



LEGISLATIVE BRIEFS...

December 2008

Update: Where Are We with State Aid Cuts?

It appears school aid has escaped the Albany hatchet, at least for the moment! Governor Paterson called the legislature back to Albany for a special session on November 18th. The purpose: to cut state aid allocations in order to help close a 4th quarter budget deficit of \$1.5B. Predictions are that in the next 18 months we will see a \$12.5 -\$15B shortfall in state coffers and up to \$47B over the next four years. The governor's mid-year proposal was for an \$800M reduction in state aid for schools, based on a sliding scale beginning from a 3% aid cut for low wealth-high need districts up to 10% for high wealth-low need districts. While school aid comprises less than 25% of state spending, the Governor's plan tagged schools to compensate for more than one-half the 4th quarter shortfall.

How did New York State PTA members react? On November 13th an Action Alert and message was sent to subscribers through our electronic advocacy tool, capwiz. The Alert provided information about the November 18th session and the message asked members to simply remind the governor and legislature of our priorities regarding funding of public education. **In total, 2,630 "activists" sent 8,068 messages asking Albany decision-makers to protect the funds that provide the opportunity for and access to quality education for NY's children!**

At the same time child and educational advocates were pressing the capwiz "send" button or faxing PTA's message, the governor challenged the legislative leaders by requesting a vote on his proposed cuts at the next day's special session. Senate Majority Leader, Dean Skelos, called his bluff agreeing the Senate would schedule a vote on the spending cuts. With no real plan in place, the special legislative session turned into a "near-farcical public meeting" and no agreement was reached. This sparring match aside, NYS PTA members sincerely thank the Legislature for recognizing the devastating impact the governor's proposal would have had on both education and healthcare and, most especially, we are grateful to our PTA advocates and friends for their overwhelming response in support of NY's children and families!

So, while our schools have been temporarily rescued from the disruption and possibility of mid-year program cuts, Wall St. revenues continue to decline, corporations and industries tumble, and job layoffs/eliminations grow nationwide. Due to the bleak fiscal outlook, the governor plans to introduce the Executive Budget proposal for fiscal year 2009-10 on December 16th, nearly one month earlier than usual. He has also requested that the Legislature pass an enacted budget before April 1, 2009. What will schools face in the upcoming year? There has been much speculation -- perhaps further reductions of foundation aid, the possibility of expanding the original four-year phase-in plan to five years, reduction of save harmless minimal increases to name a few possibilities. By the time you receive this newsletter, we may already have heard the proposal for next year's state budget. Please stay tuned and watch for New York State PTA Action Alerts and information.

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/19/nyregion/19analysis.html?_r=1&ref=nyregion&pagewanted=print

http://www.legislativegazette.com/read_more.php?story=3328

http://www.ny.gov/governor/press/press_1028081.html

It's worth mentioning: This past October, the New York State School Boards Association published its report: *Report of the Task Force on Maximizing School District Resources*. Check out the fifty-five recommendations for school district cost savings at...

http://www.nyssba.org/clientuploads/nyssba_pdf/CommReportTaskForceMaximizingSchoolDistrictResources.pdf

[Around the State:](#)

Tuition Hikes for SUNY Students

In reaction to the state's fiscal crisis, the State University of New York Board of Trustees approved a \$2.4 billion 2009-2010 budget request that includes a tuition hike for SUNY students. Students residing in New York will see a \$620 academic year increase, beginning with a \$310 tuition hike for the spring 2009 semester bringing their total tuition payment to \$4,970. Out-of-state students will see a 2260 overall hike bringing their total academic year tuition to \$12,870. For information...

http://www.legislativegazette.com/read_more.php?story=3326

Individual Education Program Forms Changing

The NYS Board of Regents has approved regulations that require the use of a universal state-mandated IEP form. The rationale for the change is to make the special education process more uniform and the concept, while generally supported by NYSUT, but is being criticized as not being a parent-friendly document. According to New York State United Teachers Vice President, Maria Neira, the document "does not foster a meaningful and focused open discussion of the child's program by the IEP team". For information...

http://www.nysut.org/cps/rde/xchg/nysut/hs.xsl/newyorkteacher_11485.htm

http://www.nysut.org/cps/rde/xchg/nysut/hs.xsl/k12_11412.htm

<http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/policy/formsnotices/cover1008.htm>

Proposal for Long Island Heroin Bills Require School Notification

Both Nassau and Suffolk County Legislatures have introduced bills requiring police to notify school districts if any of their students were arrested on heroin-related charges or if there were heroin-related arrests in their districts. This legislation is reportedly in response to the rise in heroin related arrests and overdoses over the past seven years. While well-intended, the bills raise questions surrounding school district responsibility once information is received, lack of funding for what may necessitate administrative time and costs, and even the legality of county legislators to obligate school districts by local rule. We are watching this closely as it could be introduced in Albany. For information...

http://www.newsday.com/news/local/crime/ny-linata075915820nov07_0_3336638.story

http://www.newsday.com/services/newspaper/printedition/wednesday/longisland/ny-lidrug195933278nov19_0_861865.story

[Around the Capitol:](#)

Will President-Elect Barak Obama Bring Education Reform to the Nation's Schools?

During his campaign bid for the presidency, President-Elect Barak Obama's education platform included adding \$10B a year to federal preschool spending, teacher recruitment, funding for charter schools and providing scholarships to students and professionals who pursue a career in teaching. In addition, he vowed to reform elementary and secondary education by revision of the No Child Left Behind Act. Diverse groups such as parents, school administrators, teachers unions, and school boards are advising him on just how to accomplish his platform goals. Although online petitioners are urging the nomination of NY City Chancellor Joel Klein and Stanford University professor Linda Darling Hammond, to date, President-elect Obama has not introduced any nominee for secretary of education. For information...

<http://www.edweek.org/login.html?source=http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/11/19/13obama.h28.html&destination=http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/11/19/13obama.h28.html&levelId=2100>