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"SUPERIOR  
SCHOOL BOND  
RESEARCH STUDY  
1993"

by

Jerrold M. Peterson

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Dr. Jerrold M. Peterson, Acting Director  
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## **SUPERIOR SCHOOL BOND RESEARCH STUDY 1993**

**by  
Jerrold M. Peterson Ph.D.**

The protocol for the Superior School district Bond Issue survey required that a random sample be drawn from the 20667 voters who registered to vote in the 1992 presidential election. A complete listing of all voters was obtained from the city of Superior and all out lying Towns and villages. The random sample drew 321 names from this voter list with the objective of reaching at least 220 from this list. If this number of voters were reached then the survey confidence level of including voters likely to appear in the April 6, 1993 referendum. A survey instrument consisting of 22 objective and one open ended question was developed and used (See Appendix Voter Survey). The survey was administered over four separate nights from 5 to 8 P.M. in the evening beginning on Monday March 1 through March 4. During this period of time 321 calls were made to reach 221 identified voters. From this sample 91 voters agreed to participate in and completed the survey. The response rate for the survey is 41.18 percent.

### **RESULTS**

The results of the survey are shown on the provided Survey Form. The demographics of the sample show that 85.7 % of the respondents live in a single family home with an average age of 47.58 years. Of the sample, 40.0% had school age children at home 60.0% did not have school age children or did not respond to the question. Analysing question 5 along with question 4 we find that as many as 54.0 % of our sample may have some direct interest in the referendum since that is the percentage of respondents that had school relatives in the Superior School district.

Questions 6 through 9 were aimed at determining the knowledge of the issue that the average voter has on the bond issue. From question 6, we find that only 37.36 % of the respondents new the magnitude of the proposed bond issue. Only 38.46 % of the Superior respondents were aware that the state would subsidize a significant portion of principle and interest payments of the new bonds if issued. However, more voters were aware of that the bonding issue would construct two new schools with 58.24 percent

responding correctly to this question. In addition, 58.24 percent of the survey participants also knew that the bonding issue if passed would expand the elementary classroom space.

Questions 10 through 15 were aimed at assessing Superior voters knowledge on issues surrounding the bond referendum. The answer to question 10 provided a base line for the remaining questions in this set. Question 10 was aimed at determining the survey participants knowledge about the condition of the district's buildings if the bond issue passes. The average response was 1.55; with a value of 1.00 indicating no change and a value of 2.00 significantly improved. Thus most voters believe that the bond issue if passed will improve the physical facilities of the district. In question 11, the survey was exploring the survey participants knowledge of the impact of the bond issue on elementary and secondary education. The average response for this question was 1.64, with 1.00 being improved and 2.00 being the same. Survey participants appear to know that the improved facilities will improve education. In question 12, the survey was trying to determine voters knowledge of the level of Superior's property taxes. Recent studies have shown that Superior's property taxes are significantly below other Wisconsin cities; answer "c" with a value of 3.00. The survey's average response is 1.36 indicating that most survey participants feel that their property taxes are significantly above other Wisconsin cities. In addition, the survey found that participants felt their taxes would go up moderately if the bond issue passed. The average value of this response was 1.99 with 2.00 being "b" or moderate increase. In question 14, the survey assessed the participants knowledge of the most important issue of the bond activity. The participants are split on this question as indicated by the average response value of 1.41; with 1.00 being "a" improved schools and 2.00 "b" being higher taxes. It should be noted that several participant chose no opinion "c" and this carried a value of "0". Finally, the survey asked whether the participants had enough information to make the judgments about the issue. This question was asked in question 15 of the survey. A majority of the participants felt they had enough information but a significant minority felt they had too little; the average score on this question was 2.42 or between "b" and "c".

