



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## The State Should Not Be Cutting Boys State Funding

MARK WALCZYK May 17, 2023

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Think about a 16 or 17 year old young man you know. He's completing his junior year of high school soon and entering a transformational time in his life. Everywhere he goes, adults are asking what his plan is; "are you applying to schools?" "what's your top choice?" "have you considered the union trades?" "are you sure you're going to make the NFL or should you have a backup plan?" Meanwhile, there's a good chance he's thinking about what he's going to do when school gets out for the summer.

Boys' State is a long-standing program of the American Legion, developed from the concept that youth should be offered a better perspective of the operation of state and local government. Nominated high school juniors are sponsored by local American Legion Posts from all over New York State to attend. They converge on the campus of SUNY Morrisville in the last week of June every year to learn that the individual is an integral part, and commensurately responsible, for the character and success of his government. Students graduate from Boys' State

with a strong understanding of how government works through activities like legislative sessions, court proceedings, mock elections, and other recreational programs. The partnership with the United States Marine Corps teaches young men a sense of urgency, discipline, fulfillment in building a team, and pride in serving our nation.

Notable leaders like the 42nd President of the United States, Bill Clinton, former New York State Governor George Pataki, NASA Astronaut Neil Armstrong, and former Senator David Valesky, are all Boys' State grads. Three current members of the New York Senate went through the Boys' State program. Yet, despite its value, proven record, and promise to continue to foster interest in civics to the next generation of leaders, Albany Democrats zeroed the funding for Boys' State in this year's budget. If this was a year when the State was tightening its belt and making difficult but financially responsible decisions, we'd be disappointed. But with a spending plan of \$229 billion that's larger than Florida and Texas' budgets combined - and fulfilled a political shopping spree, there's only one way to feel; outraged.

They say "budgets are about priorities," so when Governor Hochul is joined with strong support from a majority of Democratic Senators and Assembly members in rejecting the funding for Boys' State while they pad their own pet projects and give \$700m in tax credits for failed Netflix shows, they've really shown who they are. Without this funding, American Legion's across the state will have to make up the \$150k loss on their own. It's shameful, it's wrong, and I won't stop fighting for it.

Think back to that 16 or 17 year old. What options do you think he'll be taking advantage of this summer? How do you envision him spending his time? How about a 17 year old from a rough neighborhood in the inner city? What are his options this summer?

This is an impressionable time in a young man's life where small corrections or influences can change the course of his future. It's a time where he is starting to realize he has just one more year to pick a path in his first season of adulthood. A couple good choices and he's on the road to excellence, contributing to society and helping foster the American Dream. A couple of bad choices (or sometimes just idle time) for this young man to lose direction and be led down the wrong path in life.

We should be doing more of what Boys' State has done, not cutting it. We need this program. I call on New York State to reinstate this funding and I hope you join me by contacting your Legislators and making a donation to Boys State.

Find your Senator: <https://www.nysenate.gov/find-my-senator>

Find your Assemblyman: <https://nyassembly.gov/mem/search/>

Find your American Legion Post: <https://mylegion.org/PersonifyEbusiness/Find-a-Post>