



VOLUME NO. 82 – AUGUST 2008

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

"We must, indeed, all hang together, or most assuredly we shall all hang separately." – Benjamin Franklin

Franklin's adage has as much meaning today as it did centuries ago. It certainly applies to our most pressing issues: high property taxes and the threat of a school property tax cap.

While the school property tax cap has been propelled forward by the Governor and the Senate, it is imperative that we continue to be vocal in our opposition and work to ensure a broader understanding of the devastating impact of a tax cap.

We cannot accept a school property tax cap as a done deal, nor can we afford to believe it won't resurface.

The N-SSBA recently distributed a *Position Paper on the School Property Tax Cap* to our members, elected officials, other educational organizations and the media. (www.nssba.org – click listing under Updates).

Cablevision's recent editorial endorsed the tax cap, but did not blame schools for their spending habits. The editorial viewed the cap as a way to force the state to come up with funding that addresses the unfair treatment of suburban schools. As N-SSBA's president, I was invited to respond to the editorial to present our position. (See related article).

Long Island will not see real school property tax relief until the state picks up its fair share of school funding. However, given the current state fiscal crisis, it is unlikely that well-intended legislation to address mandate relief, health insurance and pension contributions, and energy costs will be adequately funded.

The governor called the state legislators back to Albany in August to deal with a fiscal crisis equated to that faced in 1991-92. We don't need a reminder that Long Island took the brunt of the massive state aid cuts at the time and our region never fully recovered.

And therein lies our greatest concern.

Were the state to again renege on its funding obligations, this tax cap would hamper Long Island's ability to protect the fiscal and educational integrity of our schools.

Depending on state aid and other factors, the impact of a 4 percent cap varies widely by district, but could limit spending increases to as little as 1%.

This cap would not relieve Long Island's tax burden, but it would render us helpless to prevent the dismantling of the schools our communities have striven to build and sustain.

On Tuesday, September 23, the conversation will continue when we are joined for dinner by the Nassau County Council of School Superintendents and the Suffolk County School Superintendents Association for, *"Critical Issue: School Property Tax Cap – Long Island in the Crosshairs."*

Please come "hang together."

*PRESIDENT KADEN RESPONDS
TO TAX CAP EDITORIAL*

N-SSBA President Jim Kaden accepted Cablevision's offer to respond to an editorial, "Tax Cap Decision," which supported the school property tax cap. Mr. Kaden's response was broadcast on Tues., August 19th as the State Legislature reconvened in Albany to address the state's fiscal crisis.

"Cablevision trusts that a cap on school property taxes would force Albany to bring changes to the state aid formula that treats suburban school districts unfairly. The Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association does not share this optimism," he said.

The invitation gave N-SSBA a forum to highlight the association's opposition to the school property cap issue. For the full text of his reply see www.nssba.org, click listing under Updates.

**NASSAU-SUFFOLK
SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION**

**N-SSBA DINNER MEETING
Discussion on Resolutions for
NYSSBA Annual Business Meeting**

PLEASE BRING YOUR RESOLUTIONS BOOKLET
FOR DISCUSSION OF THE
NYSSBA BUSINESS MEETING RESOLUTIONS

**Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association
Nassau County Council of School Superintendents
Suffolk County School Superintendents Association**

Present

**CRITICAL ISSUE:
SCHOOL PROPERTY TAX CAP -
LONG ISLAND IN THE CROSSHAIRS**

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2008

**FOX HOLLOW, Woodbury
6:30 p.m.**

See Your District Clerk or Superintendent for Registration

*N-SSBA REPRESENTATIVE ADDRESSES
PROPERTY TAX COMMISSION*

Mary Jo O'Hagan, secretary/treasurer of the Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Executive Committee, testified before the New York State Commission on Property Tax Relief and Commissioner Tom Suozzi on March 5, 2008. N-SSBA was one of approximately 15 organizations from Long Island invited to address the Commission.

With the primary mission of the commission to "devise an effective cap on local school property taxes," Mrs. O'Hagan reminded members that, "there *is* a cap on school budget increases and it rightfully rests with those on whom the immediate consequences of the support or rejection of a proposed school budget would fall.....the local property taxpayers. Our Association has long held that no caps be imposed limiting the right of a community to determine the expenditures necessary to maintain the educational and fiscal integrity of its school district."

