

## I. General Instructions

The following is a general overview of the steps necessary to submit referendum exceptions to the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Exceptions for budget year 2017-2018 must be submitted online no later than March 2, 2017.

1. Register for access to the Referendum Exception System (RES) application. See [Help and Support](#) documentation on website for assistance with creating a username/password or registering for RES.
2. After logging in to RES via the PDE website, users are taken to the *Contact Information* screen to add or modify user contact data. Update as necessary and click the ‘Save’ button to update contact data.

**School District Contact Details**

\*Indicates mandatory field

\*Title

\*First Name

Middle Initial

\*Last Name

Suffix

\*Position Title

\*Phone Number  -  -  Extn

\*Fax Number  -  -

\*E-mail Address 1

E-mail Address 2

3. Continue to *Status of Referendum Exceptions* screen either by clicking the ‘Exceptions’ link at top of page or ‘Proceed to Exceptions’ button below contact information. (This will occur automatically after saving Contact Details.)

**Note:** Users will be unable to access the *Status of Referendum Exceptions* screen until the application is open.

Click on the link for the specific referendum exception to review/complete.

<b>Preliminary Budget Submitted</b>	<b>Tax Rate Over Index</b>	<b>Advertisement Date (Section 333(j)(2))</b>
Yes	Yes	<input type="text"/> ..

**Status of Referendum Exceptions**

Exception Name	Amount Available	Request Exception	Amount Requested	Exception Status
School Construction - A (Grandfathered Debt)		<input type="checkbox"/>		Not Started
School Construction - B (Electoral Debt)		<input type="checkbox"/>		Not Started
Special Education Expenditures		<input type="checkbox"/>		Not started
Retirement Contributions		<input type="checkbox"/>		Not Started
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 0</b>		<b>\$ 0</b>	
<b>Total Amount of Approved PDE Exceptions</b>			<b>\$ 0</b>	

4. When finished with an exception, click the ‘Save Complete’ button to perform calculations run validations.
5. Return to the *Status of Referendum Exceptions* screen and continue to complete additional exceptions as necessary.
6. When all referendum exceptions to be submitted have a status of Completed, select the exceptions to submit to PDE by clicking on the “Request Exception” checkbox next to each. This adds the allowable exception amount in the “Amount Available” column to the “Amount Requested” column.
7. Click the ‘Save’ button to save the current configuration of exceptions to be submitted.
8. Verify that advertisement was made at least one week prior to clicking ‘Submit to PDE’ button by entering date of advertisement in appropriate field near the top of the screen.
9. Click the ‘Submit to PDE’ button at bottom of screen.

**Note:** The ‘Submit to PDE’ button will be disabled until the 2017-2018 Preliminary General Fund Budget has been submitted to PDE pursuant to the instructions found at [www.education.pa.gov](http://www.education.pa.gov). In addition, the real estate tax rate adopted with the preliminary budget **must** be in excess of the school district’s index to permit submission of referendum exceptions.

10. After 'Submit to PDE' button has been clicked, user is automatically redirected to *Summary of Referendum Exceptions* screen.

**Note:** After the 'Submit to PDE' button has been clicked, the user is locked out and cannot edit or resubmit exception data. Contact PDE for assistance.

11. Print "Summary of Referendum Exceptions" signature document, obtain superintendent's signature, and mail to address indicated on form.

**Note:** A new, signed "Summary of Referendum Exceptions" is required after *any* change to submitted data during PDE's review of referendum exceptions.

A detailed walkthrough of each exception can be found starting on the next page.

## II. Detailed Walkthrough

The following pages provide additional details to assist school districts with their submission of referendum exceptions to PDE.

Below are the three categories of referendum exceptions that may be submitted to PDE.

1. School Construction
2. Special Education Expenditures
3. Retirement Contributions

Some exceptions will require data to be entered in order for the exception to be calculated; others will automatically load information available to or calculated by PDE and will only require the user to view the data before saving the exception as Complete.

As stated in Section I, referendum exceptions cannot be submitted prior to submission of the 2017-2018 Preliminary General Fund Budget in the Consolidated Financial Reporting System (CFRS), as the exception approval process requires data from the submitted preliminary budget.