In the remainder of the survey we determined understanding of the economic and educational issues are on the bond issue. In question 16, we found that the sample believed that the Superior economy was only a little stronger in 1992 than it is in 1991. This suggests that the Superior voters might be extremely sensitive to potential tax changes particularly if they can't identify the direct educational benefits of these changes. In questions 17 we find that the sample feels that the building program is important. However, questions 18 and 19 indicate that the participants are not aware of the details of program. Only 31.9 percent of the participants knew the location of the proposed new Bryant school and only 28.6 percent knew the location of the proposed east end school. In question 20, the survey is further refining the participants knowledge of the building program. The response variables ranged from 1.18 to 1.67 with "0" being no, 1.00 being

yes and 2.00 being don't know. If the bonding issue passes the correct answer to all the listed parts of the program is yes. The participants of the survey do not know the details of the program but for a significant but unknown minority it doesn't matter. In question 21, the survey participants were asked to rank order their priorities for the district with smaller class size being ranked first and improved library being ranked last. Finally, in question 22, the survey participants were asked to determine the most important issue in determining their vote on the bonding referendum. They responded with 54.55 percent saying quality of education, 31.82 percent saying affordability issue and thus taxes, and 13.64 percent had no opinion. Significantly, participants felt that the location of the proposed building and renovation was not an issue.

**TABLE 1  
SAMPLE SUPERIOR BOND 1993**

	1992 PRESIDENT	PERCENT	SAMPLE
SUPERIOR	17226	83.35%	183
OAKLAND	572	2.77%	6
TOWN OF OLIVER	153	0.74%	2
TOWN OF SUMMIT	646	3.13%	7
TOWN OF PARKLAND	653	3.16%	7
VILLAGE OF SUPERIOR	306	1.48%	3
TOWN OF SUPERIOR	1111	5.38%	12
TOTAL	20667	100.00%	220

SOURCE: SUPERIOR AND AREA VOTING REGISTRATION

SUPERIOR PRIMARY 2787	16.18%
SAMPLE SIZE 95% CONFIDENCE	207

# VOTER SURVEY

## Superior School Bond Research Study

PHONE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_ 321 \_\_\_\_\_

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a researcher at the University of Minnesota Duluth. I am conducting a survey for the Bureau of Business and Economic Research UMD. As an unbiased observer, the research bureau has been commissioned by the Superior Board of Education to determine the voter's level of understanding on the April 6 school bond referendum in your area. As part of this activity we are conducting a survey of a random sampling of Superior households, who are likely to vote, in this election to determine how well informed they are on this subject. Your household has been randomly selected to represent your area of the district. None of your answers will be associated with your particular household, but will be totaled into a profile of voters in your precinct. This survey consists of 22 questions and will take about 6 to 8 minutes of your time. THE PROJECT DIRECTOR IS DR. JERROLD PETERSON OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA DULUTH.

(91) (130)

1) Would you be willing to participate in this survey? A) yes B) no IF NO, THEN THANK CALLER AND HANG UP. OTHERWISE CONTINUE.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

IN THIS SET OF QUESTIONS WE ARE TRYING TO DETERMINE THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTER OF OUR SAMPLE.

2) In what type of housing do you live? I will give you four choices. Do you live in: a) single family dwelling? b) Duplex? c) Apartment? d) other  
ASK THEM TO EXPLAIN (85.71%) (4.41%) (9.89%)

3) Would you please give me your age at your last birthday? (47.58)

4) Does your family currently have any school age children? A) yes B) no  
(40.0%)

5) Does your household have relatives with any school age children in the Superior School district living at another address? A) yes (54.0%)

### KNOWLEDGE

IN THIS SECTION OF THE SURVEY WE ARE TRYING TO DETERMINE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INFORMATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO INFORM THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE BOND ISSUE. THEREFORE, IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER OR CAN'T REMEMBER PLEASE SAY SO. THIS WILL PROVIDE US VALUABLE INFORMATION. IN EACH OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS FOUR CHOICES WILL BE PROVIDED. OF THESE CHOICES "UNKNOWN" WILL ALWAYS BE AVAILABLE

6) The current Superior Bond issue if passed would allow the Superior School District to issue up to a) \$13,500,000 b) \$6,500,000 c) \$23,500,000 d) unknown in bonds. (37.36%)

7) If the current bond issue passes, the state of Wisconsin would pay approximately what percent of the principle and interest on the bond? a) 60 percent b) 40 percent c) 0 percent d) an unknown (38.46%)

8) If the current bond issue passes, it would have provided how many totally new schools for the Superior school district? a) one b) two c) four d) unknown. (58.24%)

9) If the current bond issues passes, then elementary classroom space will be a) the same b) less c) greater. (58.24%)

### PERCEPTION

IN THIS SECTION OF THE SURVEY, WE ARE TRYING TO DETERMINE THE VOTERS' LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING ON QUESTIONS SURROUNDING THE BONDING ISSUE. FOUR CHOICES WILL BE PROVIDED TO EACH QUESTION AND "NO OPINION" WILL ALWAYS BE AVAILABLE.

