

Ranger Nation Strong Foundation

Investing in Crosby-Ironton Schools

NOVEMBER 2025 OPERATING LEVY REFERENDUM



Rick Aulie, Superintendent

Date 2025

Our Commitment to Every Student

Vision: Empowering students for lifelong success.

With a proud tradition, strong identity, and dedicated staff, Crosby-Ironton Schools provides a high-quality, well-rounded education through:

- Strong academics and engaging electives
- Hands-on career and technical education programs
- A variety of extracurriculars and athletics that promote leadership and teamwork
- Support services that foster academic, social, and emotional growth



Understanding Our Challenges

Growing costs, limited state support.



- **Like many school districts,** we face growing financial challenges due to the rising cost of education, inflation, and 20 years of underfunding from the state.
- **Unlike 70% of MN districts,** Crosby-Ironton Schools doesn't have a voter-approved operating levy to help fund day-to-day operations.

Understanding Our Challenges

We cannot maintain excellence with ongoing budget cuts.

- **After unsuccessful referendums in 2023 and 2024**, we had to make more than \$1 million in budget cuts—reducing staff, electives, and extracurriculars.
- **Despite stretching every dollar, we face a \$1 million deficit** that is projected to grow to \$1.5 million within 5 years.



Without additional funding, we cannot sustain the quality education our community expects and our students deserve.

The Plan: Investing in Crosby-Ironton Schools

A Community Investment in the Future of our District



On **Tuesday, November 4, 2025**, district voters will decide whether to approve an operating levy that would provide **\$1.5 million annually for ten years** to protect quality education in Crosby-Ironton.

What is an Operating Levy?

An operating levy is a local, voter-approved property tax that provides additional funding for the day-to-day costs of running a school district, such as:



Teacher and staff salaries



Classroom supplies and activities



Student support services



Academic programs and electives



Routine building maintenance + utilities



Implementation of state mandates

Most agricultural land and seasonal recreation properties are exempt.

The Plan: Investing in Crosby-Ironton Schools

A Community Investment in the Future of our District

- **If approved by voters**, the proposed operating levy would stabilize our budget and allow us to continue providing the opportunities our students deserve.
- **This plan is based on community input, lessons from past referendums, and careful planning**—including reviewing enrollment trends, long-term financial projections, and the cumulative impact of recent budget cuts.



If the Referendum is **Approved...**

If approved by voters, the operating levy would generate stable funding to:



- ✓ Restore the **district's fund balance** to 7% or higher.
- ✓ Maintain **manageable class sizes**.
- ✓ **Attract and retain talented staff**.
- ✓ **Sustain elective courses** and provide **adequate classroom supplies and materials** for teachers.
- ✓ **Preserve student support services**.
- ✓ Keep our **buildings and grounds** safe, clean, and well maintained.
- ✓ Continue offering a **wide variety of extracurricular programs**.
- ✓ **Provide stability** so that educators can focus on instruction instead of responding to constant cuts.

If the Referendum Fails...

On August 25, 2025, the School Board approved a plan for nearly **\$1 million in cuts** if the referendum is not approved. These reductions would significantly impact students, including:

✗ Online & College in the Schools (CIS) Contracts:

- Infinity (Online)
- Bemidji State University (CIS)

✗ Six Full-Time Employees:

- 1 Elementary Teacher
- 1 High School Science Teacher
- 1 Family & Consumer Science (FACS) Teacher
- 1 Music Teacher
- 1 Foreign Language & Work-Based Teacher
- 1 High School Custodian

✗ Reduce One School Counselor Position to Half-Time

✗ Suspend All Purchases of Curriculum and Instructional Supplies

✗ Defund all Extra-Curricular Activities:

- **Sports 100% Defunded:** Football, Volleyball, Cross-Country, Tennis, Boys/Girls Basketball, Dance, Wrestling, Track, Baseball, Softball, Boys/Girls Golf
- **Activities 100% Defunded:** Band/Choir during day, Knowledge Bowl, National Honor Society, Prom, Robotics, SALT, Special Olympics, Strength & Conditioning, Student Council, Yearbook

Why the Referendum Matters

Strong communities need strong schools.

A THRIVING SCHOOL DISTRICT:

- Attracts new families + businesses
- Supports the local economy
- Improves property values
- Strengthens overall quality of life



When schools lose teachers, programs, and services, it doesn't just hurt students—it impacts the whole community.

Taxpayer Impact

A fiscally responsible plan to protect quality education.

If voters approve the referendum, the operating levy would be supported by a property tax increase starting in 2026 and expiring after 10 years.



A \$400,000 home (about the district median) would see an estimated tax impact of about \$26 per month.



Use the tax calculator to calculate your specific property tax impact: RangerNationStrongFoundation.org/TaxImpact.

Vote on or Before November 4

There are three ways to vote on the referendum:



Vote early by mail starting Friday, Sept. 19 through Monday, Nov. 3: Absentee ballots will be available at the Crow Wing County Historical Courthouse (326 Laurel Street in Brainerd) on weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.



Vote early in-person at the County Elections Office at the Courthouse on Saturday, Nov. 1 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Monday, Nov. 3, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Vote in-person on Election Day — Tuesday, November 4: Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. at four combined polling places.

Visit RangerNationStrongFoundation.org/vote for more information.

Learn More & Stay Connected

Visit our referendum website and submit a comment or question using the Connect Form.

RangerNationStrongFoundation.org

Follow Crosby-Ironton Schools on:

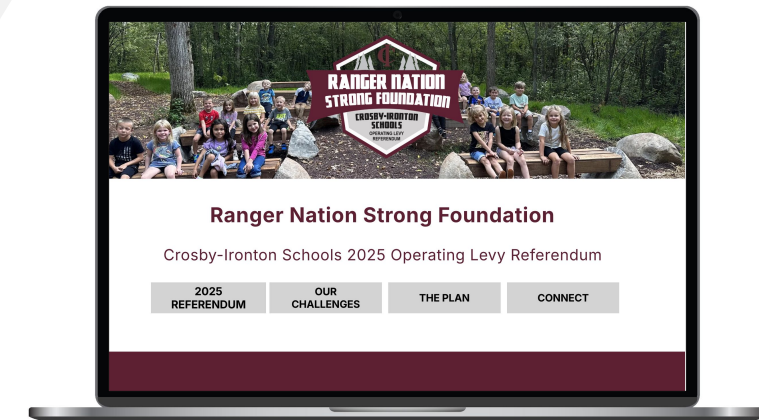
 @CrosbyIrontonSchools

 @isd182ci

 @cischooldist

Reach out to Superintendent Rick Aulie

at rick.aulie@ci.k12.mn.us or 218-545-8817.



RangerNationStrongFoundation.org

Questions?

Thank you for being a part of this important community decision for the future of Crosby-Ironton Schools!

