retain staff
- Create an adequate technology budget
- Create a maintenance budget
- 

#### Question 2: A bond question requesting authority to bond (borrow) \$75.9M

- Secure building entrances
- Upgrade video surveillance and communication equipment
- Provide greater equity in learning space needs at the elementary buildings
- Address necessary plumbing, lighting, heating, and ventilation needs
- Address limited remodeling and additions where needed

It is important to know that our district is funded at a significantly lower rate than neighboring communities and has not asked the public for funding beyond the revenue limit since a failed 2010 operational referendum.

### 2017-18 Equalized Mill Rates



If both of our school referenda pass, the District Mill Rate will continue to be the lowest in our area and still well below the state average. The District is working hard to educate our community about the referenda questions and their impact on our educational system. Much more information is available on the District website, [www.PointSchools.net/referendum](http://www.PointSchools.net/referendum). If you wish to discuss this more in person email School Board Member Trish Baker at [pbaker@pointschools.net](mailto:pbaker@pointschools.net) or her personal email at [pbaker2009@att.net](mailto:pbaker2009@att.net).

A group of citizens have formed a group to support the effort to vote yes for the referenda. They can be reached at this Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/VoteYes2BackOurSchools/>

# Medical Marijuana Advisory Referendum

## Here are the facts:

- 30 States and the District of Columbia have legalized medical marijuana.
- Our neighbors- Michigan, Minnesota, Illinois, and Canada have legalized medical marijuana.
- 13 other Wisconsin counties will have similar medical marijuana or full legalization referendums on this November's ballot. This includes the counties of Milwaukee, Dane, Kenosha, Rock, La Crosse, Marathon, Clark, Sauk, Brown, Eau Claire, Langlade, Forest, and Marquette. Many Wisconsin cities are considering as well.
- In October, Canada will implement full legalization of marijuana to be fully regulated and taxed, like alcohol, as a major revenue generator.
- Michigan and Illinois, who already have legalized medical marijuana, are considering highly regulated, full legalization of marijuana as a way to reap the tax benefits to fund aging infrastructure, schools, healthcare centers, and to repair highways, roads, bridges, and fill pot holes.

## Here are THE Reasons to Vote YES on Portage County's Advisory Medical Marijuana Referendum in November

- Epilepsy and seizures
- Crohn's Disease
- Glaucoma
- HIV/AIDS
- ALS aka Lou Gehrig's Disease
- Tourette's Syndrome
- Ulcerative Colitis
- Irritable Bowl Syndrome
- Fibromyalgia
- Alzheimer's Disease
- Anorexia
- Migraines
- Parkinson's Disease
- Sickle Cell Disease
- Cerebral Palsy
- Cystic Fibrosis
- It aids with Terminal Illness/  
And End of Life Care
- Neuropathic Facial Pain
- Muscular Dystrophy
- Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Insomnia
- Anxiety
- Muscle Spasms
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Nausea/Weight loss caused by Chemo  
treatments
- Obesity
- Complications after stroke.
- Alcoholism
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Chronic Pain
- And Opioid Addiction

The current prohibition of medical marijuana restricts people from life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It prevents people from the quality of life they could have if they were given the choice in the care that they wish to receive. Current laws criminalized people that we know and love who are suffering from chronic illness, pain, terminal disease, and addiction without regard to their well being by restricting their freedom of choice and fair access to medicine. If they should get arrested for possessing their medical marijuana, the first time it is a misdemeanor. The second time, it is a felony and they are faced with incarceration, monetary fines, court dates, a permanent record, and potential job loss. It could effect whether they are eligible for auto, home, and student loans, whether or not they can rent an apartment or car, or receive medical insurance. All for possessing a plant that is medically proven to help people survive and thrive while they have the courage to stand up to a disease, illness, or addiction that they did not chose to get. Access to medicine is a fundamental human right. Please vote YES to this November and give voice to the citizens of Portage County, so we can send a message to the State that it is time to Legalize Medical Marijuana.

An **advisory referendum** does not change the law but indicates to the legislature, who does have the ability to change laws, how the voting public thinks about the referendum question.

## **Advisory Referendum – Dark Stores – Tom Mallison**

When big box stores are able to be assessed as if their store was closed (dark) and would need to be remodeled for future use, their assessment goes down. When their assessment goes down, the tax levy is then disproportionately carried by residential and small businesses. The tax apportionment doesn't go down for each taxing jurisdiction, it is just carried by others.

