

Volume No. 88 — JUNE 2009

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Changing of the Guard... A Farewell Message from Jim Kaden

It has been my distinct honor to serve as your president for the past two years.

Together, we have advanced this Association as a key player, raising N-SSBA's profile and earning respect and credibility from our colleagues, the media and elected officials.

We have nurtured coalitions with the leadership of education, business and the planners of Long Island's future. Our powerful collective voice has been crucial in favorably impacting legislation.

In strengthening links with the New York State School Boards Association, Superintendents Associations, school business officials, PTA's, the Long Island Association (LIA), we have ensured that school boards are visible and speaking with **one voice** on the key issues impacting public education on Long Island.

At N-SSBA's *Survivor: Long Island* conference in January, Matthew Crosson, LIA President, called for education, business, labor and political leaders to "circle the wagons" to protect Long Island's schools and fight for fairness in education funding.

Good advice!

Yet, as the wagons are circled, there remains the overriding need to watch our backs, alert to the reality that not all Long Islanders are our allies....not the unperceptive anti-school spending proponents, not Newsday, not the counties or other levels of government vying for the same limited funds, and certainly not a New York City-centric state leadership.

As individual boards, we cannot afford to allow membership in N-SSBA to lapse. Our Association has come far, but we cannot afford to waiver. N-SSBA's strength to fight for your schools is dependent upon our memberships' commitment to maintaining solidarity in that mission.

N-SSBA renews its pledge to SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE and SPEAK TO BE HEARD in making our case for Long Island schools. **No individual board can make the impact that we make as an Association.**

If I leave just one impression from my tenure as your president, it should be that Long Island and its future are in jeopardy if short-sighted decisions made in Albany are allowed to diminish the educational systems our communities have struggled to build and sustain.

As I pass the president's gavel to Jay L.T. Breakstone, I do so with the confidence in his ability to press on through the financial and political hurdles ahead for Long Island's schools.



OFFICERS ELECTED—BUDGET ADOPTED AT ANNUAL MEETING

At the Annual Meeting on June 1st, N-SSBA members elected 2009-10 Officers and Executive Committee members. Completing two-years as N-SSBA President, **Jim Kaden** passed the gavel to **Jay L.T. Breakstone**. Also elected were **Fran Greenspan**, Suffolk Vice President; **Mary Jo O'Hagan**, Nassau Vice President; and **James March**, Secretary/Treasurer. Elected to terms on N-SSBA's Executive Committee were: **Lana Ajemian**, **Deborah Coates**, **Dolores Garger**, **Karen Lessler**, **Mark Masin**, **Patricia Rudd**, **Gary Schoer**, and **John Verdone**.

The membership also approved the 2009-10 N-SSBA budget that reflects a 22% decrease in expenses. The approved increase in dues was necessitated by N-SSBA's historical efforts to keep dues and the cost of events as affordable as possible, as well as by the challenges presented in these difficult financial times.

CHANCELLOR "BATS 1000" AT DINNER

"You don't need help from the State Education Department. You need for them to get out of your way to let you do your job," the Honorable Meryll Tisch, Chancellor, NYS Board of Regents said in her keynote address at N-SSBA's Annual Dinner Meeting.

The approachable Dr. Tisch "wowed" the board members and school officials with her enthusiasm, candor and insight from the moment she swept into the venue. As stated by one board of education member, she "batted 1,000!"

"Education is at the heart of life on Long Island," she said in acknowledging that the region's schools are, for the most part, doing their job. She commended LI for its commitment to public education and passing school budgets in record numbers.

The new Chancellor said she recognized that Nassau and Suffolk County schools need help with state aid, the removal of the salary cap on BOCES superintendents, support for mandate relief and school efficiencies, as well as the strengthening of BOCES to achieve desirable educational outcomes.

Completing a timely search for a new commissioner is a top priority. The Regents want a leader who has credibility among educators, good management skills, values the community, seeks input from the field and has an "open door."

In transitioning the State Education Department (SED), Dr. Tisch said she would like to see the department become a repository for best practices and take a step back from that of a regulatory agency. She is looking to partner with BOCES superintendents in this new design "so that we can better support local innovation

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in our highest performing districts and engage more deeply with districts that are struggling and in need of additional support.”

She would like to bring special education more in line with general education and to improve overall graduation rates to ensure that students are prepared for higher education and the workforce.

Dr. Tisch stated that she accepted an appointment to the Suozzi Property Tax Commission as a favor to the former governor. While she abstained from the vote on the final report that included a property tax cap, she said she “learned a lot about special education and the heavy burden of property taxes on Long Island.”

Elected Chancellor by her colleagues in April, Dr. Tisch is the first woman to serve in this position.

Embracing her new role, she exclaimed that “as Chancellor, I’ve been given an enormous opportunity to speak for those who can’t be heard.” She promises to reach out on issues and “to be a great listener.”