**PDE must receive the signed “Summary of Referendum Exceptions” document via e-mail or surface mail before submission of referendum exceptions is considered complete and approval can occur. Faxed copies are not permitted.**

Questions or concerns should be immediately addressed to PDE staff at [ra-RES@pa.gov](mailto:ra-RES@pa.gov) or the telephone numbers below:

***Division of Subsidy Data and Administration***

*(717) 787-5423, option 5 (non-construction exceptions)*

Valecia Pierce, Section Chief, Subsidy Administration Section

Jonathan Hollenbach

Mark Cimino

***Division of Budget and School Facilities***

*(717) 787-5480 (School construction only)*

James Grant

### 1. School Construction

Due to the large amount of data required to be entered for the two school construction exceptions, the “Save Incomplete” button should be periodically clicked to save data. Upon successful completion of all required data entry, the ‘Save Complete’ button should be clicked to calculate the allowable referendum exception.

**Backup documentation relating to school construction exceptions must be submitted to PDE either electronically to [ra-RES@pa.gov](mailto:ra-RES@pa.gov) or via surface mail; PDE must receive documentation within three (3) days of online submission. Details pertaining to required backup documentation can be found on the PDE website in the [Referendum Exception Guidelines](#).**

a) Grandfathered Debt (Form A)

Data entry for the grandfathered debt exception requires information for each issue/note/loan incurred prior to the effective date of Special Session Act 1 of 2006 or any subsequent refinancing of grandfathered indebtedness. (The effective date depends on whether the school district opted to participate in Act 72 of 2004.)

Users are required to enter *every* original or refinancing issue/note/loan for which the district 1) made payments in 2016-2017 or 2) is budgeting to make payments in 2017-2018.

b) Electoral Debt (Form B)

As with the grandfathered debt exception, data entry is similar in nature. However, in order to request this exception, electoral debt must have already been approved by voters in the school district.

2. Special Education

There is no data entry required for this exception.

Annual Financial Report (AFR) data is automatically populated into RES for 2014-2015 and 2015-2016.

User must click 'Save Complete' to calculate allowable exception.

3. Retirement Contributions

Enter the total salary base, federally funded salary base, and the state retirement subsidy (function 7820) for 2016-2017 and 2017-2018.

2016-2017 data should be based on the most updated salary data for the fiscal year; 2017-2018 data should be based on the school district's recently adopted preliminary budget. Note: pursuant to Act 25 of 2011, salaries eligible for the Retirement Contributions exception for 2017-2018 will be capped at an amount not greater than 2011-2012 (this will automatically occur in RES).

The amount of retirement expenditures (object 230) will be calculated using pre-populated PSERS contribution rates for each year – 30.03% for 2016-2017 and 32.57% for 2017-2018.

The following parameters must be followed and are validated within RES:

- For school districts with an MV/PI aid ratio less than 0.5000, 7820 revenue must be exactly 50% of expenditures.
- For school districts with an MV/PI aid ratio greater than or equal to 0.5000, 7820 revenue should be the sum of 50% of the expenditures for 'existing' employees and the aid ratio percentage of the expenditures for 'new' employees.

After all required data has been entered, the user must click 'Save Complete' to calculate allowable exception.

### III. Useful Tips

Below are some general tips to assist users in the RES application.

1. The  button will always return the user to the previously visited screen.
2. Always use the TAB key to move between data entry fields. Pressing the ENTER key is the same as clicking the Save Complete button. Users should treat RES as any other website and exercise normal internet protocols regarding navigation and functionality.
3. When entering data, never enter commas or decimals (for currency); RES will automatically format cells upon clicking the 'Save Incomplete' or 'Save Complete' buttons.
4. The 'Save Incomplete' button may be used when data needs to be saved but the user wishes to leave and come back later to finish entering/reviewing data. Clicking this button will perform some validations, calculations and field formatting; some fields are required in order to save incomplete, such as project name and financing details description.
5. The 'Save Complete' button performs all field-level validations and formatting. The “**Record saved successfully**” message indicates that all validations have passed and that sufficiently correct data has been entered for the allowable exception to be calculated.
6. The RES application may time-out after a period of inactivity. Users that must walk away from their computer should always save or logoff from the PDE website as data may be lost if the application is left unattended for a long period of time.
7. Never wait to report a problem to PDE. Always assume no other school district has notified PDE of a glitch or other abnormal occurrence with the RES application.