

Voters approve W. Aurora school referendum

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AURORA – By a slim margin, it appears that voters have approved West Aurora School District’s referendum for a 50-cent increase in the district’s operating fund.

According to unofficial results, 4,608 residents voted “yes,” and 4,435 residents voted “no” – a 173 vote margin.

“I don’t know why it was so close,” said Debbie Nardone, chairwoman of the West Aurora Volunteers for Education referendum committee. “You still have people on the fence, and we’re all taxed to death. People were exercising their right to vote.”

Nevertheless, Nardone was pleased that the referendum passed.

“Those kids are going to have more successful opportunities next year and the years ahead,” she said.

In the race for West Aurora School Board, incumbent board members Allan Rhea and Allyson “Sonni” Herget won re-election. Newcomers James Toynton and Angela Smith also won seats on the board.

The district projected a \$1.9 million deficit for its 2006-07 fiscal year. Board members approved the budget in June.

Before Tuesday’s vote, an operating fund rate increase had not been approved since 1988. The district has added 5,000 students since the last operating fund referendum.

The money will pay for new materials, building maintenance and repair, technology, security, staffing, utilities, and portable classrooms to relieve overcrowding.

The district recently sent reduction-in-force notification letters to 128 staff members, including 44 non-tenured teachers.

Custodians, teacher’s aides, and bus monitors were among the other staff members who received notices.

Along with staff members being let go for performance and efficiency reasons, the district also considered cuts if the referendum didn’t pass.

According to the district, the owner of a \$100,000 home would pay an additional \$167 next year in taxes if the referendum was approved.