

# newslines

NASSAU-SUFFOLK SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

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## President's Corner

**If ever there was a critical need for a local school board association, it is this year.**

Many of the most pressing issues our school boards face are unique to our region. Your Association represents these interests and is the recognized voice of school boards in Nassau and Suffolk Counties. It is incumbent upon us to maintain that powerful presence as an advocate for Long Island's schools.

Once again, Long Island and its schools were targeted for state aid reductions, cost shifts and increased taxes by the Governor and Legislature's New York City-dominated agenda:

- **The Deficit Reduction Assessment would have reduced aid to Long Island schools at a rate that was 42% higher than the rest of the state.**
- **The continuance of the flawed Foundation Formula penalizes Long Island by not accurately measuring regional cost and wealth factors in determining a community's ability to pay.**
- **The MTA payroll tax would cost Long Island school property taxpayers in excess of \$24.4 million.**
- **The shift of pre-school special education costs from the county and state onto local school budgets would have cost Long Island school property taxpayers \$37 million.**

***N-SSBA served as the catalyst in bringing these inequities to light and in championing school boards' positions on your behalf.***

Whether of federal, state or county governmental origin, N-SSBA seeks out issues of Long Island significance and takes action, be it with research, advocacy alerts, communications to legislators or generating media attention. We are an established presence in Albany, D.C., and, increasingly, at the local and county levels. Our officers represent school boards on commissions, coalitions, task forces and are frequently sought out for expert testimony on school governance issues.

The financial challenges we face are daunting and unprecedented. It is tempting to slash school board codes as we labor over trimming our budgets. However, in these perilous times, it is crucial that our school boards have a voice that is consistent, knowledgeable, clear and strong on behalf of Long Island's schools. It is N-SSBA that is **YOUR VOICE, ONE VOICE** that speaks to our elected officials, the media and the public.

I urge you to continue your alliance with N-SSBA as we solidify the Association's advocacy efforts on your behalf. Our mission to serve the interests of Long Island school boards is dependent upon a strong membership. Your school board owns a piece of that mission.

**If ever there was a need for a strong, united voice from Long Island, the time is now!**



EMAIL ADDRESS: [info@nssba.org](mailto:info@nssba.org)

OFFICE: 219 Bedford Avenue, Bellmore NY 11710

TELEPHONE: 516-781-2053

JIM KADEN, President

MAILING ADDRESS: P.O. Box 385, Bellmore, NY 11710

FAX: 516-679-0401

LORRAINE DELLER, Executive Director

## Mark Your Calendar!

### N-SSBA ANNUAL DINNER

MONDAY, JUNE 1ST (New Date)

6:30 PM

Woodbury Country Club, Woodbury

See Your District Clerk for Registration

## Measuring Success By What Didn't Happen

*"Is there any point to which you would wish to draw my attention?"*

*"To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time."*

*"The dog did nothing in the night-time."*

*"That was the curious incident," remarked Sherlock Holmes.*

*The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*

(1893) Inspector Gregory and Sherlock Holmes in "Silver Blaze" (Doubleday p. 346-7)

In the aftermath of contentious state aid battles, success is often measured by what **did not** happen, as opposed to what did happen. With regard to this year's N-SSBA priority issues, the dog did not bark:

- 4 **Governor's Deficit Reduction Assessment**
- 4 **Pre-School Special Education**
- 4 **Rate Cap/Reduction of State Payment of Taxes/ Payments in Lieu of Taxes on state-owned lands**
- 4 **MTA Payroll Tax** (*At this writing, Long Island's entire NYS Senate Delegation is opposing the payroll tax. Without their support, it will be difficult to pass.*) See page 2, "**It Ain't Over 'Til It's Over**"
- 4 **Suozzi/Paterson Property Tax Cap**

Independently, these issues would have created a considerable financial challenge, but collectively they would have been devastating for perpetuity.

These proposals did not succeed due to the diligence of the Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association in keeping ahead of the issues and advising districts through alerts and advocacy materials.

Individual school board members and superintendents responded by keeping the pressure on their NYS Senators and Assembly members. We applaud them for their tenacity. The impact of their sustained efforts through individual phone calls, letters and meetings was immeasurable.

**Our one voice has been heard!**

## N-SSBA Moves Forward on Tax Certs

Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association, along with two Nassau school districts, have been granted permission by the Court to intervene in a lawsuit by Nassau County Legislator Roger Corbin, that seeks to stop Nassau County from making back payments for tax certiorari errors made in their assessments. Should he succeed, school districts and other taxing districts would be responsible for back payments of successful tax certiorari challenges.

"N-SSBA takes the county's action very seriously with the payment of \$100 million in back certioraris at stake," N-SSBA President Jim Kaden said.

In a similar matter, N-SSBA has also filed an intention to submit an *amicus brief* in the Matter of the New York Telephone Co. v. the Supervisor of the Town of North Hempstead, et al, in which Nassau County seeks to expedite a decision to allow it to divest itself of its responsibility for back payment of erroneous assessments.

