

# newsline

NASSAU-SUFFOLK SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

Volume No. 87 — March 2009

## President's Corner

Let's set the record straight.

State aid is not a munificent annual gift doled out by the state to school districts.

It's an obligation.

The New York State Constitution places responsibility for public education with both the state and the local governments. That being said, if one entity fails to live up to its share of the partnership, particularly with respect to mandated costs, the burden falls squarely on the other.

To be more succinct...when New York State defaults on its constitutional commitment, local property taxpayers pay the price. No where is this more evident than on Long Island, where the Governor has targeted taxpayers to assume the greatest share of the state's default on its portion of school funding.

Despite reassurance from the governor, it is too soon to determine the effect of the federal stimulus money on the Executive Budget's allocation of state aid to Long Island school districts or his proposal to penalize the region through his Deficit Reduction Plan, where the loss is 42% higher than the rest of the state!

No one has to tell school board members that we have a fiscal crisis, but it is incumbent upon Governor Paterson to pare back equitably, and to accompany his "pull back" with a corresponding easing of mandates. The governor has failed to provide any meaningful mandate relief in his Executive Budget.

Instead, Governor Paterson advocates the shifting of state financial obligations to other levels of government. He has proposed dumping the burden of pre-school special education costs currently funded by the state and counties, directly on to school budgets. This action would shift in excess of \$37 million in county and state obligations directly on to the region's school property tax levy.

And it's not the only new cost lurking. The governor is supporting the Metropolitan Transit Authority's (M.T.A.) proposed .33% payroll tax. School districts, as employers, would be taxed \$.33 on every \$100 of wages paid, thereby adding \$11.6 to Nassau and \$12.8 million to Suffolk 2009-2010 school budgets!

Last year, the synergy of our school and business leaders working with Long Island's Senate delegation kept Long Island's schools from being flat lined under the governor's budget. Be assured that your Association has renewed its commitment to join with you to SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE and SPEAK TO BE HEARD in advocating for Long Island and its schools!

It's time to circle the wagons once again to protect Long Island schools and fight for fairness in education funding. 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.

Let's set the record straight...again.



## School Leaders Tackle Fiscal Challenges

One hundred seventy-five school board members and school officials participated in "SURVIVOR: Long Island – Confronting and Managing Financial Challenges, on January 27.

"The program explored the dynamics of the economic crisis from the White House to the State House to the school house and finally to *your* house," N-SSBA President Jim Kaden said.

Matthew Crosson, President of the Long Island Association and keynote speaker called for political unity of the business, education and labor communities. "Circle the wagons!" he advised.

Gary Bixhorn, Chief Operating Officer of Eastern Suffolk BOCES, exposed the governor's Deficit Reduction Assessment (DRA) figures as reducing aid to Long Island at a rate that is 42% higher than the rest of the state. He also shared SCSSA's proposed School Property Tax Reform Act, calling for state funding of 50% of the cost of special education, health insurance and pension costs.

In his *Cautionary Tale*, Dr. Herb Brown, Superintendent of Oceanside UFSD, urged districts to prepare a three-year projected budget, warning them of increases in pension contributions as high as 12% in 2011-2012, while contingency budget caps could fall to between zero and 1.7%.

The program culminated with the unveiling of the Thomas Conoscenti Report, "Education: An Economic Powerhouse—School District Operations and Long Island's Economy 2008-09," which concludes that education is a \$10.7 billion industry and accounts for 9.2% of Long Island gross regional product. He estimates that Governor Paterson's cuts to Long Island schools could result in the loss of 5,531 total jobs and -\$447.2 million to the region's economy. The report was funded by N-SSBA, SCSSA and SCOPE Education Services.

### OPPOSE THE MTA PROPOSED PAYROLL TAX!

**Cost to Nassau School Districts: \$11.6 million**

**Cost to Suffolk School Districts: \$12.8 million**

Governor Paterson is seeking a .33% new payroll tax on all employers within the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) region, including Nassau and Suffolk Counties. This is *not* an employee tax, but a direct tax on employers, including school districts.

**Governor David A. Paterson  
State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224**

Let him know what his proposal will cost your school district. Please copy your State Legislators on any correspondence.

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LORRAINE DELLER, Executive Director

