



Breaking news on the state budget

NYSUT News Wire - April 9, 2008

NYSUT's Legislative Department team has been working around the clock lobbying in the halls of the State Capitol as state budget negotiations were finalized. NYSUT Executive Vice President Alan Lubin said there is significant good news, especially in light of the state's economy. He said the union will continue pressing the Legislature for higher education budget improvements, terming as "completely unacceptable" the cuts SUNY and CUNY would face along with other state agencies.

Here is the Legislative Department's summary of highlights from the 2008-09 state budget agreement finalized today:

- Overall increase in general state support for public schools would be \$1.745 billion.
- Foundation aid would increase \$1.2 billion, including \$533 million for New York City. NYSUT sees this as a strong commitment during the current economic downturn.
- All districts would receive a minimum 3 percent increase in foundation aid.
- BOCES would be funded at present levels; the Executive Budget would have cut \$78 million.
- Universal Pre-Kindergarten is slated for a \$97 million increase. No additional flexibility in the use of funds was provided.
- High tax aid would increase by \$102 million over 2007-08 levels. Three tiers of eligibility would be used to distribute aid.
- Supplemental Public Excess Cost Aid would be funded at 15 percent of last year's level for a statewide total of \$3.9 million.
- Aid for Academic Improvement – a new aid category – would be created for districts that are not components of BOCES. Funding would be unrestricted general aid for a total of \$36 million statewide.
- Teacher Center and Teacher Mentor Intern funding are restored at current level.

Higher Education

- SUNY campuses would be cut \$38 million in operating aid.
- CUNY campuses would be cut \$17.7 million in operating aid.
- The Legislature added \$1 million for a nursing program at CUNY.
- The Legislature added \$1.1 million for SUNY's Theatre Institute to cover negotiated salary increases.

- The Legislature fully restored the Executive Budget proposed cuts of \$120 per FTE for community colleges (\$20.4 million).
- The proposed increased state subsidy for SUNY's hospitals of \$7.8 million would be maintained for a total subsidy of \$154.1 million.
- The Legislature restored cuts to the Tuition Assistance Program and Higher Education Opportunity Programs. The state budget does not authorize tuition increases for SUNY or CUNY.
- The budget agreement provides a statutory framework for a public higher education endowment to be administered by the state comptroller. When funds are created, the comptroller shall deposit both public funds and private funds into the endowment. The endowment shall be used for the hiring of full-time faculty, financial aid to improve student access and to enhance the research capacity at SUNY and CUNY.
- The state budget would provide some combat veterans with tuition assistance benefits equal to the cost of SUNY undergraduate tuition.

Education-related Article VII Provisions

NYSUT beat back a huge push by the State School Boards Association and NYC Schools Chancellor Joel Klein to tie teacher tenure to student test scores. The tenure amendments, which prohibit the use of student test scores in tenure determinations, would have a two-year sunset clause. As NYSUT President Dick Iannuzzi told the New York Times, "Student assessments are designed to assess students, not teachers." He said the Assembly and Senate wisely recognized the potential for misuse of student test scores in making tenure decisions.

Both houses rejected the preschool special education cost shift from the state to the school districts and included \$42 million in state funding in the budget to pay for it.

Contract for Excellence

- Number of C4E districts reduced from 56 to 39
- School districts will now be required to complete a Contract for Excellence if they are in corrective action or restructuring status OR if they have been identified as a school requiring academic progress or a School in Need of Improvement year two or above.
- A new multi-tiered process is constructed to determine the amount of new C4E funding that must be spent on C4E purposes. Additional flexibility is provided to allow some districts to use up to 50 percent of their new funding to maintain current programs.
- Academic after-school programs and Limited English Proficiency programs are added to the C4E menu of allowable purposes.

School Resource Officers - Former Gov. Eliot Spitzer's budget called for reassigning the 92 troopers assigned to school buildings across New York. Instead of working on school safety and with students, they would have been assigned to Operation Impact to aid local

police in high-crime areas. Talks between Gov. Paterson and the state legislative leaders have killed those plans.

[NYSUT: A Union of Professionals](#). NYSUT represents more than 585,000 teachers, school-related professionals, academic and professional faculty in higher education, professionals in education and health care and retirees. NYSUT is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association and the AFL-CIO. NYSUT.org. Copyright New York State United Teachers. 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, New York,