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# LEGISLATIVE BRIEFS...

January 2010

## **2010 Legislative Session Commences in January**

Governor David Paterson will deliver the State of the State message on January 6. The Governor is expected to address education reform, one of the top priorities of the 2010 legislative session, in his speech. The State Legislature begins work the following Monday, January 11.

## **Governor Moves to Reduce to State Aid Payments and Education Advocates Move to Block**

In response to the state's immense budget deficit, Governor Paterson has directed the Division of the Budget "to reduce State aid payments administratively in order to balance the budget and prevent New York from running out of cash."

In the fall, the State Legislature had rejected the governor's proposed mid-year cuts to education, which were part of the deficit reduction plan (DRP) to help fill the state's growing budget gap. But many schools already laid off employees, left positions unfilled, and cut programs to reduce expenditures. Additional reductions could further erode opportunities for students and drive up local property taxes.

Withholding state aid payments is expected to help close the projected \$3.2 billion state deficit for 2009. Last month, the Legislature agreed to \$2.7 billion in reductions, far short of the amount needed to keep the state solvent. The most recent study by the NYS Comptroller projects a gap of more than \$4 billion.

A broad coalition of education advocates and citizen taxpayers, seeking to protect school programs from elimination, stop employee layoffs and prevent dramatic property tax increases, filed suit against Gov. David Paterson, saying he acted illegally and unconstitutionally by withholding state funds allocated by the state Legislature for school districts.

The lawsuit was filed in state Supreme Court in Albany County by New York State United Teachers; New York State School Boards Association; New York State Council of School Superintendents; and the School Administrators Association of New York State. Other education partners, including the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, the New York State Association of School Business Officials and the state PTA, signaled their strong support. NYS PTA filed an affidavit of support agreeing that this will hurt the education of children statewide and will work to ensure that full payments to schools continue.

For more information go to:

<http://www.osc.state.ny.us/press/releases/dec09/121409.htm>

<http://www.nyssba.org/index.php?src=news&srctype=detail&category=Press%20Releases&refno=1143>

<http://www.nyssba.org/index.php?src=news&srctype=detail&category=Press%20Releases&refno=1167>

### **Commissioner Steiner Plans for Education Reform**

The state's new education commissioner, David Steiner, is setting an aggressive schedule for reforming New York's current education system and transforming the Education Department into "a hub of innovation and best practices."

Steiner spent much of his first few months as Commissioner traveling throughout the state listening to teachers, school leaders, parents and students to identify what's working in our schools. He is committed to developing "a comprehensive, integrated and innovative education reform agenda for our state."

This means addressing standards, curriculum, instruction and assessments. Toward that end, Steiner plans to:

- accelerate the work of building a comprehensive P-20 data system that helps to link student performance data to educator effectiveness, provides electronic transcripts for all students, connects P-12 education with higher education, and integrates non-educational databases (like information on the workforce and health);
- generate real options to turn around such schools, bringing in new models and new partners;
- strengthen the State Education Department's ability to provide research-based support to school districts and serve as a client-support center ready to assist citizens with education questions and concerns; and
- develop clear, content-rich, sequenced curriculum guides that will form the foundation for a new generation of assessments - assessments that will be redesigned to generate truly useful data for students, teachers, principals and parents.

For more information go to:

<http://www.oms.nysed.gov/press/AgendaforEducationReform.html>

### **State to Consider Raising Charter School Cap**

The State Legislature is likely to consider lifting the charter school cap – which currently limits the number of charter schools in New York State to 200 – early in the 2010 legislative session. Charter schools are a major factor in the competitive Race to the Top grants being offered by the federal Department of Education. The deadline for first round of applications for funding is January 19. New York could qualify for as much as \$700 million from Race to the Top.

For more information go to:

<http://www.timesunion.com/AspStories/story.asp?storyID=878115&category=REGION#ixzz0ZijKPNRM>