

December 2003

# Education: Campaign for Fiscal Equity Ruling

From the NYS Assembly · Sheldon Silver, Speaker  
Steven Sanders · Chair, Education Committee

## Pataki's failed leadership and policies are undermining our schools

When the governor took office, he stated, "let me tell you flat out, we aren't going to give . . . any school district in the state more money in 1995." Eight years later, he proved that his failing education policy had not changed when he asserted that an eighth grade education is sufficient to meet the needs of our students.

The governor's neglect of our schools has now come back to haunt us. The Court of Appeals ruled that the current school aid system fails to provide New York's children with the basic education that is guaranteed to them under the state constitution and which is the state's moral obligation to deliver.

Although the court issued its landmark ruling in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) case in June, the governor waited months to appoint a study commission. What's more, he intentionally set a March deadline for recommendations on the issue to avoid putting a plan in his budget. This should come as no surprise, since throughout his term in office, the governor has undermined education standards by:

- recommending inadequate education funding increases in his past nine years in office; the governor proposed budgets increasing school aid a meager 5 percent compared to the Assembly's enacted school aid increases of 40 percent — an investment eight times more than the governor's; and
- trying to cut the state's share of education funding from 42 percent to 37.7 percent in the 2003-2004

## What the experts are saying...

*"We can't wait any longer to give all children - regardless of geography - the opportunity for a sound, basic education. . . The best way to improve public schools is to continue to invest in small classes, high standards, well-equipped classrooms, and the best teachers - solutions that we know work."*

- Antonia Cortese, New York State  
United Teachers First Vice  
President

*"The Court of Appeals decision is a victory for every school district in the state that struggles to find resources to support its public schools."*

- Timothy G. Kremer, New York  
State School Boards Association  
Executive Director

*"[T]his is not an upstate versus downstate issue, but quite frankly, the issue that we're all talking about is about the right for every child in the state to a sound basic education."*

- Brandon L. Gordon, Director,  
Midstate School Finance  
Consortium

*"If our school system is the basis for our future labor and economic development forces, then how the state funds education is critical to the future development of New York State."*

- Hamilton S. White, Parent

*"The children in our schools need a strong and sound education today to prepare them for successes in higher*

budget, which would have caused an average statewide property tax increase of 20 percent for schools to maintain their levels of service; Pataki's lieutenant governor then stated that property taxes are just "a local matter and not a concern of the state."

### **The Assembly is committed to ensuring every school district receives the resources it needs to provide a quality education**

Because of the CFE ruling, the governor can no longer ignore our schools' needs. Money won't solve all our schools' problems, but by providing sufficient resources we can begin to address the barriers to a quality education. And by increasing accountability we can make sure resources are used effectively.

We must provide students with the skills they need — in safe and up-to-date classrooms — so they can compete for the jobs of tomorrow. It is time for the governor to recognize that improving schools across the state will improve economic opportunities and attract businesses that create good-paying jobs.

### **The Assembly has a strong record of supporting education**

Despite the governor's attempts to undermine our schools, the Assembly has consistently fought to provide a quality education that doesn't burden property taxpayers by:

- securing \$3.8 billion more than the governor's proposals, including \$1.1 billion by overriding the governor's 2003 vetoes
- supporting the CFE's goals by funding reduced class sizes, pre-K and full-day kindergarten, teacher training and school repairs

The Assembly Internet Information Service is available to those interested in receiving timely legislative updates by e-mail. To subscribe to this service, please drop us a line at [signup@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:signup@assembly.state.ny.us), indicating your area of interest. *(The Assembly Internet Information Service will not release, sell or give away a subscriber's e-mail address, name or any other information provided without express permission from the subscriber. Each e-mail notice or newsletter will contain simple instructions for removing your name from the mailing list if you decide you no longer wish to subscribe.)*

New York State Assembly  
[\[ Welcome Page \]](#) [\[ Committee Updates \]](#)

*education and in the increasingly challenging workplace of the twenty-first century economy. Every delay in implementing the court's rulings diminishes our children's opportunities."*

- Joel I. Klein, New York City Schools Chancellor

*"School finance is often seen as a complex, intimidating topic, but some issues are, in fact, easy to illustrate. In a fair world, children who begin life facing the greatest challenges would get the best schools."*

- Robert Lowry, Associate Director, New York State Council of School Superintendents