



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael H. Ranzenhofer

End the GEA

MICHAEL H. RANZENHOFER February 17, 2015

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Look for...

Senator Mike Ranzenhofer's
Monthly Column

...In your local newspaper
the third week of every month

By: Michael H. Ranzenhofer

Back in 2010, when the Legislature was controlled by New York City Democrats, taxpayers all across the Empire State were repeatedly hurt by bad decisions. New job-killing taxes were imposed. State expenditures spiraled out of control. Among the worst was the creation of the Gap Elimination Adjustment or GEA.

The GEA resulted in billions of dollars being unfairly taken away from our local school districts, especially in rural and suburban areas of New York. Since then, this multi-billion dollar budget cutting scheme has hurt local schools and property taxpayers.

I voted against this draconian measure, and I have been leading the fight to end the GEA. Since it was first approved, the GEA cuts have been reduced by 62 percent, from a high of \$2.6 billion in the 2011-12 State Budget to \$1 billion in the 2014-15 Budget.

Last year alone, the State Budget included an additional \$602 million— 86 percent more than what the Governor proposed and nearly seven times more than the Assembly— to help schools overcome the GEA challenge. That funding represented a major step towards lessening the GEA's negative impact, but there is still \$1 billion in GEA budget cuts anticipated for the upcoming fiscal year.

That is why I am proposing to end the notorious Gap Elimination Adjustment and its devastating impact on State funding to public schools once and for all. In doing so, I am proposing the return of \$1 billion to accelerate the abolishment of the GEA in the 2015-16 State Budget.

As a member of the Senate Education Committee and Budget Subcommittee, ending the GEA is one of my highest priorities. By making this a top priority in budget negotiations, I am fighting to restore much-needed funding to local schools in our community. This will

mean more resources for classroom instruction and quality programs, helping to ensure an outstanding education for every child.

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

My Senate colleagues and I will be putting forth a budget that uses the majority of the \$1.1 billion increase proposed by the Executive budget, up to \$600 million, as well as identifying the sources for the additional \$300 to \$400 million needed to eliminate the GEA.

Fulfilling the commitment to eliminate the remaining \$1 billion of this unfair draconian measure would provide critical resources to school districts, allowing them a possible option to freeze or reduce school taxes for the upcoming year. Working together, we can bring an end to the GEA school aid cuts, and build a brighter, stronger, better future for our children.

Senator Ranzenhofer's monthly column appeared in the Amherst and Clarence Bees on February 18th.