



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David J. Valesky

## Senate Passes Mandate Relief Legislation to Protect Taxpayers and Provide Districts Better Budgeting Abilities

DAVID J. VALESKY March 15, 2010

| ISSUE: **EDUCATION**

SYRACUSE, N.Y.—State Senator David J. Valesky (D-Oneida) today applauded the passage of a legislative package that provides mandate relief and reverses New York’s long-standing practice of passing financial burdens onto local school districts.

“This package of legislation represents our commitment to government efficiency. It just makes sense to give school districts the tools to best manage their resources, especially in these difficult economic times,” Senator Valesky said.

Identified by school districts as vital to their operations and ability to budget in a prudent manner, the package will allow them to more effectively manage the resources they have, and make the best possible decisions for their communities in this time of fiscal crisis.

Components of the mandate relief plan include:

Education Mandate Relief Act of 2010 (S5523A)

Enacting a prohibition on the imposition of new mandates on districts after the passage of school budgets, this comprehensive legislation provides schools greater authority and

responsibility over their budgets by authorizing:

- Reviews of potential regionalized cost containment/shared services (by BOCES districts).
- “Piggyback” transportation contracts.
- BOCES boards to fill mid-year vacancies by appointment rather than a special election.
- BOCES to perform aidable auditing services for school districts.
- The establishment of reserve funds for TRS contributions.
- Districts to use a five year rolling average of the consumer price index when calculating the contingency budget cap.

#### Universal Pre-Kindergarten Flexibility (S6777/)

Unrealistic regulations placed on districts has kept allocated funds from being used. This legislation permits a school district eligible for a universal pre-Kindergarten grant but who may be unable to fill some allocated funding slots the ability to utilize unspent funds in alternative ways, such as creating full-day slots, supporting the cost of transporting pre-K students and other program-related initiatives.

#### Paperwork Reduction Act (S3874A)

Requires the state Education Commissioner to establish a unified electronic data collection system in order to reduce the enormous costs of paperwork, mailing, processing and filing

done by the department and education system. It also requires the Commissioner to take regulatory action to reduce reports, and statutorily eliminate or alter the submission and filing of 8 statutorily required, but unnecessary and costly reports, plans and applications.

#### Flexibility in Claims Auditing (S5637)

Providing school districts with additional flexibility to manage how claims auditing is performed, this legislation maintains a high standard of oversight while allowing for efficient and cost-effective processing and payment of claims. This bill allows school districts outside the Big 5 to appoint a deputy claims auditor, and the Big 5 to appoint multiple deputy claims auditors. It also clarifies the process by which BOCES may be used to perform claims auditing functions, by authorizing the Board to review claims made by BOCES.

Kevin Casey, Executive Director of the School Administrators Association of New York State said, “This legislation providing for mandate relief and the streamlining of reporting requirements will have a significant impact on the efficient operations of New York’s schools. We thank the Senate for their efforts and for supporting our public schools at this most critical time.”

Deedrick Bertholf, Executive Director, New York State Association of School Business Officials said, “School business officials support this package of reforms. The proposed mandate relief will not only allow school districts to operate more cost-effectively but also engage in improved long term planning on behalf of students and taxpayers.”

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