



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Darrel J. Aubertine

NYS SENATE UPSTATE CAUCUS AND LONG ISLAND DELEGATION CLAIM VICTORY IN DRP RESULTS: Upstate, Long Island Coalition Protected School Aid Upstate, Long Island Coalition Protected School Aid and Blocked Property Tax Increases

DARREL J. AUBERTINE December 3, 2009

| ISSUE: **BUDGET**

For Immediate Release: December 2, 2009

The Senate Majority Upstate Caucus, (Senators Aubertine, Chair; Breslin; Stachowski; Thompson; Valesky), joined by the Long Island Democratic Delegation (Senators Foley and C. Johnson), were instrumental in preventing school aid from being reduced in the Deficit Reduction Plan passed by the Senate today.

The plan ultimately included no cuts in school aid and minimal reductions in healthcare spending. School aid reductions had been a sticking point in the negotiations for weeks between the legislature and the Governor.

The Caucus had definitively stated from the onset that the mid-year education cuts were not an option. Throughout the weeks of negotiations these seven Senators stood firm, demanding that school aid cuts be taken off the table in any reduction package. The caucus raised concerns about the impact mid-year cuts would have on school budgets already approved by voters, with the likely end result of increased property taxes, layoffs, and increased class sizes.

Additionally, the proposed reductions in school aid would have put a disproportionate burden on the 12 counties represented by the seven senators. These counties would lose 3.75 percent, or \$230 million, in education funding, whereas New York City schools would only lose 2.6 percent of their aid based on the

formula.

The Upstate Caucus and Long Island Democratic Senators continually stating, in no uncertain terms, that they would not tolerate shifting the burden to local property taxpayers, ensuring that the plan passed today did not include these cuts.

While a plan was passed today, there still remains work to be done as only \$2.8 billion, of a \$3.2 billion deficit in the state's budget was addressed. The lawmakers also acknowledged that the stop gap measure passed today does not end the work that needs to be done, more difficult decisions must be made, and real reform to the budget process is still needed.

*"This deficit reduction plan required many difficult decisions and does not mark the end of the difficult decisions we will have to make," said **Senator Darrel Aubertine**, chair of the Senate Majority's Upstate Caucus. "This legislation keeps New York strong and protects Upstate residents from mid-year cuts that would have pushed the state's problems down to our local property tax bills. As a caucus and as a conference, we were able to forge a bipartisan agreement with careful and deliberate cuts and other measures that do not include tax increases or the devastating cuts that had been proposed."*

*"We are not out of the woods yet—New York State still faces serious economic issues which will need to be dealt with in the upcoming weeks and months. I will continue to look at long-term solutions to reining in state spending to ensure New York State comes out of the recession in solid economic standing and to help ease the tax burden on citizens and businesses." – **Senator David Valesky***

*"Today we adopted a DRP that does not place any additional burden on taxpayers, while protecting our ability to save jobs, educate our children, and make sure New Yorkers live in safe and healthy communities. While the process to enact this deficit reduction plan was longer than we would have liked, we did find a solution that is fair to those who reside upstate. Clearly, we face many difficult choices as we approach next year's budget, but the actions we have taken today demonstrate that we can work together to attain a common goal." – **Senator William Stachowski***

*"I am pleased that a deficit reduction plan has been passed that does not make significant cuts to healthcare or education," stated **Senator Antoine M. Thompson**. "However, there are still many difficult decisions ahead of us and the Senate will find a way to deal with these challenges."*

*“We were not going to let this budget deficit be balanced on the backs of Long Island and Upstate taxpayers - which is what would have happened if school aid was cut mid-year,” said **Senator Craig M. Johnson**, (D-Nassau.) “I am extremely disappointed that our governor has seemingly failed to grasp the consequences of his proposals during this process. I thank Senator Sampson and colleagues on both sides of the chamber for standing with us during this battle.”*

*“While this deficit reduction plan has solved the immediate situation, we still have a ways to go in forging long term solutions to our state’s spending. I am grateful that we were able to protect Upstate and Suburban taxpayers by preventing cuts to school aid and limiting the cuts made to healthcare.” –**Senator Neil Breslin***

*“The fact that the Deficit Reduction Plan (DRP) does not contain any cuts to Long Island’s education aid is a major victory for all of us who care about Long Island’s children, families, and taxpayers,” said **Senator Brian X Foley**, who serves on the Senate Education Committee. “The DRP makes significant cuts in spending without sacrificing the quality of education our students can receive and without forcing school districts in Suffolk and Nassau Counties to raise property taxes.”*

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The Upstate Caucus was formed to identify policy priorities and positions that protect the regionally diverse interests and well being of Upstate constituents.