



LEGISLATIVE BRIEFS...

January 2011

Obama Signs Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act

President Barack Obama signed the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act into law on December 13, 2010. This legislation reauthorizes the National School Lunch Program and authorizes the first increase in meal reimbursements to schools since 1973.

It also gives the federal government the authority to regulate food sold at schools. The USDA is charged with making significant nutrition improvements in school meals and eliminating junk food from vending machines.

“Getting junk food out of schools has been ten years in the making,” said Margo G. Wootan, Director of Nutrition Policy, Center for Science in the Public Interest. “This bill is a historic step toward reducing childhood obesity and helping parents feed their children better. It’s the result of the hard work of many, but would not have passed without this Administration. The President’s leadership and First Lady’s tireless advocacy brought the child nutrition bill back to life a number of times as it made its way through Congress.”

For further information go to:

- <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/12/13/president-obama-signs-healthy-hunger-free-kids-act-2010-law>
- <http://www.scientificamerican.com/blog/post.cfm?id=child-nutrition-law-will-require-us-2010-12-14>

State Completes Work on Education Budget

After the State Legislature’s Special Session in December, Governor Paterson signed legislation to finalize New York’s education budget through actions including a one-year reduction in School Aid and adjusting the planned phase-in of Foundation Aid.

The Education, Labor and Family Assistance (ELFA) Article VII bill amended current law to continue Foundation Aid at the current level and extend certain statutory provisions for two additional years, through 2011-12.

The bill also extends the freeze on per-pupil charter school payments and maintains payments made by school districts to charter schools at the current level. Lawmakers also approved continued supplemental aid to public, school and research library systems using the same formulas as in 2009-10.

For further information go to:

- <http://www.scribd.com/doc/44337735/Gpb-326-Ex-Session-2-Elfa-Article-Vii-Memo>
- http://www.nyssba.org/index.php?src=gendocs&ref=newlaws&category=advocacy_legislation

School Boards Association and Unions Concerned about Property Tax Cap

The New York State School Boards Association produced a report that finds that school districts across New York face a potential shortfall of \$815 million per year over the next four years just in meeting personnel costs under a proposed property tax cap.

The report envisions how a tax cap of 2 percent or the rate of inflation would limit property tax increases in school districts to an average of \$229 million per year over the next four years. At the same time, school districts could have a projected average annual increase of more than \$1 billion in salaries, health insurance and employee pension contributions.

The New York State United Teachers union shares this concern. The union has endorsed a “circuit breaker” proposal, which ties property taxes to a homeowner's income and ability to pay.

For further information go to:

- http://www.nyssba.org/clientuploads/nyssba_pdf/nyssbapropertytaxcapreport.pdf
- http://www.nysut.org/cps/rde/xchg/nysut/hs.xsl/legislation_15689.htm
- <http://thecapitolpressroom.org/the-capitol-pressroom-for-december-14-2010/>

Government Ban of Drop-side Cribs Announced

National and NYS PTA members joined with the newly-formed National School Safety Coalition at a press conference and meeting hosted by Consumers Union at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. The Coalition was formed to address issues involving food and product safety recalls and timely notification to schools and families.

Consumer Safety Product Chair Inez Tenenbaum announced pending government action to ban drop-side cribs after the deaths of more than 30 infants and toddlers in the past decade and millions of recalls. The ban will go into effect June 2011.

The National School Safety Coalition also launched its [Click Check and Protect](#) program to help keep unsafe products out of the homes and hands of children.

ClickCheckandProtect.org feeds up-to-date recall information through school systems to homes with school-age children – a link can be found on the NYS PTA home page www.nyspta.org.

For further information go to:

- <http://blogs.consumerreports.org/safety/2010/12/national-school-safety-coalition-launches-click-check-and-protect-to-drive-recall-awareness.html>
- <http://www.cpsc.gov>
- <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/12/15/AR2010121502598.html>