



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Students First: Senate Budget Adds \$1.9 Billion for Local Schools

PATTY RITCHIE March 11, 2015

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### **Plan Eliminates the Aid-Cutting GEA Gimmick, Helps More Families Pay for College**

Senator Patty Ritchie announced that the Senate's proposed budget plan would hike aid to schools by \$1.9 billion, and completely eliminate the aid-cutting GEA, or Gap Elimination Adjustment, that's been squeezing local schools to balance the state budget, when the funds should be going into classrooms.

The Senate's increase is \$800 million more than that proposed by the Governor.

"Our students deserve a quality education so they are prepared for the future," Senator Ritchie said. "That's why the Senate is working to increase funds for local schools, eliminate the GEA, and give teachers and students the support they need to succeed."

Since joining the Senate in 2011, Senator Ritchie has made increasing state support for local schools a priority, and has been able to deliver \$33 million more to schools in Jefferson, Oswego and St. Lawrence Counties than originally proposed in the Governor's Executive Budget.

She's also pushed to eliminate the GEA, voting in each of the last two years to fully restore GEA funding. GEA was created in 2010 as a way to balance the state's budget by reducing aid that school districts expect. More than 2,000 local residents have signed Senator Ritchie's online petition to eliminate the GEA, located at [www.ritchie.nysenate.gov](http://www.ritchie.nysenate.gov).

[CLICK HERE TO SIGN SENATOR RITCHIE'S PETITION TO END THE GEA](#)

In addition to the school aid increase, the Senate's budget also increases funding for community colleges, raises the income limits to make more students and families eligible for the TAP tuition assistance program, and doubling tax credits and deductions to help pay the cost of college tuition.

“As a parent, I know that finding ways to pay for a college education for your children can be a challenge, and that's why I've been working to find ways to help make college more affordable and accessible,” Senator Ritchie said.

In addition to the college education initiatives, the Senate budget also increases funding for Senator Ritchie's “Young Farmer” student loan forgiveness program, which was first enacted last year.

The Senate is expected to approve these measures later this week. The final budget is due April 1.