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Funding Obstacles Remain for Public Safety Services
Referendums Serve as Band-Aids for Broken Funding System

MADISON – At the August Primary, voters in Kenosha passed a referendum that asked property taxpayers to help pay for underfunded public safety services. According to the Wisconsin Elections Commission, Kenosha was one of nine referendums on public safety across the state. In the Spring Election, eight municipalities in Wisconsin held referendums in order to continue funding police and fire/EMS services including the: Village of Butler, City of Fort Atkinson, Village of Pleasant Prairie, Village of Melvina, City of Algoma, City of Seymour, Village of Browntown and the City of Washburn.

“Local property taxpayers are facing an ever-increasing burden in ensuring their communities have the public safety services they deserve, and we need state legislators to join us in fixing this broken funding system which is overly reliant on property taxes,” said League Executive Director Jerry Deschane. “While state tax revenues have tripled in the last 30 years and inflation is rising above 8 percent, the share of state taxes going to support police, fire, EMS and other local services has actually decreased. Our local communities cannot rely on temporary Band-Aids and referendums to fund critical local services, and we remain committed to working with the legislative and executive branch to help address the broken system of funding local governments.”

A recent Wisconsin Department of Revenue, “Net New Construction 2022,” report shows that most communities will be limited to approximately a 1% increase in the community’s ability to provide police, fire, and other critical local services to their residents despite inflation increasing costs by more than 8%. Wisconsin is the only state in the country that funds critical first responder services largely from property taxes. Nearly 80 percent of the emergency medical services in Wisconsin are owned, operated, or supported by city, village, and town governments.

Read more about how state lawmakers can fix the system for how local governments are funded in this month’s edition of the League’s “*The Municipality*” magazine [here](#).

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The League of Wisconsin Municipalities advocates for Wisconsin’s cities and villages, large and small, urban and rural, speaking up for local democracy and common-sense citizen-led government. Learn more at <http://www.lwm-info.org/>