



LEGISLATIVE BRIEFS...

May 2009

Update: Amidst Partisan Wrangling and Closed Door Talks, State Budget Finalized

While nearly on-time, the final 2009-10 state budget bypassed months of partisan bickering and wrangling and culminated with back room negotiations – instead of conferencing bills between the state houses, legislative leaders returned to the three men in a room scenario for making decisions on state spending. In fact, while New York State PTA representatives visited state leaders on the March 17th Lobby Day, staffers consistently reiterated that budget discussion information was embargoed. While this did not deter representatives from stating concerns regarding the governor's deficit reduction proposal, any dialogue or meaningful exchange on budget negotiation progress was essentially thwarted.

So, where are we? Thanks to the federal stimulus package (ARRA) we have avoided the projected \$1.1B in school aid reductions. Raised to \$132B, the state spending plan has an overall increase of 9% for 2009-10. Schools will receive a modest 1.9% increase in aid to \$21.9B. The federal government will also provide an extra \$454 million in Title I funding to help economically disadvantaged students and \$398 million for special education services required by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Challenging the progress of state aid reform, foundation aid will be frozen at the 2008-09 levels of \$14.8 billion dollars for the next two years. The budget provides no increase in school operating aid over the next two years leaving school districts and local tax payers to absorb significant inflationary increases on their own. Additionally, the original four year phase-in of the \$7B foundation aid plan will be stretched to seven years. Since the plan does not address inflationary concerns, and despite the infusion of federal stimulus funds, programs and services may need to be cut. School officials across the state warned that layoffs and staff reductions through attrition may be in the picture for many districts. Regarding foundation aid, Deputy Director of the NYS Council of School Superintendents, Robert Lowry states “we risk falling so far behind in implementation that we can never catch up and end up abandoning this reform”.

The budget also calls for:

- \$4 billion in new income taxes per year (on New Yorkers with annual incomes above \$200,000) without directing any portion of it to public education;
- Raising taxes and fees to bring in revenue estimated at \$5.3 billion;
- Elimination of middle class STAR property tax rebate program (\$1.5 billion to taxpayers)

Governor Paterson continues to express concern over mounting budget deficits and predicts that an additional \$4B deficit may result in a repeat of this year's attempt at mid-year aid cuts. Be sure you are subscribed to our electronic advocacy tool, *capwiz*, (www.nyspta.org; take action) for future alerts and messages! For information ...

http://www.legislativegazette.com/back_issues/09-4-6_for_web.pdf ;

http://www.nyssba.org/index.php?src=news&submenu=on_board&srctype=detail&category=On%20Board%20Online%20April%206%202009&refno=788



Annual School District Elections/Budget Vote: Tuesday, May 19th

Check the NYS PTA Resource Guide for guidelines on PTA participation!

Around the State:

What Does the Federal Stimulus Package (ARRA) Provide for NY's Schools?

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009:

- creates the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund to provide funding to states to stop cuts in funding for school districts and higher education institutions.
- provides increases in Title I and IDEA directly to local school districts.
- creates a new fund to provide grants to states and local school districts for innovative programs.

For allocations and implementation information...

http://www.nysut.org/cps/rde/xchg/nysut/hs.xsl/bulletins_12657.htm

http://www.workingpoorfamilies.org/pdfs/ARRA_principles.pdf

<http://www.educationcounsel.com/>

Governor Paterson Proposes Legislation to Combat Obesity

During an April 3rd news conference, Governor David A. Paterson announced proposed legislation to help fight obesity and promote healthy lifestyles among all New Yorkers. One bill will enact the Healthy Schools Act, which will establish nutritional guidelines on foods served in schools, and require schools to develop wellness policies to increase physical activity among students. The other bill will prohibit trans fats in restaurants and other food service establishments. Both bills have been submitted to the legislature for introduction.

Based on adopted resolutions, New York State PTA has supported Healthy School Foods legislation introduced both by former governor, Eliot Spitzer and Governor Paterson and has urged the reduction and elimination of non-naturally occurring trans fats from school foods, vending machine options and sale at fundraising or after school events. PTA also recognizes the importance of integrating physical activity into the school day.

For more information...

http://www.state.ny.us/governor/press/press_0403091.html

http://www.nyspta.org/pdfs/advocacy/WHERE_WE_STAND_2009_2_.pdf

Dignity for All Students Passes NYS Assembly...for Seventh Time!

In an effort to stop bullying and menacing in our schools, State Assembly members demonstrated overwhelming support the Dignity for All Students Act. Bill A.3661, sponsored by Manhattan Assemblyman, Daniel J. O'Donnell, is a measure aimed at ensuring public school communities provide students with a learning environment free of discrimination. Provisions of the legislation prohibit harassment and discrimination based on race, color, weight, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or sex. Senator Tom Duane is sponsoring the bill in the State Senate. For information...

<http://www.assembly.state.ny.us/Press/20090407a>

<http://www.assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?bn=A.3661B>

Around the Capitol:

National PTA Highlights NYS PTA Meeting with Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy

At the 2009 PTA National Legislative Conference in Washington DC, New York State PTA conducted a disciplined Hill meeting, stayed on message and got results. In her opening remarks before the joint subcommittee hearing, "Lost Educational Opportunities in Alternative Settings," on March 12, Chairwoman Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY) of the House Healthy Families and Communities Subcommittee referenced the meeting she had with New York State PTA prior to the hearing, stating: '[O]ne of the things on [PTA's] agenda [is] that a lot of young people [are] going into the juvenile justice system even just for truancy... Each of us sitting here knows the importance of education in a child's life...' For information <http://www.pta.org/2872.htm>

Supreme Court to Hear School Strip Search Case

Wading into the legal balance of protecting student privacy and student safety in schools, the Supreme Court will hear a strip search case involving a 13-year old student. For information:

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2009/04/14/29search.h28.html?tkn=QTUFjUYc2k%2B1uxM5KAT9v1OCiJhJVdw9TCI>