



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

## Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins' Task Force on Alternative Funding and Fiscal Reform For Public Education (AFFIRM Ed) Holds Town Hall Meeting

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS May 14, 2008

| ISSUE: **EDUCATION, LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

**--Public Meeting from 5:00-8:00pm at Greenburgh Town Hall for Citizens to Provide Comments on Task Force Objectives ---**

*(May 14, 2008) New York State Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins (D-35th District) will host an AFFIRM Ed Task Force - Public Town-Hall Meeting on Friday, May 16, 2008 from 5:00-8:00pm at Greenburgh Town Hall (177 Hillside Avenue, Greenburgh) providing interested residents with the opportunity to provide oral or written testimony to inform the work of the Task Force.*

AFFIRM Ed is an acronym for Alternative Funding and Fiscal Reform for Public Education. "After meeting earlier this year with the School Superintendents in my district, it was clear that their obvious priority -- and primary concern -- is the continued funding of public education. The Task Force, which is still in formation, has begun to explore the possibilities for alternative public education funding. Friday's hearing is part of that exploration and we invite all interested parties to come and be part of the discussion," stated the Senator.

Sidney A. Freund, Ed.D., Chair of the hardworking volunteer group is looking forward to Friday's hearing. "I am deeply honored to serve as the Chair of this vital Task Force. It is my hope that we will propose new initiatives from a fresh perspective to fund public education in New York State for consideration by our Westchester County and State Legislators. The public's comments will help shape our recommendations," he commented.

It is Senator Stewart-Cousins' hope that AFFIRM Ed will: explore alternative sources of school district funding to augment or replace funding through local property tax levies; explore measures by which school districts can contain and control costs; inform legislation proposed by the Governor's Commission on Real Property Tax Fairness to ensure

that any cap on property tax does not have the effect of reallocating, rather than alleviating the high tax burden of Westchester County residents; and propose legislation that will help school districts in Westchester County and throughout New York State attain excellence in education for high needs school districts without sacrificing the quality of education that has already been attained in high performing school districts.

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(**AFFIRM Ed**) Task Force members include:

**Sidney A. Freund, Ed.D.**, is Chairman of the AFFIRM Ed Task Force. He has served as a Superintendent of Schools in various school districts in Westchester and Nassau counties for over 25 years. In 2006 he retired as Superintendent of the Dobbs Ferry School District and since then has served as interim Superintendent of the North Salem and Greenburgh Central 7 School Districts. Dr. Freund has served on various advisory committees for the New York State Education Department, the New York State Council of School Superintendents, the American Association of School Administrators, and Nassau County BOCES and is a past president of the Nassau County Council of School Superintendents.

**Wendy L. Bartley, J.D.**, is the Director of Policy for New York State Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins (35th District). Ms. Bartley is a business lawyer with an extensive background in finance, mergers/acquisitions, and strategic joint ventures. She was the founder and principal of a transactional law practice after serving as an associate in the Business and Finance department of Morgan, Lewis & Bockius in Manhattan.

**Nicholas DeSantis, C.P.A.**, is a partner at Bennett Kielson Storch DeSantis, which is the government services division of O'Connor Davies Munns & Dobbins, LLP. Mr. DeSantis' primary expertise is in governmental operations and finance, including strategic planning. He has held a number of municipal government positions, including City Manager, Commissioner of Finance, and Budget Director for the City of Yonkers and Fiscal Manager for the County of Rockland. Mr. DeSantis is a member of the New York State Government Finance Officers Association, the New York Municipal Managers Association, the New York State Society of Certified Public Accountants, and the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. He participates in budget reviews of the Counties of Westchester, Dutchess, Orange, and Rockland and of the City of Yonkers.

**Donald P. Marra** is a municipal consultant and former educator who has served in various capacities in local government. Mr. Marra has been both Village Administrator and Deputy Village Administrator of the Village of Irvington and has also served as Village Trustee and Mayor of the Village of Dobbs Ferry. He is the former president of the Municipal Administrators Association of Metropolitan New York, a member of the Board of Directors of the Hudson River Valley Greenway, the former chairman of the Village of Dobbs Ferry Ethics Board, and an executive committee member of the Historic Hudson River Towns. He also serves on the Children's Village Community Advisory Board.

**Scott P. Oling, C.P.A.**, is a partner at Bennett Kielson Storch DeSantis, which is the government services division of O'Connor Davies Munns & Dobbins, LLP. Mr. Oling's primary expertise is in supervising audits of school districts and other municipal entities, as well as municipal budget and management consulting services. He is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, the New York State Society of Certified Public Accountants, the New York State Government Finance Association, and the New York State Association of School Business Officials. Mr. Oling participates in budget reviews of Westchester County, Orange County Community College, and the City of Yonkers.

**Betty H. Perkins, Ed.D.**, is the founder and executive director of Today's Students, Tomorrow's Teachers, a program that recruits and trains minority and economically challenged high school students for a career in teaching, provides financial assistance for them to attend college, and places them back in their communities as teachers. Dr. Perkins, an educator and former IBM executive, has developed and implemented programs to enhance the academic achievement of young people in New York and throughout the northeast. She has been recognized by Pace University and many prominent Westchester organizations for her leadership in education.

**Patricia Puleo** is President of the Yonkers Federation of Teachers, a union with 2000 active teacher members, and is a member of the Board of Directors of the New York State United Teachers union (NYSUT), a union of over 600,000 professional members statewide. Ms. Puleo also sits on NYSUT's Policy Council and is a NYSUT Representative on the 9 County Coalition, which is made up of school board members, teachers, and parents from Long Island to Rockland County. Ms. Puleo is a National Board Certified Teacher who has taught art in Yonkers since 1990, working in several elementary, middle, and high schools. She currently teaches at Roosevelt High School in Yonkers.

**Joanne G. Sold, J.D.**, is in her thirteenth year (5th term) as a trustee of the Ardsley Union Free School District in southern Westchester and is currently Vice President of the Ardsley Board of Education. Ms. Sold is an attorney and is counsel to Westchester County Legislator Thomas J. Abinanti (District 12). Prior to her current position she was a consultant for several leading financial institutions, served as Assistant Special Counsel to the President of Queens College of the City University of New York, and was an associate at the law firm of Wofsey, Certilman, Haft, Lebow and Balin.