### **NOTICE OF REFERENDUM**

#### **COUNTY OF PORTAGE**

**NOVEMBER 6, 2018**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that at an election to be held in the County of Portage, Wisconsin, on Tuesday, the 6<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2018, the following question will be submitted to a vote of the people:

QUESTION 2: Should the state legislature close the dark store and *Walgreens* tax loopholes and prevent shifting an ever-increasing tax burden to homeowners, small businesses, and other property owners by enacting legislation that: 1). Prohibits using closed, vacant (dark) properties as comparable properties for determining the assessed value of open, occupied, and fully operational properties; and 2). Overturns the 2008 Wisconsin Supreme Court decision in *Walgreens v. City of Madison*, which is being interpreted by the courts as requiring municipalities to assess certain leased commercial properties at a substantial discount, often 50% below the sales prices of such properties?

A copy of the entire text of the resolution directing the submission of the question can be obtained from the office of the Portage County Clerk.

**Acceptable Photo ID will be required to vote at this election. If you do not have a photo ID you may obtain a free ID for voting from the Division of Motor Vehicles.**

Done in the County of Portage, Wisconsin on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2018.

**SHIRLEY M. SIMONIS  
PORTAGE COUNTY CLERK**

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## **2019 PCDP Executive Board Candidates Needed**

The Portage Co Democratic Party is looking for interested members willing to run for positions on our Executive Board. It does involve attending the Executive Board meeting held on the first Tuesday of every month and helping out at events throughout the year. Serving on the Exec Board would give you an excellent background in the operation of our county party. If interested, please contact co-chair Jan Way at [janmway@gmail.com](mailto:janmway@gmail.com) or Gary Hawley at 715-321-0111 before our Nov 13<sup>th</sup> general meeting so that your name can appear on our candidate slate. You may also nominate yourself at the meeting that night. However, no names can be added to the slate after that meeting. Voting will occur at our Dec 11<sup>th</sup> general meeting.

## Calendar Week of October 14

We still need help canvassing and phoning. If you can help, please contact:

Marlo Field, Field Organizer for Ron Kind,  
[marlof@ronkind.org](mailto:marlof@ronkind.org), 612-401-9597;  
or

Dylan Contrino, Wis. Coordinated Campaign Field Director,  
[dylanc@wisdems.org](mailto:dylanc@wisdems.org), 610-844-2995

We'll again be meeting for **Coffee and Conversation** at the Olympic Restaurant on **Wed, Oct 17**, at 10:30 am. Meet us in the back at "our" table to talk progressive politics.

US Senator **Tammy Baldwin** will stop by our HQ for a meet 'n greet on **Wed, Oct 17, at 11:15 am**. The purpose of her visit is to encourage members to help get out the vote by volunteer to canvass or phone. It is a great opportunity to meet her.

The Portage Co **Health Care Center Committee** will meet on **Wed, Oct 17, at 5:15 pm**, at the Portage County Annex. Of particular interest, they will be discussing reducing the number of bed licenses for the center and what to do should the upcoming referendum fail.

There is a reception for **JOSH KAUL**, the Democratic Candidate for Attorney General on **Thurs, Oct 18**, from 5:00 - 7:00 pm at the Point Brewery. Please feel free to drop by anytime to meet this outstanding candidate.

### **Election Debates** on Wis Public TV

#### Gubernatorial Debate

Evers vs Walker

Fri, Oct 19, 8:00 – 9:00 pm

**Sat, Oct 20, Empty Bowls at SPASH; 11 am – 2 pm**

### **SPARTA Book Sale**

Central Wis. Children's Museum

Wed, Oct 17: noon – 7 pm

Thurs, Oct 18: 9 am – 7 pm

Fri, Oct 19: 9 am – 7 pm

Sat, Oct 20: 9 am – 2 pm



Portage County Democratic Party  
2220 Division St.  
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[www.PortageCountyDems.org](http://www.PortageCountyDems.org)

Like us on Facebook: PortageCountyWisconsinDemocrats

Twitter-PortageCoWIDems@portagecowidems

**Vote on November 6th**

then plan to attend our General Meeting  
Tuesday, Nov 13th

Our main speaker, Ed Miller, Professor Emeritus of Political Science, Co-Director of the Center for the Small City at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, and political analyst with the Educational Division of the Wall Street Journal will discuss the results of the Nov. 6<sup>th</sup> elections. Prof Miller will also discuss the implications of these results on the 2020 election.

Authorized and paid for by Portage County Democratic Party