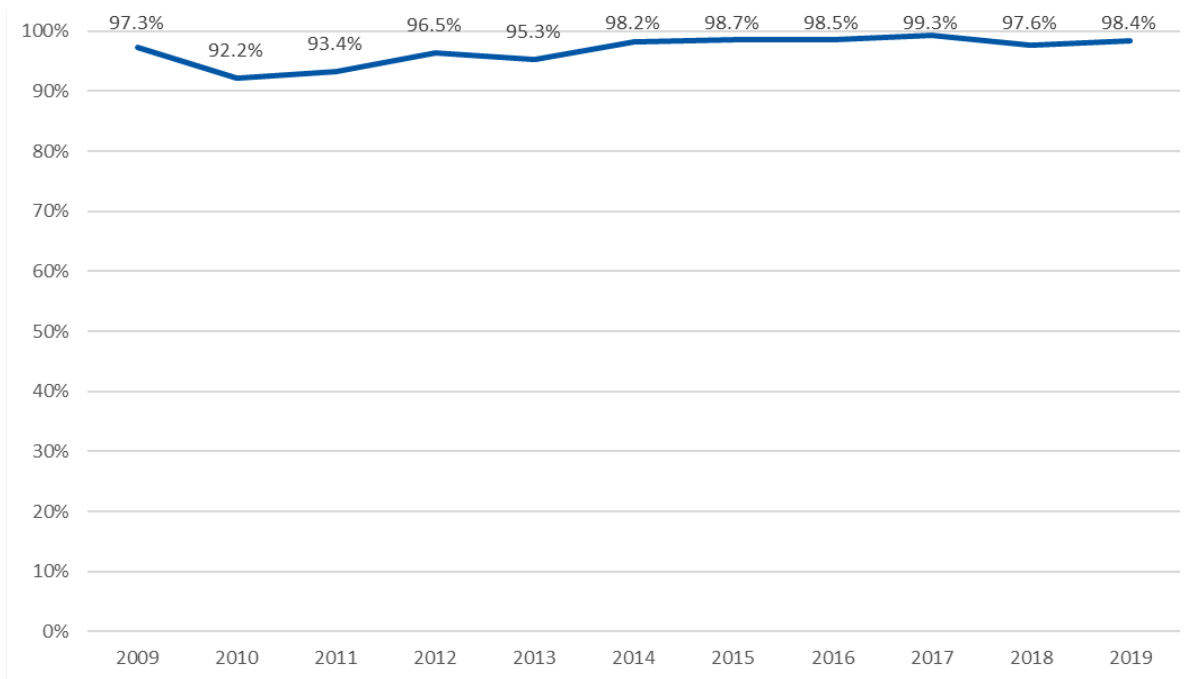


98 Percent of School Budgets Pass

On May 21, communities across New York State voted on proposed school district budgets for the 2019-20 academic year. Budget approval remained strong, as 98.4 percent of budgets passed, a slight uptick from last year. Most of the defeated budgets looked to override the tax cap, which requires 60 percent supermajority approval for passage. This analysis is based on school budget vote results in the 668 fiscally independent major school districts.

Figure 1 shows overall passage rates for each of the past 10 years. This is the sixth consecutive year where the approval rate was over 97 percent.

Figure 1. Overall Passage Rates by Year, 2009-2019



Ninety-seven percent of school districts proposed 2019-20 budgets that stayed within the tax cap. Voters approved 99.5 percent of budgets with proposed levy increases that complied with their tax cap limits. Figure 2 lists the three school districts that were unable to meet the required majority support for their budgets.

2019 SCHOOL BUDGET VOTE ANALYSIS

Figure 2. Defeated Budgets Requiring Majority Support (Under Levy Limit)

School District	Region	Share of Yes Vote
Altmar-Parish-Williamstown	Central New York	44.4%
Brockport	Finger Lakes	46.2%
Owego-Apalachin	Southern New York	44.5%

School districts with defeated budget proposals can propose a budget for the June re-vote. They have the option of creating a new budget or putting forth the same budget they proposed in May. If they are unable to pass a budget in June, they are required to adopt a contingency budget for the 2019-20 school year. Contingency budgets require school districts to maintain the same levy as they had in the prior year, along with additional restrictions on spending. While very few school districts end up with contingency budgets in a given year, the restrictions are often a burden on student learning and opportunity.

While school budgets that include levy increases that are at or under the tax cap only require a simple majority for approval, exceeding the levy limit needs 60 percent supermajority approval. For the May vote, 18 school districts proposed override budgets and 10 passed. Of the defeated budgets, four received majority support that didn't clear the 60 percent threshold.

Figure 3 shows district specific override results. Districts marked with an asterisk (*) had negative tax caps, which means their maximum allowable tax cap for 2019-20 is less than what they levied for school year 2018-19. Research has documented that school districts experience financial stress when faced with a negative tax cap. Voters approved five of the seven proposed overrides in school districts with negative tax caps.