## Behalf Of N-SSBA

- Executive Committee members **Jim Brennan, Alicemarie Bresnihan, Maryanne Lehrer and Patricia Rudd**, NYSSBA Area 12 Director **Fred Langstaff**, as well as **Angel Cepeda, Fran Langsner, Joel Petersen, B.A.Schoen, Michelle Sikhrangkur and Gale Ross-Srulevich** joined forces with school board members nationwide at the National School Boards Association's (NSBA) Federal Relations Network in Washington, DC. as appointees for Long Island's five Congressional Districts. The three-day conference held in early February was well timed as decisions on the federal stimulus package were being finalized. The appointees met with Senators Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, Congressmen Gary Ackerman and Timothy Bishop, Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy; and the legislative aides for Congressmen Steve Israel and Peter King. Representing N-SSBA were **Lorraine Deller and Myra Vaughn**.
- President Jim Kaden** testified before the New York State Assembly Ways and Means Committee Public Hearing on the 2009-10 Executive Budget, outlining N-SSBA's legislative priorities, including the governor's over burdensome and inequitable Deficit Reduction Assessment, inherent problems with the Foundation Aid Formula, charter school funding, opposition to the property tax cap, efforts with BOCES to share services and increase efficiencies, and repeal of the Wick's Law. He sited the Conoscenti Report on the positive impact of education on Long Island's economy.
- N-SSBA President Jim Kaden, Lorraine Deller and Myra Vaughn**, represented N-SSBA at the Suffolk County School Superintendent Association's (SCSSA) Third Annual Advocacy Workshop for the purpose of training school district teams on key legislative issues. Participants heard from members of Suffolk County's State Senate and Assembly delegation.
- N-SSBA President Jim Kaden, Lorraine Deller and Myra Vaughn** representing N-SSBA, united with 1500 other voices from the education community at the Long Island Education/Taxpayer Rally held February 28. Former N-SSBA President and LIEC Co-Chair **Judith Chen** delivered the keynote address: *Speak with One Voice-Speak to be Heard*.
- Copies of the Thomas Conoscenti Report, "Education: An Economic Powerhouse—School District Operations and Long Island's Economy 2008-09," were distributed to school board members, members of the Long Island's NYS Senate and Assembly delegation, and the press.
- N-SSBA President Jim Kaden** was a panelist for Dowling's Long Island Economic and Social Policy Institute "Symposium on New York State's Budget and the Impact on Long Island Education," that also featured Senator Kenneth LaValle, Assemblywoman Ginny Fields, Professor Richard Walter and John Hildebrand.
- N-SSBA responded to the governor's support of the MTA payroll tax with a letter to the editor of **Newsday** from **Jim Kaden**, explaining its impact on school property taxes (published March 3, 2009). Letters were also sent to Governor David Paterson, Senate Majority Leader Malcolm Smith, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and Long Island's NYS Senate and Assembly delegation.
- Secretary/Treasurer Mary Jo O'Hagan** provided N-SSBA's legislative positions at the NCCSS/N-SSBA/Nassau Region PTA Legislative Advocacy Meeting, co-sponsored by N-SSBA.

- President Jim Kaden** delivered the keynote address at the Longwood Regional Legislative Breakfast on February 7, at which Congressman Timothy Bishop, State Senators Kenneth P. LaValle, John Flanagan and Brian Foley; and Assembly members Marc Alessi, Patricia Eddington, Steve Englebright, Michael Fitzpatrick and Fred Thiele focused on key legislative concerns to Long Island and fielded questions from school board members. **Lorraine Deller and Myra Vaughn** were among the 200 guests.

## N-SSBA on the Move

Your interests were represented at the following events since early January:

- Long Island Association's (LIA) Opening Day Reception in at the Legislative Office Building in Albany following Governor Paterson's State-of-the-State address. N-SSBA's **Mary Jo O'Hagan, Jay Breakstone** were accompanied by **Lorraine Deller and Myra Vaughn**. They met with members of Long Island Senate and Assembly delegation, county executives, Regents and key state government officials.
- Long Island Education Coalition (LIEC) meeting in January, chaired by **Judith Chen**, hosted Matthew Crosson, Long Island Association President (LIA), and Senator John Flanagan. In attendance were **Mary Jo O'Hagan, Lorraine Deller and Myra Vaughn** for N-SSBA, and **Lana Ajemian** for Nassau Region PTA.
- An informational meeting of the *School and Municipal Savings Initiative: Opportunities for Efficiencies Through Shared Services, A Cooperative Effort by Nassau County, Nassau School Districts and Nassau BOCES*, where **Mary Jo O'Hagan** provided N-SSBA's position.
- The Long Island Association's Executive Breakfast with the County Executives Steve Levy and Tom Suozzi. Representing N-SSBA were **Mary Jo O'Hagan, Maryanne Lehrer, Susan Bergtraum, Steve Witt, Lorraine Deller and Myra Vaughn**.
- The Long Island Association's Congressional Breakfast with Congressmen Timothy Bishop, Steve Israel and Gary Ackerman. The economy and the impact of the federal stimulus package to Long Island were the main topics. **Mary Jo O'Hagan, Maryanne Lehrer, Patricia Rudd, Susan Bergtraum, Fred Langstaff, Lorraine Deller and Myra Vaughn** attended.
- The WLIW/ITV meeting in preparation for the Celebration of Teaching and Learning Conference, March 6 and 7, at which N-SSBA was represented by Executive Committee member **Maryanne Lehrer**, who serves as N-SSBA's liaison and is a member of the ITV (Instructional Television) Board.

### LEGISLATIVE ALERT!

**Governor Paterson's proposal to shift costs for pre-school special education would transfer in excess of \$37 million from the state and county directly on to the backs of school property taxpayers in Nassau and Suffolk Counties.**

**Let your NYS Senate and Assembly Members know what this will cost your local taxpayers.**

### DATES TO REMEMBER

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
March 12	N-SSBA Legislation Committee Meeting	Western Suffolk BOCES/7:30 PM
March 17	NYSSBA's <i>Need Help Passing Your School Budget?</i>	Island Marriot Long Island/9 AM—Noon
March 19	N-SSBA Executive Committee Meeting	Western Suffolk BOCES/7:30 PM

[Save the Date! N-SSBA's ANNUAL DINNER—Woodbury Country Club, MONDAY, JUNE 1st](#)