



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Senate Budget Invests in Education, Speeds End of Aid-Cutting Gea

PATTY RITCHIE March 17, 2014

| ISSUE: **EDUCATION**

Plan Also Boosts College Aid to Help Families Struggling with Tuition Costs

New York's schools would receive \$812 million more in state aid, and the aid-cutting "Gap Elimination Adjustment" (GEA) would be eliminated over two years, under the Senate's new budget plan that also boosts aid for middle class families struggling to pay college tuition costs.

The bipartisan Senate plan (R.4036) includes \$541 million in "GEA restoration"—\$200 million more than proposed by the Governor, and five times the increase recommended by the Assembly.

Eliminating the aid-cutting GEA was listed as a top priority of school officials in this year's budget.

"The GEA was a budget gimmick imposed before I joined the Senate, and one that disproportionately punishes rural schools," Senator Ritchie said. "Eliminating the GEA and getting a fair share for our schools and taxpayers has been a priority for school officials, as it has been for me, and this plan drives more funding to the classroom, and gets us closer to our goals."

The Senate education budget also includes:

- An additional \$145 million to give schools outside New York City for expanded full-day kindergarten and pre-k. School districts that choose not to expand these programs could use these additional funds for general classroom support;

- A College Affordability Plan that makes more middle class families eligible for tuition assistance, a new tax credit for college graduates who stay in New York to work. The Senate plan would increase the maximum TAP award from \$5000 to \$6470—the first increase since 2001—and raises income eligibility limits.
- Nearly \$1 million to support programs like Ogdensburg’s ATTAIN lab;
- Cost-cutting mandate relief for local school districts;
- New incentives for school districts that consolidate high schools.

The Senate’s budget also rejected a proposal to provide free college education to prison inmates.