



2009-10 BUDGET ADVOCACY AND ACTION STEPS

KEY NYSUT TALKING POINTS ON THE 2009-10 BUDGET:

- In these tough economic times, New York must continue to invest in public education from pre-school through college to keep students and the state's economy moving forward. Deep and painful cuts in the executive budget proposal would erode both progress and potential, short-circuiting the state's commitment to closing the achievement gap and further weakening the economy.
- It is time for New York state to increase the state Personal Income Tax on the wealthiest to prevent painful cuts in services citizens rely on — a solution supported by more than 80 percent of New Yorkers.
- New York state, which is especially hard hit by the Wall Street meltdown, needs our representatives in Congress to advocate fiercely for the federal stimulus revenue needed to support services, sustain student progress and close the achievement gap.
- This crisis creates an opportunity for the governor and Legislature to build a transformative budget that keeps New York moving forward in education and health care, and grows the state.

URGENT NYSUT TALKING POINT POSTED 1/7 ON COMMUNITY COLLEGES:

- The governor is seeking mid-year cuts in the current fiscal year which would damage community colleges. It is essential for the Legislature to resist the proposed cuts to Community College Base Aid in the current year (\$15 million in 2008-09.)

NOTE: *Specific talking points for constituent groups and ongoing updates of these general talking points are on Leader Access at www.nysut.org.*

WHAT LOCAL LEADERS ARE ASKED TO DO:

NYSUT urges board members and local presidents, in concert with regional offices, to:

- Participate immediately in regional leadership meetings to be briefed by NYSUT Legislative staff. Schedule district visits **as soon as possible** with congressional and state legislative reps to hammer home our urgent budget messages. *The federal stimulus package is currently in play and Congressional visits should be an immediate priority, followed by district calls to state legislators.*
- Reach out to activate your local coalitions (parents, community members, others) to enlist their help in legislator visits, e-campaigns and lobbying.

- Hold membership meetings to share urgency, action steps with members.
- Monitor daily the NYSUT Website (www.nysut.org) as well as the password-protected Leader Access area of the site for informational updates and action steps. Respond to NYSUT e-alerts, and urge your members to participate in electronic communications to elected representatives. (This supplements and does not replace in-person district visits.) Two immediate upcoming alerts will address community colleges and federal aid. **When you receive these alerts, follow the directions to the NYSUT Website to send a letter, and share this with your members and coalition partners.**
- Take part in the as-yet-to-be-scheduled special February lobby day (Committee of 100) in Albany.
- Provide your ideas and develop local initiatives in support of this crucial campaign.
- Update your member email lists and share with IT to broaden Legislation's activist list to be tapped for letters to legislators, other initiatives.
- Additionally, Teacher Center directors are asked to showcase their lighthouse programs through tours for legislative representatives and media. The executive budget proposes to entirely eliminate the funding for these centers and NYSUT is lobbying to defend them as an essential resource. Keep an eye on the website for upcoming letters and talking points on Teacher Centers and other specific budget items.

OVERVIEW ON CURRENT BUDGET ISSUES:

The executive budget projects a state budget deficit totaling over \$15 billion in 2009-10 and would cut \$698 million or 3.3 percent in school aid compared to 2008-09. The funding commitment through the Foundation Formula and other aid categories was estimated to be \$23.2 billion in 2009-10 – this amounts to a cut of \$2.5 billion or a 12 percent cut from current law. The budget contains a number of damaging proposals for public higher education on top of cuts already sustained by SUNY and CUNY, a disinvestment that must be reversed.

School Aid

- The state Legislature should begin budget negotiations by looking at the Regents State Aid proposal which would increase aid by \$880 million or 4.1 percent over the current year. The Regents' budget proposal, while not perfect, represents a commitment to maintaining the foundation formula and to quality education for all children. As we press to remedy its shortfalls, NYSUT will work to build on this credible framework to meet the needs of all districts in the state.

Higher Education

NYSUT is asking the state Legislature to:

- Invest in SUNY, CUNY and the community colleges, which in an economic crisis are even more essential as sources for quality education and state economic growth.
- Protect the core mission of SUNY/CUNY four-year campuses by ensuring student access and maintaining the quality of academic programs and student services. Too many campuses are

halting faculty searches and increasing class size or canceling courses. Faculty shortages and funding shortfalls deny tens of thousands of qualified students admission to four-year public colleges and universities. And legislators must restore the proposed \$25 million reduction in the state subsidy for SUNY hospitals.

- Restore the proposed cuts to Community College Base Aid in 2008-09 and 2009-10. For 2008-09, these proposed mid-year cuts would total \$15 million; for 2009-10, proposed cuts total \$65 million. These institutions are the gateway to achieving a college degree for thousands of people and this is especially true in times of economic crisis.

POTENTIAL SOURCES OF NEW REVENUE:

Federal Stimulus

- NYSUT is working with New York's congressional delegation to push for additional aid to the state in a federal economic-stimulus package expected to pass early this year. This package would likely include a big boost in state budget relief by increasing human service and education funding streams. If Congress enacts such a package, this could infuse over \$5 billion into New York's treasury. This would be an essential help in closing New York's \$15 billion budget gap and restoring education funding.

Increasing the State Personal Income Tax (PIT) Paid by the Wealthy

- Economists say an increase in the personal income tax on high-income taxpayers is the least damaging way to balance state budgets during recessions. A temporary income tax surcharge could raise up to \$7 billion annually. Various positive scenarios are being proposed by the Fiscal Policy Institute and other coalition partners. Polls across the state are showing overwhelming public support for this approach, with 80 percent of New Yorkers supporting such an increase to avoid painful cuts in services.
- New York state has cut its top personal income tax rate by more than 50 percent over the last 30 years – from 15.375 percent to 6.85 percent. The tax cuts enacted since 1994 are reducing state revenues by over \$16 billion annually.