## MTA Payroll Tax Halted...For Now

We did it!!!

Together, we blocked the MTA payroll tax, once considered a done deal by the NYS Democratic leadership. The Association's advocacy efforts were unrelenting in communicating with Long Island's NYS Senate and Assembly delegation.

N-SSBA's uncovering of the proposal ignited passionate opposition from the Association's members, superintendents and business officials. Educational organizations in the MTA regions north of New York City jumped on board as a result of N-SSBA's efforts to reach out to other affected areas. They credit N-SSBA with alerting them to the tax and mobilizing the opposition that halted the proposal.

Following the publication of Jim Kaden's letter to the editor of *Newsday* (March 2, 2009) citing a \$24.4 million price tag to the region's schools, *Newsday* followed up with two editorials aligned with N-SSBA's position.

Efforts to thwart the enactment of payroll tax have succeeded because our collective "one voice" was heard! **HOWEVER...**

### ..." It Ain't Over 'Til Its Over!"

Until the Legislature has resolved the MTA's financial woes, pressure on Long Island's NYS Legislators must be maintained. Senator Smith is now reaching out to Republicans to garner support for the proposal. Please contact your State Senator and Assembly Member, and:

Governor David A. Paterson, Office of the Governor  
Phone: 518-474-8390 Fax: 518-486-1513

Speaker of the Assembly Sheldon Silver  
Phone: 518-455-3791 Fax: 518-455-5459

Senate Majority Leader Malcolm Smith  
Phone: 518-455-2701 Fax: 518-455-2816

Remind them that schools are not an ATM for the MTA!

### Why We Oppose the MTA Payroll Tax

Nowhere but in the increasingly bizarre world of New York State government would school budgets be raided to fund a transit system.

But it's not just the money, though a \$24.4 million hit cost to Long Island schools and its taxpayers is reason enough to oppose it.

What is equally disconcerting is that once a tax is imposed on school payrolls, it opens a new revenue stream that could be tapped whenever the MTA or any other quasi governmental authority runs short of funds. Any tax on school payrolls, be it .33%, .25% or even .0001%, will leave school budgets vulnerable to future increases.

As school districts are among the largest employers on Long Island, the bulk of the payroll tax funding for the MTA bailout would come from the most overburdened source of government revenues...the local property tax.

### Counties Respond to N-SSBA's Recommendation on Heroin Notification

Both Nassau and Suffolk County governments have created websites to track heroin activity as proposed by N-SSBA.

The websites may be viewed at:

gis.co.suffolk.ny.us/SCDMI/  
police.co.nassau.ny.us/pdf/HeroinArrests.pdf.

## N-SSBA - Watching Your Back In Albany

Nearly 50 school board members from Long Island were among the approximately 350 state-wide who participated in New York State School Boards Association's (NYSSBA) State Issues Conference, (formerly the State Legislative Network), held at "The Egg" in downtown Albany, March 1-3. The conference offered the opportunity to hear directly from state leaders on their perspective of issues and decisions in Albany that impact local school districts.

N-SSBA provided each Long Island participant with a packet that included N-SSBA's Legislative Priorities and a letter from **Jim Kaden**, highlighting talking points on topics of regional concern to N-SSBA members.

N-SSBA Executive Committee members **James Brennan, Alicemarie Bresnihan, Liz Dragone, Ronald Ellerbe, Maryanne Lehrer, Mary Jo O'Hagan, Patricia Rudd**; along with NYSSBA Area Directors **Susan Bergtraum** and **Fred Langstaff**; and N-SSBA Executive Director **Lorraine Deller** and Communications/Research Director **Myra Vaughn**, who coordinated N-SSBA and NYSSBA advocacy.

They were joined by school board members from: **North Shore, New Hyde Park, Lynbrook, Seaford, Nassau BOCES, Sewanhaka, East Williston, New Hyde Park-Garden City, Oceanside, Valley Stream Central HS, Freeport, Baldwin, Oyster Bay-East Norwich, Massapequa, Elmont, Middle Country, Eastern Suffolk BOCES, Harborfields, East Islip, Bay Shore, Riverhead, Sayville, Northport-East Northport, Copiague, Amityville, Mattituck-Cutchogue, Hauppauge, Central Islip, South Huntington, Center Moriches** and **Shoreham-Wading River School Districts**.

## Suozzi's Stance on Tax Cap Unaltered

Nassau County Executive Tom Suozzi continues to push for a property tax cap. Standing on the dais with the leadership of LIFER (Long Islanders for Educational Reform) on March 25, Mr. Suozzi reiterated his call for a 4 percent cap on school property tax increases.

Concurrently, Mr. Suozzi sought to push the county's costs for pre-school special education on to school districts. His county attorney is supporting a move to shift the county's responsibility for back payment of tax certioraris to school districts. He has remained mute on the proposal to impose the .33% MTA tax on school district payrolls.

## DATES TO REMEMBER

Date	Event	Location
June 1st	N-SSBA Annual Dinner	Woodbury Country Club, Woodbury/6:30 PM