

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: Strategies and Factors Contributing to Passing School Referendums in Indiana

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Indiana School Leaders are sometimes forced to search beyond the traditional funding sources provided by the state. Proposing a school referendum to local voters is one avenue that school districts can utilize in order to add additional revenue for operating expenditures or when growth dictates the building of new buildings or major renovations to current structures. This study provided an examination of strategies and variables contributing to the passing of school referendums in Indiana. This study examined various quantitative variables and what statistical relationships existed in relation to majority passing rates of school referendums in Indiana. Additionally, this study examined qualitative insights from current and former Indiana School Superintendents in relation to referendum campaign strategies. Data sources of the study included longitudinal data from the Center for Education and Evaluation Policy (CEEP), Indiana Census data of 2010, Indiana Department of Education School District data, and superintendent survey data. Correlation and regression models were conducted to analyze if there were any statistical relationships of nineteen independent variables associated with school referendums with referendum passing rates from the years 2008-2019. Variables were isolated into three sectors: School, Referendum and Community and multiple regression models were utilized

among and between these three sectors. Additionally, a fourth sector of political factors was observed throughout the duration of the study.

Of the nineteen variables tested, seven variables were found to have a significant relationship with the dependent variable passing rate. Regression analysis identified the percentage of college graduates living in a community as the strongest statistical relationship. Additionally, other variables including the tax rate of the proposed referendum, the enrollment of the district, the median housing value of the district, the median age of the district, the percentage of English Language Learners in the district, and the total population of the district were as statistically significant in correlation studies. Variables including the timing of the referendum, the total amount of the project, and several other variables showed significant relationships when observed in isolated analyses. This study also drew upon qualitative data from four local school superintendents to provide further insights and strategies for school districts seeking to propose a referendum. Specific insights on the referendum campaign, political factors and other strategies that they found paramount to a successful referendum process was also explored.