

May 2004

Education

From the NYS Assembly • Sheldon Silver, Speaker
Steve Sanders • Chair, Education Committee

Assembly Majority to Governor and Senate:

Don't turn your backs on the future of our children

Governor's missed deadlines mean missed opportunities

We face a July 30 deadline to satisfy a court ruling requiring the state to provide children with a sound, basic education. Yet, the governor has repeatedly dragged his feet to find a solution to the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) ruling by:

- Waging a \$12 million legal battle to argue – fortunately without success – that an eighth grade education is enough
- Waiting two months after the court's June 26, 2003 ruling to appoint yet another commission, headed by Frank Zarb, to study education funding issues
- Setting a March 1 deadline for the Zarb commission's report, well after the date required to present his budget
- Allowing the commission to postpone a release of its report until just two days before the April 1 budget deadline – a report that did little to advance a solution

The consequences of continued delay are serious. Without a timely agreement, the court will appoint a

What the experts are saying...

"If, instead, they do what Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno (R-Brunswick) suggested recently and punt to the courts, the result could be devastating. For one thing, since the original State Supreme Court ruling only dealt with New York City schools, any solution the court might come up with after July 30 may affect city schools only - 38 percent of the state's schoolchildren."

- Newsday
May 9, 2004

"Abdicating authority to the court would heap chaos on top of chaos. Because the case involves only New York City, a response coming from the court would be limited to redressing funding inequity there. More money would be ordered for the city, likely bringing on the 'Robin Hood' effect state leaders and the statewide school community hope to avoid: robbing from 'rich' districts to help the poor one... To his credit, Silver isn't buying into Bruno's buck-passing."

- Editorial, The Journal News,
May 2, 2004

"Senators can't afford to follow Bruno's suggestions that they 'let

special master who may impose a solution addressing only New York City's schools – leaving hundreds of schools in the rest of the state out in the cold. It would be a disgrace to miss this opportunity to provide a quality education for the children of New York State.

Senator Bruno walks away from an obligation to our children

To say that only New York City children deserve a sound, basic education is absurd. But that's just what Senator Joe Bruno is doing by suggesting the governor and Legislature should give up and let the state courts decide New York's school aid formula. Senator Bruno and the governor may be ready to throw in the towel, but the Assembly Majority is not.

Weighing the needs of nearly 700 school districts is a difficult task, but that doesn't mean our children should suffer. The CFE court order has to be dealt with – so it's a question of whether the judge will order a decision that only benefits New York City, or if we will come up with a school funding formula that addresses the needs of all our school children.

It's not only a constitutional obligation, but a moral obligation to equip our children to deal with tomorrow's challenges. In finding a solution we must not take a "Robin Hood" approach that gives resources to some schools at the expense of others. Investing in all New York schools is the rising tide that will lift all boats – giving all our children the opportunity to succeed.

Seizing the moment for our students and taxpayers

The Assembly is committed to finding a solution to the CFE decision that:

- Invests in a sound education – including quality, effective teaching
- Provides teachers with the tools to maintain safe classrooms
- Protects property-taxpayers

The Assembly Majority roundly rejects placing the burden on the shoulders of property-taxpayers by adopting mandatory property tax hikes. In fact, last year the Assembly, working with our partners in the Senate, passed a bipartisan budget to prevent a

the courts who created this situation' provide the solution. The courts did not create the state aid formula that has been historically unbalanced. That was the work of Bruno and his colleagues in the state Legislature. They are the ones who must do their duty and not leave the matter for the courts to fix."

- Editorial, The Post-Standard,
May 3, 2004

"Leaving it to the courts to resolve CFE would be a failure. Failure is not an option, however. It would deny help to other communities: since the Court of Appeals decision applied only to New York City, any court-mandated remedy could help only New York City. It would not fix other defects in how the state funds schools. It would invite more litigation. Most important, it would be a dereliction of duty – elected leaders would surrender to the courts part of their authority over how to fund the state's most important function – educating children."

- NYS Council of School
Superintendents,
May 4, 2004

"Albany needs to act now to provide additional funding not only for New York City but for other high need districts around the state. The alternative would be a Special Master, endless additional litigation, and a missed opportunity to address the needs of all students statewide."

- Robert Johnson, Chairman,
President and CEO of Bowne and
Company, Inc.

"We have a moment in time now when the combination of major reform and smart investment will

statewide average 20 percent property tax hike.

Investing in education now

The children and families of New York State expect the Legislature to make the right choices and protect their best interests, including providing a top-notch education for all children. As the challenge to meet the recent Court of Appeals decision unfolds, the Assembly will fight to help schools across the state provide students with the skills they need to compete for the jobs of tomorrow - because a well-trained work force will attract businesses that create good-paying jobs.

reverse the stubborn low performance of our public schools and ensure that our students will meet the demands of the 21st century. This is a leadership issue, not just a government issue. It is all of us coming together to ensure the future of this State."

- Time Warner Chairman and CEO
Richard Parsons

"This is a critical time for school funding in our state. "Giving every child in New York State the same opportunity to learn through equal funding will result in lower social costs for all of us in the future."

Andrew Tisch, Chairman of the
Executive Committee of Loews
Corporation

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