



LEGISLATIVE BRIEFS...

April 2010

Senate Passes Education Mandate Relief Package

The New York State Senate passed several measures to reduce the burden on school districts caused by unfunded mandates. If passed by the Assembly and signed by the Governor, this legislation is expected to help districts achieve efficiencies and budget in a more prudent manner. "These difficult economic times compel us to look for ways to restructure government at all levels to make it operate more efficiently," said Senate Education Committee Chair Suzi Oppenheimer who sponsored the measure. "School districts are depending on us to deliver reforms that will cut their costs in this challenging fiscal climate."

The Senate package is comprised of measures that would allow districts to more effectively manage resources by:

- Providing mandate relief specifically requested by school districts ([S.5523A](#))
- Providing flexibility to enable districts to better utilize funding for universal pre-kindergarten programs ([S.6777](#))
- Reducing unnecessary and duplicative paperwork ([S.3874A](#))
- Providing flexibility in claims auditing to promote more efficient processing ([S.5637](#))

One important provision would clarify an inherent contradiction in current law pertaining to contingency budgets which go into effect if voters fail to approve a school budget. Under the Oppenheimer proposal, districts would use a five year rolling average of the consumer price index when calculating contingency budget caps.

Under current law, a "no" vote means that districts have to limit spending hikes to 4 percent or 120 percent of the Consumer Price Index, whichever is less. But this policy law failed to account for an economy experiencing deflation. Calculating the CPI based on a rolling five year average would smooth out the highs and lows and is a timeframe used by many actuarials. The law also provides for exceptions to contingency budgets in situations that include rising students enrollment and court-ordered mandates.

For further information go to:

<http://www.nysenate.gov/press-release/senate-majority-urges-passage-mandate-relief-package>

Congratulations! Legislature Re-Elects Six Members to the Board of Regents

Six members of the New York State Board of Regents were re-elected for five year terms by the State Senate and Assembly. The Board is comprised of 17 members: one from each of the state's 13 judicial districts and four members who serve at-large.

The State Legislature re-elected the following Regents on March 2:

Lester W. Young, Jr. serves as a Regent at Large.
Karen Brook Hopkins serves for the 2nd Judicial District.
James C. Dawson serves for the 4th Judicial District.
Robert M. Bennett serves for the 8th Judicial District.
Harry Phillips III serves for the 9th Judicial District.
Roger Tilles serves for the 10th Judicial District.

The Board of Regents was established in 1784 and is the oldest, continuous state education entity in the United States. The Regents are responsible for the general oversight of all educational activities within the state, presiding over the State University of New York and the state Education Department.

For more information go to:

<http://www.assembly.state.ny.us/Press/20100302/>

New Graduation Results Released for High Schools Statewide

[Statewide high school graduation results](#) reported by school districts show that:

- Statewide, almost 72 percent of the students who started 9th grade in 2005 had graduated after 4 years, by **June** 2009. This is compared with a 66 percent graduation rate for students who started 9th grade in 2001.
- A fifth year of high school makes a difference for many students. Among students who started 9th grade in 2004, 77 percent had graduated by 2009, an increase of five percentage points or 12,500 more students during the fifth year.
- The 4-year graduation rate of Black students increased from 45 to almost 56 percent between 2005 and 2009. Also, more Black students are staying in school beyond four years.
- The 4-year graduation rate of Hispanic students increased from 42 to almost 55 percent between 2005 and 2009, although it also remains far too low. Also, more Hispanic students are staying in school.
- The 4-year graduation rate for students with disabilities has risen and fallen over the past four years. Graduation rates are especially low in high need districts.
- The 4-year graduation rate for English Language Learners is also low but increasing.

For more information go to:

http://www.oms.nysed.gov/press/2009_Grad_Rates03092010.html

Obama K-12 Budget Proposal Raises Concerns

Major education groups, including the heads of both national teachers' unions, urged a House appropriations subcommittee Wednesday to reconsider the Obama administration's fiscal 2011 budget proposal, which would put all new education funding into competitive grants rather than into aid formulas.

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/03/17/27appropriations.h29.html?tkn=LLSFXEupSQiw0ObINvcIP+6BcqXoAE7WTaCe&print=>