10) If the current bond issues passes, the overall condition of the districts buildings will be: a=1, b=2, c=0 (1.55)

A) About the same as now B) significantly improved C) don't know

11) If the bond referendum passes and the building plan is implimented the quality of Superior's elementary and secondary education would A) improve B) remain the same C) deteriorate D) no opinion

a=1,b=2,c=3, d=4 (1.64)

12) From your knowledge, Superior's property taxes in comparison to other Wisconsin cities currently ranks A) significantly above B) average C) significantly below D) no opinion other cities

a=1,b=2, c=3,d=0; (1.36)

13) From your knowledge, if the bond referendum passes your property taxes would go up A) significantly B) moderately C) only slightly D) no opinion

a=1, b=2, c=3, d=0; (1.99)

14) From your knowledge, the most significant issue in this bond referendum is: A) improvement of schools B) higher taxes C) no opinion

a=1, b=2, c=3, d=4; (1.41)

15) Regardless of how you plan to vote on the issue during the referendum, do you feel that you have enough information on the issue? A) too much B) enough C) too little D) no opinion

a=1, b=2, c=3, d=4; (2.42)

#### PRIORITIES

SINCE VOTER'S ECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL PRIORITIES MAY AFFECT THE VOTING PATTERN IN THIS SECTION WE WILL TRY TO DETERMINE IMPORTANT VOTER ECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL PRIORITIES ON THE ISSUE.

IN THIS SECTION, QUESTIONS WILL BE PROVIDED WITH SEVERAL CHOICES INCLUDING "NO OPINION" FOR THE LAST FIVE QUESTIONS OF THE SURVEY.

16) Was Superior's economy stronger in 1992 relative to 1991?

A) stronger B) no change C) weaker D) no opinion

a=1, b=2, c=3, d=4; (2.22)

17) From your knowledge, the most important aspect of the building plan is A) the improvements to the high school B) the building of the new Bryant school C) the building of a new east end school D) all of the above

a=1,b=2,c=3,d=4; (2.96)



18) If the current bond issue passes, two new elementary schools will be built: A new Bryant school and a new east end school. Do you know the location of the proposed new Bryant school? A) yes B) no

(31.9%)

19 )Do you know the location of the proposed new east end school?

A) yes B) no

(28.6%)

20) If the bond issue passes, the proposed improvements to the Superior Senior High include the following: (please answer "yes" or "no" or "don't know")

a=1, b=2, c=2

New vocational area A) yes B) no C) don't know (1.33)

Large gr instructional facility A) yes B) no C) don't know (1.35)

Expanded library A) yes B) no C) don't know (1.18)

New computer lab A) yes B) no C) don't know (1.28)

Classroom space for 9th gr A) yes B) no C) don't know (1.30)

All of the above A) yes B) no C) don't know (1.67)

21) Please rank in your order of priority from 1 to 4 Superior Schools greatest needs. (important caller read all the choices first and then again)

(1.80) \_\_\_\_\_ smaller classes

(2.34) \_\_\_\_\_ teach using high technology such as computers

(2.55) \_\_\_\_\_ upodated high school vocational classes

(3.14) \_\_\_\_\_ improved school libraries

22) From your knowledge, which of these issues will be the most important in your vote on this referendum? A) quality of school facilities (54.55%)

B) affordability of the bond issue (31.82%) C) the proposed location of the new or renovated schools (0.0%) D) no opinion or none of the above (13.63%)

Do you have any additional comments you would like to add?

This concludes our survey. I would like to thank you for your cooperation and participation in this survey. Good evening.