



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Funke, Senate Republicans Call for a Budget That Returns \$1 Billion to Schools by Ending the Gea This Year

RICH FUNKE February 10, 2015

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Billions of Dollars Have Been Stripped from School Budgets by the Democrats' Gap Elimination Adjustment

At a press conference in Albany today, the New York State Senate Majority outlined their plan to abolish the notorious Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) and its devastating impact on state funding to public schools. The Senate Republican Conference is proposing to return \$1 billion to schools across the state by accelerating the complete elimination of the GEA in the 2015-16 state budget.

Senate Majority Leader and Coalition Co-Leader Dean G. Skelos said, "The Senate Republican Conference has been fighting to roll-back the damage caused by Senate and Assembly Democrats since they created the GEA. In the last few years, we successfully chipped away at the GEA's impact by restoring funding to public schools, and this year, we are making it a priority to fully eliminate the \$1 billion in anticipated GEA cuts from the budget."

Senator Rich Funke (R-C-I, Fairport) said, "The GEA has meant less funding for schools, fewer teachers in the classroom, students lumped in larger classes, and a bigger burden for local taxpayers. In the 55th District alone, our schools have lost \$120 million under the GEA.

At a time when we are talking about education reform, repealing the GEA is one of the simplest ways to achieve real results for our schools. Let's work together to get it done."

Senator John Flanagan (R-C-I, East Northport) said, "As the Chair of the Senate Education Committee, my number one priority has been, and will continue to be, the complete elimination of the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA). Since regaining control of the Senate in 2011, the Senate Republican Majority has worked to restore more than \$1.6 billion in funding that was lost to schools under the GEA. Today, we're making it clear that we will continue to work together to make record investments in education funding with our primary focus on eliminating the devastating effects of the GEA."

The GEA was first imposed on New Yorkers in 2010 by former Governor David Paterson and the Democrats who controlled the Senate and Assembly. The entire Senate Republican Conference voted against the GEA because it created severe cuts to the bottom lines for public schools.

Since it was first approved, Senate Republicans have been leading the charge to abolish the GEA and deliver major funding increases to help mitigate its impact on education. The GEA cuts have been reduced by 62 percent – from a high of \$2.6 billion in the 2011-2012 budget to \$1 billion in the 2014-15 budget – to help restore billions of dollars in state aid to schools.

Last year alone, the Senate Republicans successfully negotiated an additional \$602 million – 86 percent more than the Governor proposed and nearly seven times more than what the Assembly proposed – to help schools overcome the GEA challenge created by Democrats. That funding represented a major step towards lessening the GEA's burden on school budgets, but there is still more than \$1 billion in GEA budget cuts anticipated for the upcoming fiscal year.

The Governor's Executive Budget proposes an overall \$1.1 billion increase in education funding over last year. However, that increase was not specifically tied to the elimination of the \$1 billion needed for this year's GEA.

The Senate Majority is currently preparing its own budget proposal which will include revenue estimates for the next fiscal year, reviews of all new initiatives, and sources of funding that can be found within the Executive proposal. The conference will be proposing a budget that uses the majority of the \$1.1 billion increase proposed in the Executive budget – up to \$600 million – and is working to identify the sources for the additional \$300-\$400 million needed this fiscal year to eliminate the GEA once and for all.

Senator George A. Amedore, Jr. (R-C-I, Rotterdam), said, "Since the GEA was enacted, it has forced schools to cut educational programs, reduced services and ultimately, our children are paying the price. There is no better investment we can make than to make sure our schools are being properly funded. We have a rare opportunity before us, and we cannot let it go to waste: we need to completely eliminate the GEA once and for all this year."

Senator Terrence P. Murphy (R-C-I, Yorktown) said, "As a father of three young kids I believe we have a responsibility to provide a quality education for all of New York's children. By finally getting rid of the Gap Elimination Adjustment we will restore vital dollars to our schools and help areas like Peekskill - which lost more than two million dollars last year to the GEA - improve vital programs and resources for their students."

Senator Sue Serino (R-C-I, Hyde Park) said, "The issue of eliminating the GEA transcends politics. Plain and simple, it's bad for our schools, it's bad for taxpayers and most importantly, it puts our local students at a distinct disadvantage. We have heard the voices of so many New Yorkers who are frustrated and today I am proud to join my colleagues in making the elimination of the GEA a top priority."