



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Suzi Oppenheimer

Senator Oppenheimer Promotes Educational Enhancement Through Legislative Grants to Schools and Libraries

SUZI OPPENHEIMER July 19, 2009

| COMMITTEE: **EDUCATION**

Senator Suzi Oppenheimer (D-Mamaroneck) today announced that she will provide legislative grants to school districts and libraries throughout her district. Each school district in her Senate district will receive \$100,000 for educational enhancement, while each library district will receive \$50,000 for the purchase of educational materials.

“As Chair of the Senate Education Committee,” said Senator Oppenheimer, “I wanted to help schools and libraries in our community that are reeling from the effects of our struggling economy and unprecedented state budget constraints. These institutions have faced difficult decisions this year in reducing expenses to contain the growth in property taxes, our most urgent tax problem in Westchester County.”

“Libraries, in particular, are historically underfunded by the State,” noted Senator Oppenheimer, “and funding cuts were again made in this year’s budget.” These cuts were done despite the fact that library usage has increased by as much as 30 percent during the

current economic downturn.

The legislative grants complement the Senator's efforts to maintain education funding, while helping local school districts achieve operational efficiencies that will contain educational costs, sustain core instructional programs and reduce property taxes. Senator Oppenheimer advocated forcefully in the budget process for restoration of education funding statewide. Despite extraordinary fiscal challenges, the 2009-10 budget maintained school foundation aid levels, while fully funding all expense-based education aid programs, including transportation, Boards of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES), Special Services and building aid.

To help alleviate the growing burden on local property taxpayers, Senator Oppenheimer argued successfully for reimbursement of payroll taxes collected by school districts as part of the MTA bailout bill. The Senator also sponsored legislation that would have eliminated unnecessary or duplicative paperwork requirements, allowed for greater consolidation and sharing of services between school districts and provided a 5-year exemption from state Wicks law requirements for school construction projects. While these measures were not enacted in the current session, they remain among her top legislative priorities for the months ahead.

"On behalf of the Briarcliff School District, I want to share my appreciation, gratitude and excitement about the legislative grant sponsored by Senator Oppenheimer," said Dr. Frances Wills, Superintendent of Schools in Briarcliff. "In a year of reductions and constraints, these

funds will be available to enhance and enrich our students' learning experience.”

“Senator Oppenheimer has had a long standing commitment to children and education, and we are thrilled that she has taken this opportunity to help us at this important time,” said Sandra Miranda, Library Director of the White Plains Public Library. “With joblessness and the need for the public library’s free educational, cultural and recreational services at an all-time high, this grant gives us the chance to be more responsive to our community when it matters most.”