



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Hugh T. Farley

Sen. Farley Reports Senate Acts on Bill That Provides \$3.1 Billion in New Property Tax Relief, Extends the Tax Cap, and Implements Significant Education Reforms

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State Senator Hugh T. Farley (R, C, I - Schenectady) reported that he and his colleagues in the New York State Senate acted on an end-of-session measure that will bring \$3.1 billion in new tax relief to property owners, extend the existing property tax cap to deliver additional savings and create new jobs, improve affordable housing statewide, and continue the Senate's ongoing commitment to ensuring that every child has access to a quality education.

STAR-eligible homeowners throughout the state will be eligible for \$3.1 billion in new

property tax rebates over the next four years, starting in 2016. When the new rebate amounts are combined with the existing tax freeze check planned for next year, a total of \$900 million in property tax relief checks will be sent – an average of approximately \$350 per eligible homeowner statewide. In 2019-2020, this new tax relief will be fully phased in and a total of \$1.3 billion will be issued to taxpayers.

The Senate also succeeded in extending the highly effective property tax cap that has already saved taxpayers \$7.6 billion over the past four years. The cap had been set to expire in 2016-2017 but will now be extended to 2019-2020, bringing certainty to taxpayers and businesses.

To help give all children the opportunity to receive a quality education, the Senate passed legislation that includes \$250 million in funding for non-public schools. This money will be provided over two years to reimburse the costs incurred by private schools for performing state mandated services and implementing the Comprehensive Attendance Program (CAP).

Significant parent-centric education reforms first championed by the Senate were also included to provide greater transparency and accountability, and ensure that the standardized tests are a learning tool.

Measures include:

- Empowering both parents and teachers by directing the State Education Department (SED) to release test questions and the corresponding correct answers back to teachers in their respective classrooms by June 1st of each year. This will ensure greater accountability and transparency in testing, while also ensuring that tests are used as a real teaching tool, rather than simply a data collection device;
- Eliminating the “gag” order that had prevented teachers from discussing tests with their students;
- Helping students by enacting new measures to ensure that state exams in grades 3 through 8 are grade-appropriate and time-appropriate;
- Establishing a content review committee to review exam questions to ensure that they are aligned with the standards and are age and grade-level appropriate; and
- Protecting teachers by establishing in the education law a requirement that SED must consider student characteristics (such as English language learners,

students with disabilities, students in poverty, and a student's prior academic history) as factors in the calculation of a teacher's student growth scores.

These reforms build upon the Senate Republicans' success in increasing school aid by \$1.4 billion – an increase of hundreds of millions of dollars above what the Executive Budget originally proposed – for a total of \$23.5 billion. This funding increase also helps reduce the pressure to raise local taxes by giving school districts the resources they need to ensure children are college and career ready.

Due largely to the Senate Republican Conference, this year's budget also reduces what remains of the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) cuts by nearly 60 percent, restoring \$603 million. The state has now done away with nearly 85 percent of the original GEA, and the Senate will continue to work towards its full elimination once and for all.

The bill passed today is expected to be taken up by the Assembly and signed by the Governor.