

April 2003



School Budgets

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

"Property tax Pataki " hits us with 20 percent tax hike

School districts across the state are preparing their budgets and, in many cases, asking voters to approve double-digit property tax increases. Let there be no doubt, the blame for these tax hikes rests squarely on the shoulders of Governor George Pataki.

Pataki's broken promises, fallen STARS

School boards are scrambling to replace the funding the governor's budget yanks from our schools. This year's \$1.4 billion cut to education is the largest in state history – a wrong choice that forces school districts to raise property taxes an average 20 percent just to keep their schools running at current levels. The governor would replace the rising stars in our classrooms with the fallen STARS of impoverished schools and inflated property taxes.

The governor's cuts to education are so severe that tax hikes won't be enough to repair the damage. The New York School Boards Association recently reported 92 percent of districts are cutting programs, and 83.5 percent are eliminating instructional staff positions. A majority of school districts surveyed reported they would cut:

- Pre-kindergarten
- Teacher training
- Tutoring
- Sports
- Class size reduction
- Enrichment
- BOCES

To make matters worse, the governor's budget calls for

Experts say...

"The governor's cut is a massive job-killing tax shift to local communities."

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

"The result of the governor's budget will be deterioration in educational quality throughout the state, combined with large property tax increases as school districts and cities try to make up for the lost state aid,"

- *Karen Scharff, Co-Chair, Alliance for Quality Education and Executive Director, Citizen Action New York*

"Unless money falls down from the sky, we are in deep, deep trouble."

- *Leslie Lewis, Superintendent, Cheektowaga Central School District*

"Everything we did to bring down the tax increase will impact

freezing basic STAR, the tax-relief program that helps many families make ends meet. According to the governor, the freeze will cost homeowners \$93 million statewide, making the Pataki property tax increase an expensive one-two punch.

Pataki's budget shows no concern for woes of local taxpayers

This should all come as no surprise. Lt. Governor Mary Donohue has admitted that the Pataki administration considers property taxes strictly a local issue and not a concern of the state. And the governor vetoed a bill that would have given school districts some breathing room to avoid raising property taxes by postponing the school budget vote. It's outrageous that this administration should turn its back on taxpayers like this.

At a time when New York is seeking to attract and nurture high-tech industry, Governor Pataki is looking to hike taxes and shortchange our schools. Working families can't afford the governor's wrong choices. And our children shouldn't have to contend with overcrowded classrooms and inadequate resources.

The state Assembly is Standing up for our schools

The Assembly has always been dedicated to education, fighting to restore the governor's yearly assaults on funding for our schools. Since 1995, the Assembly has fought for – and won – \$2.4 billion more for our schools than the governor would have given them. The Assembly will continue to fight for the right choices for New York's working families and students.

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New York State Assembly

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student education. There will be a significant amount of pain from this."

*- Jeffery McLellan,
Superintendent,
Schalmont Central
School District*

"The governor is proposing to cut \$1.24 billion in state aid to education. Our districts need to make up that much and more by turning to local revenue sources, like property taxes."

*- James Baldwin,
Regional
Superintendent,
Questar III*