2019 SCHOOL BUDGET VOTE ANALYSIS

Figure 3. Override Results by District (*District had a negative tax cap)

School District	Region	Outcome
Alexandria*	North Country	Passed
Belleville-Henderson	North Country	Passed
Brighton	Finger Lakes	Defeated
Clymer	Western Region	Defeated
Copenhagen*	North Country	Passed
Dolgeville	Mohawk Valley	Defeated
Eastport-South Manor ¹	Long Island	Passed
Johnstown City	Mohawk Valley	Defeated
Keene*	North Country	Passed
Lansingburgh	Capital District	Defeated
Laurens*	Southern Tier	Passed
Minisink Valley*	Hudson Valley	Defeated
Northeast	Hudson Valley	Passed
Putnam	Capital District	Passed
Ticonderoga	North Country	Defeated
Wainscott Common ²	Long Island	Passed
Worcester*	Southern Tier	Passed
Wyandanch*	Long Island	Defeated

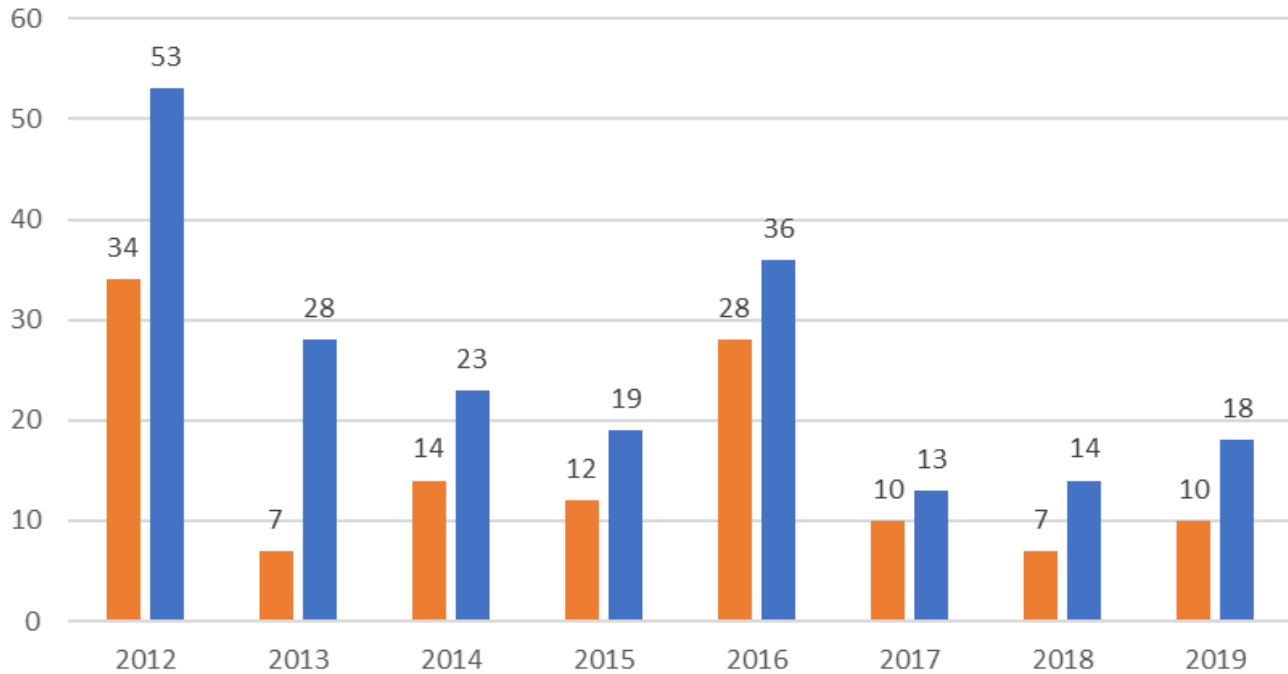
While slightly more school districts proposed overrides this year than in the previous two years the level of proposed overrides remains low, with approximately one to three percent of school districts likely to propose overrides in a given year.

¹ Eastport-South Manor reported its budget was approved, but an additional proposal that would have exceeded the tax cap was defeated.

² Not a major school district but proposed a tax cap override.

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Figure 4. Successful and Total Number of Overrides, 2012-2019



Overall budget success rates were over 95 percent in all state regions. Figure 5 presents the number of passed and defeated budgets as well as proposed and successful overrides in each state region. The North Country is the only region with more than two overrides and four of the five proposed overrides passed. The Mohawk Valley is the only region with multiple unsuccessful overrides as both proposed overrides were defeated.

Figure 5. Regional Passage Rates

Region	Passed	Defeated	Proposed Overrides (Passed Overrides)	Pass Rate
Capital District	72	1	2 (1)	98.6%
Central New York	47	1	0	97.9%
Finger Lakes	67	2	1 (0)	97.1%
Hudson Valley	99	1	2 (1)	99.0%
Long Island	120	1	3 (2)	99.2%
Mohawk Valley	44	2	2 (0)	95.7%
North Country	57	1	5 (4)	98.3%
Southern Tier	73	1	2 (2)	98.6%
Western Region	78	1	1 (0)	98.7%

Conclusion

In the tax cap era, it has become clear that voters overwhelmingly support budget proposals that comply with levy increase limits. This year 98.4 percent of tax cap compliant budgets succeeded. Relatively few school districts propose budgets requiring a supermajority approval rate of 60 percent. The recently enacted 2019-20 state budget made the tax cap permanent without any modifications. To further reduce the need to override the tax cap, ASBO recommends that the state amend the tax cap law to exclude BOCES capital expenses from the Tax Cap, eliminate negative tax caps by providing for a minimum of zero percent levy change, and make the allowable growth factor the greater of the inflation rate or two percent.

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