Mrs. O'Hagan pointed out that property taxes on Long Island are high due to insufficient state funding, not excessive spending. She appealed to the Commission to examine the root causes of high property taxes.

*BOARD MEMBERS HONORED
AT ANNUAL DINNER*

B.A. Schoen, (Baldwin), and Steven Foster (Island Park), earned special recognition for their board service at the Annual Dinner in June.

“Choosing from the many nominations was a daunting task, but we are confident that these tributes recognize a cross section of those individuals who have dedicated themselves to building and sustaining Long Island’s quality public schools,” Committee Chairperson Jay Breakstone said. The selection committee members also included Fran Greenspan and Mary Jo O’Hagan.

Distinguished Service Award

B.A. Schoen, a member of the Baldwin Board of Education for 12 years, including two as president, was the recipient of a Distinguished Service Award, presented to an individual whose outstanding leadership has had a positive impact on the scene of public education.

“Of all the titles our recipient has held, the one that describes him best is “ambassador” – literally an ambassador with the New York State School Boards Association, but also an ambassador for the town he grew up in and loves so well, an ambassador for public education, and foremost, an ambassador for all children,” Mrs. O’Hagan said in presenting the award.

“Through his service and leadership on the Baldwin Board of Education, his passionate support for fair state funding of education as president of R.E.F.I.T., and his legislative advocacy B.A. Schoen brings honor to all school board trustees,” Mrs. O’Hagan added.

Silver Bullet Award

Steven Foster, a member of the Island Park Board of Education for 27 years, was the recipient of a “Silver Bullet Award,” which was established by the Distinguished Service Committee to honor board members who provide stability of leadership and serve as mentors to the boards on which they serve.

“During ordinary times, it is unusual to find motivated individuals who would willingly make the personal and financial sacrifice expected of those who run for school board office,” Mr. Breakstone said. “In these extra-ordinary times, however, it is astonishing to discover individuals who have made a long-term commitment to board service, often extending well beyond 25 years,” he said of the Silver Bullet Award recipient.

*NYSSBA’S DAVID LITTLE ADDRESSES
N-SSMA’S 49TH ANNUAL MEETING*

David Little, the Director of Governmental Relations for the New York State School Boards Association for the past decade, delivered the keynote address to the 100 school leaders in attendance at Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association’s (N-SSBA) 49th Annual Meeting on June 2. His address, *Money and Tenure and Wicks - Oh MY!*, provided a poignant perspective of the challenges facing NYSSBA members, while highlighting some of the successes achieved on behalf of public schools over this past year.

Mr. Little praised the efforts of school board members to overcome the odds. From small rural upstate schools to schools in the Long Island region, the state funding mechanism does not provide adequate funding for education. “State aid inadequacy in relation to the percentage of the cost of the total enterprise completely controls the correlation between local costs and local tax increases...This is not some indiscriminate cosmic perversion...it is an ordinary, if complex dilemma subject to analysis and correction.

“Together, we *have* and *will* overcome even this,” he said.

You Are Invited to

N-SSBA's Reception at the
New York State School Boards Association's
2008 Summer Institute for
School Board Members

Saturday, September 6th, 8:30 PM – Midnight
"The Lodge" at The Desmond

Please join your colleagues from Nassau and Suffolk Counties when you attend NYSSBA's Summer Institute in Albany. Whether you enroll in the veteran board member track, "Critical Issues – Critical Times," or the new school board member track, "School Board Fundamentals," you will gain an additional benefit from this weekend of training by networking with other area board members and discussing issues of common concern.

DATES TO REMEMBER

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
Sept. 4	N-SSBA Joint Finance/Legislation Committee Meeting	Western Suffolk BOCES, Dix Hills
Sept. 5-7	NYSSBA Summer Institute for School Board Members	The Desmond, Albany
Sept. 12	NYSSBA Media Relations Boot Camp	Plainview
Sept. 18	N-SSBA Executive Committee Meeting	Western Suffolk BOCES, Dix Hills
Sept. 23	N-SSBA Resolutions Dinner Meeting	Fox Hollow, Woodbury
Sept. 25	R.E.F.I.T. Annual Dinner	Stuart Thomas Manor, Farmingdale

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