



# LEGISLATIVE BRIEFS...

February, 2008

## **Update – Where Are We With: Protecting Kids on the Internet?**

On Monday, January 14, the attorneys general from 49 U.S. states, including New York, announced that they'd reached an agreement with MySpace for the site to initiate new security measures designed to protect its youth from potential sexual predators on the Internet.

Under mounting pressure from law enforcement and parents, MySpace agreed to take steps to protect youngsters from online sexual predators and bullies, including searching for ways to better verify users' ages. These measures provide guidelines to ensure safety and include developing an e-mail registry that would allow parents to prohibit their kids from creating online profiles for the network. As part of two years of discussions, the states have urged MySpace (and similar networks) to make changes after sexual predators repeatedly used the site to victimize children. Last Spring the attorneys general pushed MySpace into removing 29,000 sexual predators from the registry. For more information...

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/15/us/15myspace.html?ref=nyregion>

[http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/01/15/18apmyspace\\_web.html?print=1](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/01/15/18apmyspace_web.html?print=1)

## **Around the State:**

### **NYS Senate Passes Computer Sex Crime Bill**

The Senate passed (12/13/07) legislation, sponsored by Rochester Senator Joseph Robach to combat computer crimes against children. The bill (S.1921) establishes a felony offense, Computer Sex Crime, when an offender uses a computer to facilitate and commit a sex crime against a child.

"Sexual crimes against children are amongst the most heinous in our community," Senator Robach said. "The Internet is a wonderful tool that has transformed and improved the lives of millions of people. Unfortunately, sexual predators have also made it a dangerous weapon that can be used to victimize innocent children. By passing this bill, we will crack down on pornographers and predators that use computer technology to harm and exploit young children." For more information...

[http://www.senate.state.ny.us/pressreleases.nsf/public\\_bruno?openform](http://www.senate.state.ny.us/pressreleases.nsf/public_bruno?openform)

<http://public.leginfo.state.ny.us/menugetf.cgi>

### **Education a Top Priority for 2008: Governor's State of the State Address**

Governor's Spitzer's State of the State address drew mixed reactions among the education community, politicians and lobbyists. Many seemed enthusiastic about the governor's proposals, but are still holding their breath to see how plans will fit into the state budget. The Governor plans to target significant dollars to the SUNY/CUNY higher education systems and pitched the idea of leasing the state lottery to private investors to fund an endowment.

He addressed public education through: Wick's Law reform; increased school and district accountability with expansion of the Contracts for Excellence initiative; reintroduction of the Healthy Schools Act to "take junk food out of schools"; and a request to Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli to help enforce "widely ignored" physical education requirements by including them in regular school district audits. Plans are underway to set up a property tax commission with

Nassau County Executive, Tom Suozzi, at the helm. The commission's charge will be to address the root causes of local property tax rates, including unfunded mandates on school districts; make New York's tax relief system fairer to middle class taxpayers and; create "a fair and effective cap" on school property taxes.

For more information...

[http://www.legislativegazette.com/read\\_more.php?story=2789](http://www.legislativegazette.com/read_more.php?story=2789)

<http://www.ny.gov/governor/sos/>

### **Significant Legislation passed in NYS Assembly 2007 Session**

Despite rumors of a dysfunctional legislature, by the end of the 2007 session a number of significant bills were passed by NYS Assembly members. These included health related legislation to expand Timothy's Law ([A.8617](#)) and on Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention ([A.2856](#)); environmental legislation requiring Vehicle Global Warming Labels on cars ([A.8839-A](#)); and the Children's Weapon Accident Protection Act ([A.76-A](#)). For listing and summary of all bills...

<http://www.assembly.state.ny.us/Press/2007Leg/#lnk25>

### **Around the Capital:**

#### **Omnibus Bill Sets 2008 Education Program Funding**

After a protracted budget battle with Democrats in Congress, last month President George W. Bush signed into law a \$551 billion omnibus spending bill for fiscal year 2008 (FY08) containing 11 of the 12 annual appropriations bills. The measure appropriates \$59.2 billion for U.S. Department of Education programs in the fiscal year that began Oct. 1, a 2.9 percent increase over fiscal 2007. The bill provides an increase of \$1.2 billion (9.2 percent) for Title I programs but also provides less than inflation level increases for the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), Impact Aid and Improving Teacher Quality State Grants, among other programs. The bill substantially cuts other vital programs. For more information...

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/01/09/17budget.h27.html?print=1>

[http://www.pta.org/ja\\_newsletters\\_issue\\_1199907843515.html](http://www.pta.org/ja_newsletters_issue_1199907843515.html)

#### **Farm Bill Passes Senate: Child Nutrition Amendment Dropped**

On December 14, 2007, the Senate passed its version of H.R. 2419, the Farm Bill Extension Act of 2007. The overall Nutrition title of the bill was increased by over \$5 billion. A proposed amendment to this bill, backed by health-advocacy groups, National PTA, and food-and beverage-industry giants, was dropped in last-minute wrangling over the \$286 billion bill. The Harkin-Murkowski Amendment to the bill would have called on the USDA to update its nutrition standards for school foods sold outside of meals to ensure that they conform to current nutrition science and address pressing threats to child health and nutrition at school was excluded from the final version. For information...

[http://www.pta.org/ja\\_newsletters\\_issue\\_1199907843515.html](http://www.pta.org/ja_newsletters_issue_1199907843515.html)

#### **No Child Left Behind Deemed an "Unfunded Mandate" by Federal Appeals Court**

The United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit revived a lawsuit challenging how the federal No Child Left Behind law is funded. The court ruled in *Pontiac v. Spellings* that the federal government was in violation of the Spending Clause of the U.S. Constitution for not providing clear notice as to who bears the additional costs of compliance.

Currently the National Education Association (NEA) is supporting an overhaul of the Act with more than 120 changes...

For more information...

<http://www.nea.org/lac/esea/07nclb.html>

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/01/16/19nclb.h27.html>

<http://www.ca6.uscourts.gov/opinions.pdf/08a0006p-06.pdf>