



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## O'Mara, colleagues say it's time to end Gap Elimination Adjustment for local school districts

THOMAS F. O'MARA February 12, 2015

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**Albany, N.Y., February 12**—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C-Big Flats) and his colleagues in the Senate Republican Majority this week staked out one their key priorities for the new state budget: the complete elimination of the damaging and highly controversial Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) that has cost school districts locally and statewide billions of dollars in state aid over the past several years.

"The elimination of the unfair and detrimental Gap Elimination Adjustment is a top priority for our local school districts, and it will be a top priority for Senate Republicans throughout this year's budget negotiations. It's a priority I strongly share. It's time to completely

eliminate the GEA,” said O’Mara.

The GEA was originally enacted in 2009-2010 by then-Governor David Paterson, and when both houses of the Legislature were under Democratic control, as a way to help the state close a multi-billion-dollar budget gap. Republicans in the Senate at that time unanimously rejected the move as a budget-balancing scheme that would hurt local school districts.

According to the New York State School Boards Association, the GEA has cost school districts statewide over the past four years, from 2010 to 2014, an average of \$3.1 million per year, per district. It has led to staff reductions and cuts to many educational programs.

Last year’s state budget provided an overall increase of approximately \$1.1 billion in state aid to public schools and included, largely at the insistence of Senate Republicans, a \$602-million reduction of the GEA, approximately \$60 million more in GEA relief than what was provided in 2013.

O’Mara and his Republican colleagues are now calling on Cuomo and the new Assembly Democratic leadership to do away with the remaining GEA, approximately \$1 billion, as part of the 2015-2016 state budget due to be enacted by April 1.

The Legislature is currently holding public hearings on Cuomo’s 2015-2016 proposed state budget and will then begin this year’s final budget negotiations with the governor.

[Read more on the Senate's call to end the GEA.](#)