



NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

NEWS RELEASE

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Statement of NYS Council of School Superintendents on Property Tax Cap Legislation

“Over the past three years, school district leaders have worked hard to hold down local tax increases, despite having to cope with continuing cuts in state aid and surging costs for pensions and health insurance.

“Aid cuts and employee benefit costs are the two factors that have prevented our school districts from achieving lower spending and tax increases. Like the proposal from the Governor that was previously passed by the Senate, the newest proposal does nothing to address these forces.

“Tax cap proposals allow state officials to say they have solved a tough problem. But they leave it to school district leaders and local voters to take all the tough actions actually required to balance what schoolchildren need and what the tax cap will fund.

“This year for example, school districts proposed budgets which raised taxes by an average of 3.4 percent, despite a third straight year of cuts and freezes in state aid. They proposed spending increases averaging 1.3 percent, despite costs for pensions and health insurance that would have driven up overall spending by more than 2.5 percent, even if all other costs could have been frozen.

“In other words, this year schools had to cut everything else, on balance, in order to fund benefit costs and hold overall spending down as low as they did. The tax cap would have forced deeper reductions in staffing and programs.

“We are especially disappointed that the proposal would establish minority rule in school budgeting decisions and say that the votes of school supporters should count less than those of others. It would require a 60 percent majority to approve tax levy increases. Municipalities would require only a simple majority to over-ride the cap.”

Robert J. Reidy
Executive Director

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