WATCHING YOUR BACK IN ALBANY

BREAKING NEWS – The change in Senate majority as it now stands could have a impact on legislation yet to be addressed in this session. N-SSBA is reviewing all pending legislation that is significant to Long Island schools.

What’s With Wicks??? Prior to the latest turmoil in Albany, N-SSBA was questioning the inaction on the Governor’s promised Wicks Law moratorium. It appears that Albany is either unwilling or unable to absolve school districts of this indefensible waste of local property tax dollars.

Rockefeller Drug Law Reform – N-SSBA supported S.5684 and called for the introduction of an Assembly companion Bill that would repeal the provision in the Rockefeller Drug Law Reform granting judicial discretion to prevent school district access to criminal records.

STILL PENDING.....

School Property Tax Cap – New Senate leadership may revive proposals to cap school property taxes.

New Tier 5 for Employee Pensions – NYSSBA and N-SSBA are calling for Teachers Retirement System to be included in Tier V agreement.

Real Mandate Relief – Bills to address bona fide financial relief for schools have yet to be advanced.

Pension contributions – To mitigate the tax impact of escalating pension contributions, N-SSBA and NYSSBA continue to push for authority to create retirement system reserve funds and borrowing authority to pay large pension increases.

BE PREPARED....to respond to N-SSBA and NYSSBA alerts should the need arise for your board to contact your NYS Senator or Assembly member.

BUDGET REPORT CARD WITH A TWIST

Levittown’s Budget Report Card provided additional information that voters could comprehend; calling it exactly what it is: “BUDGET NOTICE – New York State Mandated Notice,” with a footnote: “NOTE: This mailing represents an unfunded state mandate.”

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD COMMITTEE ANNOUNCES HONOREES

N-SSBA’s Distinguished Service Award Committee comprised of **Jay L.T. Breakstone**, Chair; along with members **Mary Jo O’Hagan** and **Fran Greenspan**, announced the Association’s 2009 honorees at this year’s Annual Dinner.

Lorrie Brady, who is retiring after 21 years serving on the Rockville Centre BOE, was honored with N-SSBA’s Outstanding School Board Service Award, acknowledging her as a role model for effective school board service. On behalf of the Rockville Centre BOE, Superintendent Dr. William Johnson recounted the district’s many achievements resulting from Lorrie’s stewardship.

Middle Country Superintendent **Dr. Roberta Gerold’s** “persistent energy in advocating for the needs of Long Island’s schools” was recognized with N-SSBA’s Distinguished Service Award. Middle Country BOE President and N-SSBA Executive Committee Member **Karen Lessler** cited Dr. Gerold’s spearheading of the Multi-District Legislative Committee as indicative of her willingness to go beyond her appointed responsibilities to foster support for public education.

N-SSBA’s Crystal Apples were presented to **Dr. Ronald Friedman** and **Dr. Thomas Shea**, outgoing presidents of the Nassau County Council of School Superintendents (NCCSS) and the Suffolk County School Superintendents Association (SCSSA) for their collaboration with N-SSBA in advocating for Long Island’s public schools.

JIM KADEN – CHAMPION OF EDUCATION

For just the third time in its 50-year history, N-SSBA has conferred a *Champion for Long Island Education Award*.

To no one’s surprise, it was presented to outgoing **President Jim Kaden**.

Mr. Kaden has already been the recipient of the Association’s revered **Distinguished Service Award**.

“It is fitting that the inscription on that 2004 Distinguished Service Award reads ‘for your personal courage and unwavering commitment on behalf of Long Island’s public schools,’ for those words exemplify **Jim Kaden’s** tenure as President of the Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association,” President-Elect **Jay L.T. Breakstone** said.

“Add experience, knowledge and articulate advocacy to the inscribed words, and you have an extraordinary leader,” he concluded.

In MEMORIAM—IRIS WOLFSON

N-SSBA members are saddened by the loss of their friend and colleague, **Iris Wolfson**, the Executive Committee’s longest-serving member. Having begun her tenure in 1975, she served as N-SSBA President from 1983-85. A member of the Nassau BOCES Board since 1979, Mrs. Wolfson was its current Vice President. Beginning in Hicksville in 1973, her school board service spanned 36 years. Mrs. Wolfson’s board leadership included 18 years on the Board of Directors of the New York State School Boards Association, serving as Area 11 Director from 1987-94 and as NYSSBA Treasurer from 1995-2005. She was appointed by the Board of Regents to the Board of Directors of the NYS Teachers Retirement System and was its current Vice-President.

DATES TO REMEMBER

| Date | Event | Location |
|----------------|---|-------------------|
| July 23 | NYSSBA 15th Annual Summer School Law Conference | Islandia Marriott |
| August 21 & 22 | NYSSBA New School Board Members Academy | Islandia Marriott |
| August 22 | NYSSBA Fiscal Oversight Workshop | Islandia Marriott |