



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Owen H. Johnson

Senator Johnson Joins In LI Education And Taxpayer Rally

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- [Education](#)



State Senator Owen H. Johnson joined more than 1,500 concerned residents and taxpayers from all across Long Island in opposition to Governor Spitzer's proposed cuts to Long Island school districts at an Education and Taxpayer Rally held last Saturday in Farmingdale. Taxpayers, educators, students, and business and labor leaders partnered with Johnson and the entire Long Island Senate Majority Delegation to call upon Governor Spitzer to restore the funding he cut to Long Island schools in his proposed education budget.

"We want our Fair Share!," many shouted and held up signs in reaction to the fact that while 17% of New York State's children are enrolled in Long Island schools, only 8.2% (down from 13%) of the Governor's proposed increase is targeted for Long Island school funding.

"This rally tells the Governor that Long Island schools need and deserve their fair share of state aid," said Senator Johnson. "Taxpayers on Long Island can ill afford to be shortchanged on school aid this year and face the prospect of even higher local school property taxes. Long Islanders need relief this year and, together, we will bring that important message to the Governor."

Vincent Lyons and Judith Chen, Co-Chairs of the Long Island Education Coalition said in a joint statement, "Simply stated Governor Spitzer's 2008 school aid formula is built upon the myth that Long Island taxpayers are able to bear a disproportionate share of the cost of public education. The truth is that this region's inequitable share of state aid endangers its high quality public schools and overburdens the local property tax base. It was only through the successful efforts of the Long Island Senate Majority delegation that last year Long Island districts were rescued from being 'flat-lined' under the Governor's budget, thereby mitigating local property tax increases. The Governor has targeted Long Island for even further cuts this year and we are once again calling upon our senate delegation to spearhead the resistance to the state's shifting more of its school funding responsibility onto the local property tax base."

Matt Crosson, President, Long Island Association said, "All Long Islanders ask for from the State is fairness. In Governor Spitzer's budget, they did not get it. 60% of all districts statewide that would suffer a cut in aid under the budget are on Long Island. Is that fair? Ten lower wealth school districts educating 73,000 children would receive only the minimum. Is that fair? In the budget debate to come in Albany, all

Long Islanders will stand united behind our legislative delegation to demand fairness for Long Island, for its children, and for its taxpayers. The rally today is only the beginning of our fight."

Taxpayers expressed great frustration that Long Island's average aid increase is one-third than the state average with 39% of state school aid headed for New York City schools. Budget breakdowns show that the Governor's budget has \$9.1 million less in High Tax Aid which will be detrimental in high tax communities. Overall, 46 out of 77 or 60% of schools in New York State with a projected aid loss are on Long Island.

Also, \$18.5 million less in BOCES aid and \$8.7 million less in Supplemental Excess Cost Aid means school districts would have to bear a greater share of these costs. The Governor's Foundation Aid proposal pours money into New York City to the detriment of Long Island schools. This proposal comes only months after school districts were promised that Foundation Aid would be predictable and dependable for future years. He originally promised a \$1.25 billion increase this year in the formula but, instead offers only \$899 million and cut the maximum increase districts may receive.