United South Central School District
NEWS RELEASE

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Balancing Educational Needs and Financial Responsibility: USC's Proposed Bond Referendum

Wells, Minnesota – As United South Central (USC) School District residents prepare to vote on the proposed $22.9 million bond referendum on November 3, the district is sharing information about the financial considerations that helped shape the proposal, including state tax relief, community feedback, and long-term value for taxpayers.

Throughout the development of the proposed plan, the School Board worked to balance identified educational and facility needs with the financial impact on taxpayers. Enrollment growth, limited classroom space, and competing demands for existing facilities have created challenges for the district. Working closely with financial advisors, the district evaluated how those needs could be addressed while considering both the immediate and long-term financial implications.

One significant factor is Minnesota's Ag2School Tax Credit. Approximately 54% of the USC School District consists of agricultural land that qualifies for the credit. Based on the proposed $22.9 million bond, the state will cover approximately $12.4 million of the total bond cost through this program. This state support was an important consideration in evaluating the financial impact of the proposed investment.

Community feedback influenced the final proposal as well. Through a scientific survey, residents were asked to review a potential plan, consider its cost, and indicate their level of support. Following the survey, the district further refined the proposal, reducing the overall cost by nearly $3 million before the School Board approved placing the $22.9 million referendum on the ballot.

The district also considered how the proposed improvements could serve multiple needs over time. Additional early learning and elementary classrooms would help address enrollment pressures while opening existing space for high school programs. A proposed multi-purpose space would accommodate required physical education classes, student activities, events, and community use. These improvements are intended to provide flexibility as enrollment and educational programs grow and change.

While the Ag2School credit would provide substantial state support, the financial impact of the referendum would vary among individual property owners based on property type and valuation. Additional state programs, including Minnesota's Homestead Credit Refund Program, also known as the Property Tax Refund, can also provide relief for eligible homeowners. Residents can access resources through the district's referendum website to estimate their potential property tax impact, learn about available tax relief programs, and review the proposed improvements.

The November 3 referendum will determine whether the district is authorized to issue bonds to fund the proposed facility improvements. The district encourages all eligible voters to learn more about the proposal and participate in the November 3 election.

Residents do not need to wait until November 3 to cast their ballots. Absentee voting began September 18, with options to vote in person or by mail. In-person voting is available through November 2, and ballots can be requested by mail for those who prefer to vote from home. Information about voting locations, hours, and absentee ballot procedures is available at www.uscgrowingstrong.com/election-information.

For additional information about the proposed referendum, including project details, tax impact estimates, and available tax relief programs, residents are encouraged to visit www.uscgrowingstrong.com or contact Superintendent Taylor Topinka at (507) 553-3134 or at ttopinka@unitedsouthcentral.org.