



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

Ortt: Senate Budget a Huge Boost to Western NY Schools

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Senator Fights for Increased School Funding, College Tuition Assistance

Senator Rob Ortt (R,C,I – North Tonawanda) announced today the passage of the State Senate’s “Brighter Future” budget plan and laid out the benefits for Western New York schools and families. The Senate’s proposal, to be negotiated with the Assembly and the Governor, increases school aid by \$1.9 billion over last year, completely eliminates the \$1 billion deficit remaining from the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA).

“Our budget builds a brighter future for our students,” said Sen. Ortt. “This significant increase in school aid will provide teachers and students with the resources they desperately need. We also propose eliminating the Gap Elimination Adjustment to restore billions of dollars lost in school aid to our western New York students. And, by expanding aid to community colleges and increasing the ceiling for the state’s tuition assistance program, we will make college more affordable for New Yorkers.”

The GEA was introduced in 2010, when Democrats controlled both houses of the Legislature as well as the Governor’s mansion. It was used to close the state’s then \$10 billion budget deficit by diverting funding originally dedicated to school districts and deducting it from state aid.

Ortt also noted the importance of what was removed from the education negotiations. Contentious issues like tuition assistance to illegal immigrants, extending New York City Mayor Bill DeBlasio's control over city schools, and student and teacher assessments were removed from the Senate's budget language. Ortt reasoned that these were policy proposals that should be debated in their own right, and certainly not worth risking a late budget.

The Senate's proposal combines with the Assembly's one-house budget resolution and the Governor's executive budget to layout each stakeholder's position heading into budget negotiations.

The State Budget is due March 31.