



I hope that everyone has had a good start to the new year. I am quite sure you are all busy engaging in the activities that you have planned for the balance of the school year. We are doing the same at NYS PTA. Our Legislation/Education Conference is scheduled for Saturday, February 28 – Sunday, March 1. I cannot urge you enough to send at least one representative from each of your units to attend. We are also preparing for our Lobby Day and the materials to be sent to you for Virtual Lobby Day.

I also have no doubt that you are all aware of the cuts in aid proposed by the Governor. This will be an important topic discussed at the Conference and in our Virtual Lobby Day materials. We have grave concerns about what these proposed cuts could mean to the children throughout the State of New York. This coupled with the tax cap concept, which may not have been abandoned, will have a devastating effect on the educational programs to which we have become accustomed.

My presidential theme, *The Power to Shape the Future*, takes on even greater relevance in light of the financial crisis we are facing. I believe that we have the power to shape a bright and successful future for all children through strong collaborative efforts with the larger educational community as we work together to present a unified message. Certainly we must try....this is no time for apathy or cynicism. The state has an obligation to fund education adequately and we cannot let them forget that obligation.

My own children were in elementary school when we suffered the mid year cuts in aid in the early 1990's. Programs were lost, some never returned. Certainly, even with increases in aid over the subsequent years, we never regained the level of aid that the state provided prior to that. With what is being proposed, school districts will be set back again and the children will pay the price with limited opportunities.

Our legacy as a society will be measured by the importance we place on the value of education for our children. That education must incorporate a wide range of opportunities for our children to explore. No program is unimportant in a well-rounded education. The temptation for PTA units to find ways to fund some of what might be cut will be great but in the end it will not be able to be done for every program or activity or for every child, and thus, only some will benefit. More importantly, it is not sustainable over time to continue to try to make up the shortfall.

When you receive the Virtual Lobby Day materials, do not just share them with the people who come to your meetings. Post them on your own websites, ask your school district and your teacher's union to do the same. Share them with your civic associations and other community-based organizations including child care facilities.

We are working hard at the state level to fight this fight but we cannot do it alone. We need you to become as educated on the issues as possible and help to educate others. I can assure you that there will be no more important thing that you can do this year than to partner with your administration, school boards, teachers, and community to make your voices heard. **Take Action!**

Susan Lipman, NYS PTA President