



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

Senator Martins: Senate Budget Resolution Would Cut Taxes, Increase School Aid, and Deliver Mandate Relief to Schools and Local Governments

JACK M. MARTINS March 14, 2014

Senator Jack M. Martins (R-Mineola) announced that the recently approved 2014-15 Senate budget resolution would balance the budget without raising taxes or fees, deliver tax relief to families and businesses, and increase state education aid to local school districts. The resolution includes several measures aimed at delivering permanent mandate relief to schools, local governments, and special districts.

“The Senate’s budget resolution would deliver tax relief, control spending, and invest in important priorities such as education. It would also deliver mandate relief to help reduce costs on schools and local governments and save taxpayer dollars. It is important that we keep New York State heading in the right direction, and that’s exactly what this budget plan would do,” said Senator Martins.

The Senate’s budget resolution controls spending and builds on the progress that has been made over the last three years in stabilizing the state’s finances. As part of the resolution, the Senate advances the “Freeze Plus NY,” program, which will provide \$1.4 billion in additional property tax relief over the next two years. This program makes the existing property tax cap permanent, strengthens STAR and provides the benefits of a simplified freeze while

helping local governments, school districts and taxpayers alike. It also requires local governments to submit efficiency plans that show current and out-year savings, and financial plans that include consolidation and shared service actions, as well as other budget actions which keep them within the property tax cap.

To help small businesses cut costs and create jobs, the budget resolution eliminates the job-killing “18-a energy tax surcharge” which is paid by all businesses. The Senate’s budget increases state education aid by over \$811 million over the last year’s total.

Additionally, the resolution includes the following mandate relief measures, which Senator Martins has been strongly advocating for:

Making Savings for the School Bus Mandate Relief Law Permanent

The school bus mandate relief act was authored by Senator Martins and signed into law in 2011. The law amended a burdensome state regulation which forced school districts to provide transportation to every student who was eligible for busing, not just those who used it. As a result, schools were forced to spend taxpayer dollars reserving seats on buses for students who were not using them. In some cases, buses were traveling with only a handful of children, but the district was unable to combine buses because of the mandate.

The law authored by Senator Martins relieved this unnecessary mandate by allowing school districts to provide transportation only to students who use it after a pattern is established. The result was savings to school districts; the Port Washington School District alone was able to reduce the size of their bus fleet by eight buses and saved nearly \$500,000 in the first year of the law.

The original law needs to be renewed by the end of the year in order for school districts to continue saving money under the provision. The provision included within the Senate’s

budget resolution would renew the law and make it permanent to ensure that school districts can continue to receive these important savings.

Reducing Election Costs for Schools, Villages, and Special Districts

School districts, villages, and special districts would be allowed to permanently use lever style voting machines to conduct their elections. The federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) required the state to begin using optical scan voting machines in conducting elections for primary and general elections for federal, state, and local offices. School districts, villages, and special districts, whose elections are much smaller in scale, requested that they be allowed to continue to use the lever voting machines to help avoid the significant expense of purchasing optical scan voting machines. Temporary exemptions have been granted, but they must be renewed annually which creates uncertainty and instability for these districts. The provision included in the Senate's budget would make this exemption permanent so that schools, villages, and special districts can avoid a costly and unnecessary mandated expense.

Repeal the MTA Payroll Tax for Local Governments and Libraries

Local governments and libraries are still required to pay the MTA payroll tax, a tax which Senator Martins strongly opposes. Paying this tax forces local governments and libraries to spend taxpayer dollars which could be better used for tax relief or community services. The measure included in the Senate budget would exempt local governments and libraries from paying the tax.