



VOLUME NO. 84 – OCTOBER 2008

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Concern over Governor Paterson's push for a school property tax cap has been ratcheted up a notch as the economy falters and school aid is jeopardized. Long Island Schools, with their considerable dependence on High Tax Air, are most vulnerable to the posturing of Albany lawmakers as they seek cuts to the state budget.

Those in attendance at the Resolutions Dinner had the opportunity to hear three eye-opening, research-based presentations on the fiscal implications of a school property tax cap. We are grateful to our speakers for their perspectives of the consequences of capping local revenues, both intended and unintended. Their message was underlined by hard-hitting historical data, as well as financial projections for a sampling of local school districts. **See link below for figures for individual districts.*

Your Association has a broader concern beyond the looming threat posed by a tax cap. ***It remains our mission to defend the governance authority of locally elected boards of education.*** On your behalf, we actively resist efforts to usurp this authority by other levels of government, editorial boards and civic activists, all of whom are eager to force their agenda, but loathe to answer for the results. It will be local school board members who remain on the front line when communities erupt in opposition to tax cap forced cuts to educational programs.

Just think of it, with a school property tax cap in place, the State of New York would control both main sources of your school revenues – its own share and that from your property tax base – while at the same time manipulating STAR payments and continuing to impose mandates that hijack your ability to control costs.

In the end, however, it will be your community that sustains the biggest loss. A ceiling on the local revenue contribution prevents the voters from determining the investment they wish to make to maintain the quality of their schools. Coupled with state aid cutbacks, a local tax cap restriction would render a community helpless to protest the school system it has striven to build and sustain.

The bandwagon mentality fueling the tax cap momentum has not slowed. However, there is a short window of opportunity prior to Election Day to deliver some sense to the decision makers. Bring to your State Senators and Assembly members an understanding of what a tax cap would truly mean to their constituents in your school district. Inform them of the immediate and long-term impact that placing a popular agenda ahead of a sound fiscal agenda will have on your community's schools.

The clock is ticking.

*Visit <http://www.suffolksuperintendents.org/index.html>, for all Nassau and Suffolk School Districts' projections under a tax cap. Click "View Reports" on the right side; under "Information," see "Reports," and click the appropriate link for Nassau or Suffolk County Tax Cap Scenarios.



HE'S BACK!
David Little to Address N-SSBA at December Dinner

David Little will join us at the N-SSBA 49th Semi-Annual Dinner Meeting on December 2, 2008 to share his unique perspective from Albany of what has been going on in recent months, then he'll peek into his crystal ball for a look ahead. The news may not be good, but it will be honest and delivered with Mr. Little's keen sense of humor.

ADVOCACY EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF N-SSBA

N-SSBA has responded to NYSSBA's "Call to Action" by writing letters to Governor Paterson, urging the veto of bills that were not in the best interest of Long Island ` school districts:

- Establishment of a Retiree Health Insurance Task Force (A. 9393-a Abbate/S. 6457-a Farley). *The bill was vetoed.*
- A Bill that would enable local governments to pass off the cost of crossing guards to school districts (A. 9381 John/S. 5110 Little). *The bill was vetoed.*
- N-SSBA has written to the Long Island Senate and Assembly Delegations on the delay in the release of Local Records Management Grants. *The funds have since been released.*

WELCOME BACK!
Rocky Point and Wantagh School Boards
have rejoined N-SSBA



Join Us!

**At the NYSSBA Conference for the
Upstate/Downstate Resolutions Discussion**

*Open discussion of proposed NYSSBA Resolutions
led by Westchester-Putnam SBA.
N-SSBA will join Erie County ASB, Four County SBA,
Genesee Valley SBA, Monroe County SBA,
Rockland County SBA, Westchester-Putnam SBA,
and Niagara-Orleans SBA*

**Friday, October 17th - 5 – 6 PM
The Sheraton New York Hotel & Towers
Riverside Ballroom – Third Floor**

No fee. No reservations necessary

N-SSBA HOSTS RECEPTION AT SUMMER INSTITUTES

Executive Committee members **Maryanne Lehrer** and **Martin Kaye**, along with NYSSBA Area 11 Director **Susan Bergtraum** and Area 12 Director **Fred Langstaff** welcomed more than 70 Long Island school board members and NYSSBA's leadership and staff to N-SSBA's Reception at the Summer Institutes for New and Veteran School Board Members in Albany, September 6th. The venue provided participants with an opportunity to network and discuss the various sessions.

