



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Young: Restoration of GAP Elimination Adjustment Gets Top Mark For 2015-16 State Budget

CATHARINE YOUNG February 10, 2015

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GEA Funding Seen As Top Budget Priority for Many Local School Districts, Senate Republicans

ALBANY - Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I-Olean) today joined members of the Senate Republican Conference to announce their plan to fully restore the Gap Adjustment Elimination (GEA) funding for local school districts in this year's state budget.

The GEA has been repeatedly cited by local school districts as their biggest fiscal constraint. The cut was originally instituted by Senate Democrats when they controlled the chamber in 2010, over opposition by Senator Young and her Republican colleagues. Despite last year's restorations, school districts still have an outstanding balance to return to pre-GEA funding levels.

"The only way we are going to be able to combat rural poverty and give our children the opportunities they need to succeed is by making a sound investment in education.

Unfortunately, our children have been short-changed by legislators beholden to downstate interests. The local property tax base is not very wealthy and each year the GEA takes millions of dollars away from our schools. This loss of funding has forced districts to raise taxes, cut classroom staff and eliminate student programs. By fully restoring the funding in this year's budget we would allow districts to purchase much needed supplies, upgrade materials, or keep after-school activities running," said Senator Catharine Young.

"Our schools are desperately in need of this aid and with each year that passes our local property taxpayers are being forced to bear this added burden. I've heard from parents, teachers and administrators who have all stressed the importance of eliminating the GEA. Our taxpayers need the relief and our school districts need the support," Senator Young continued.

During last year's state budget negotiations, on Senate Republicans' insistence more than \$602 million was included in GEA restorations. The majority of these funds went to high need school districts, like the ones represented by Senator Young. This year Senator Young and the Senate Republican Conference have made the complete restoration of the GEA their number one priority.

The 2014-15 State Budget included a GEA restoration for Allegany County schools of \$2,791,068. This leaves schools in the county with a balance of \$2,061,597 being owed to close their GEA. For Cattaraugus County, last year's state budget restored \$4,624,710 to school districts, leaving them short \$4,710,576 from a full GEA funding restoration. In Chautauqua

County, school districts received a restoration of \$6,050,995 last year, leaving them \$6,658,996 left to be restored to full funding. Livingston County school districts received a restoration last year of \$2,711,680 and are slated to receive a restoration of \$4,963,310 if the Senate's plan is enacted.

"We can't continue to short-change our children's education and not risk jeopardizing the future for the next generation of New Yorkers. This year's budget must include the full restoration of the GEA funds and I urge the Assembly and the Governor to join us in putting New York's school children first," said Senator Young.

Senator Young said helping districts who need Foundation Aid increases, such as Jamestown and Dunkirk, will be her priority, too.

Video of Senator Young calling for the elimination of the GEA in the 2015-16 State Budget is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NCQsmCXTOIk>.