



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Seward: GEA Restoration Vital To Our Schools

JAMES L. SEWARD March 27, 2014

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ALBANY, 03/27/14 -- State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I – Oneonta) today called on assembly Democrats to join with senate Republicans in enacting a final state budget that will address the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) which has robbed school districts of millions of dollars in education aid.

“At the start of the year, I clearly stated that eliminating the GEA was one of my top priorities,” said Senator Seward. **“This cash grab by the state has created a budgetary hole for schools throughout my district and statewide, forcing many to make dire decisions, harming education programs and eroding opportunities for our students.”**

The Gap Elimination Adjustment was enacted in 2010 by the Democrats who controlled the senate, assembly and governor's office. Senator Seward, along with every other senate Republican, voted against the GEA. Since its inception in 2010, the GEA has cost school districts across the state billions of dollars in reduced aid.

“The GEA fiasco was a bad idea when first approved in 2010, and it continues to hurt our local schools, taxpayers and children today. As a member of the budget conference committee on education, I have been working to address this very specific and very serious school aid problem. Unfortunately, far too many Democrats in Albany are still focused on other priorities in budget negotiations,” added Seward.

The one-house budget resolution approved by senate Republicans this year included up to \$686 million in funding that could be used for GEA elimination. This was more than twice the level of funding proposed by Governor Cuomo, and is more than eight times the level of GEA funding proposed by the assembly Democrats in their budget resolution. In addition, throughout this year's budget negotiations on school aid, Democrats have been working to put money toward priorities other than the GEA.

“I have met with parents, teachers and school administrators in schools throughout my Senate District and they have made clear that eliminating the GEA as quickly as possible is a critical priority. That’s why I am calling on the assembly Democrats to join with the senate Republicans in increasing funding to address the very serious problems created by GEA.

“Additionally, I am targeting Common Core Learning Standards and excessive standardized testing that have caused great upheaval in our classrooms and around kitchen tables where many students wage a nightly battle with their homework.

“The final state budget must include significant GEA restoration funding and legitimate Common Core changes – both components are vital for the future of our schools and student success,”
Seward concluded.