N-SSBA REPS ATTEND ANNUAL R.E.F.I.T. DINNER WHERE MATTHEW CROSSON SPEAKS

Mary Jo O'Hagan, **Ron Ellerbe**, **Juliet Jordon-Thompson**, **Edward Murphy**, **Brian Sales**, **Sandra Townsend**, Area 12 Director **Fred Langstaff**, and Executive Director **Lorraine Deller** represented N-SSBA at the R.E.F.I.T. Annual Meeting.

LIA President Matthew Crosson focused on concerns that "should a property tax cap drive down Long Island's quality of education, in reality or reputation, there will be a quick-fire effect on our economy and quality of life." The LIA was advised by a government planning expert that there couldn't be a worse time to implement a cap that when this region is competing with other areas of the country to attract a talented and creative workforce. "Education is the top priority of a 'creative class' that is now more mobile and able to migrate to where all of the circumstances of life are optimum for raising a family. Long Island needs these people to come and state. It cannot afford to let its reputation for high quality education evaporate," he concluded.

N-SSBA ON THE MOVE

Mary Jo O'Hagan, Secretary/Treasurer provided N-SSBA's invited testimony at the September 9th **Hearing of the Property Tax Relief Commission**, focusing on special education costs and mandates.

N-SSBA was represented at the **Assembly Republican Regional Education Forum on State Education Funding and Its Impact on Our Schools**. Executive Director **Lorraine Deller** provided the panel, chaired by Assemblyman Fred Thiele, with data for Long Island comparing the percentage of state aid vs. local tax levy for the years 1989-90 to 2007-08. She also shared information on the Foundation Formula and special education costs.

LIEC (Long Island Education Coalition) Co-Chair and N-SSBA Liaison **Judith Chen**, chaired the September 9 meeting of the coalition. **N-SSBA's Mary Jo O'Hagan**, **Lana Ajemian**, Executive Director **Lorraine Deller**; and Communications/Research Director **Myra Vaughn** represented the Association in coordinating strategies to improve public understanding of the true impact of capping schools' local revenues.

RESOLUTIONS DINNER/PROPERTY TAX CAP PROGRAM ATTRACTS LARGE TURNOUT

"I never expected to be dealing with a property tax cap in New York State," Iris Lav, Deputy Director of the Center of Budget and Policy Priorities told more than 150 guests at September's **N-SSBA Annual Resolutions Dinner** and program: "**Critical Issue: School Property Tax Cap – Long Island in the Crosshairs.**"

Ms. Lav, one of the program's three featured speakers, shared her "Six Lessons on Property Tax Caps," based on the outcomes of other states with tax caps. She said the NY cap is the only cap in the nation that affects just schools; it is far more damaging than those in other localities where they have places other than schools to cut. She said a well-crafted circuit breaker would be a far better solution to high property taxes.

Herb Brown, Ed.D., Superintendent of Oceanside School District and Treasurer and Legislation Chairperson of the Nassau County Council of School Superintendents (NCCSS) demonstrated the damage that was done to California's schools, with the exception of communities (400) that had the resources to create foundations to supplement their budgets. He also provided 18 years of state aid data for Long Island (1989-90 – 2007-08), showing the annual increases in local property taxes resulting from the decline in the percentage of districts' budgets funded by state aid.

Gary Bixhorn, Chief Operating Officer of Eastern Suffolk BOCES and the Legislation Chairperson of the Suffolk County School Superintendents Association (SCSSA) highlighted a variety of scenarios depicting the impact of the tax cap. "Individual district projections will provide the best indication of the impact of the tax cap on a particular community," he said. (See link, page one.)

Vice President Jay Breakstone chaired the program with **Martin Kaye**, Legislation Vice Chairperson, leading the discussion and review of the NYSSBA resolutions. Mr. Breakstone, Chair of Board In-Service, focused his remarks on "**Protecting the Governance Authority of Locally Elected Boards of Education.**"



DATES TO REMEMBER



DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
Oct. 5-7	NYSCOSS Fall Conference	Saratoga Springs
Oct. 7	CANCELLED: N-SSBA Legislation Committee Meeting	
Oct. 16-19	NYSSBA Convention	New York City
Oct. 20	N-SSBA Finance Committee Meeting	Western Suffolk BOCES, Dix Hills
Nov. 13	N-SSBA Executive Committee Meeting	Western Suffolk BOCES, Dix Hills
Nov. 15	NYSSBA Fiscal Oversight Workshop	Long Island

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