



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara, colleagues say it's time to end GEA for local school districts
~ Senate approves legislation to eliminate it this year

THOMAS F. O'MARA January 11, 2016

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EDUCATION NEWS

Albany, N.Y., January 11—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C-Big Flats) and his colleagues in the Senate Republican Majority today staked out one of their key priorities for the next state budget: the complete elimination of the damaging and highly controversial Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) that has cost school districts locally and statewide billions of dollars in state aid over the past several years.

The Senate today approved legislation (**S.6377**) co-sponsored by O'Mara to completely eliminate the GEA this year. Largely at the insistence of Senate Republicans, the GEA was reduced by \$602 million in the 2014-2015 state budget and by \$603 million last year. There is currently \$434 million remaining in the GEA.

"Today's action signals that the elimination of the unfair and detrimental Gap Elimination Adjustment is a top priority for our local school districts and it will be a top priority for Senate Republicans throughout this year's budget negotiations. It's a priority I strongly share. It's time to eliminate the GEA," said O'Mara.

The GEA was originally enacted in 2009-2010 by then-Governor David Paterson, and when both houses of the Legislature were under Democratic control, as a way to help the state close a multi-billion-dollar budget gap. Republicans in the Senate at that time unanimously rejected the move as a budget-balancing scheme that would hurt local school districts.

According to the New York State School Boards Association, from 2010 to 2014 the GEA cost school districts statewide an average of \$3.1 million per year per district. It has led to staff reductions and cuts to many educational programs. Through a state aid formula largely based on the rate of state personal income growth, New York annually allocates state aid to education and then takes away a portion of that aid through the GEA.

Last year's state budget provided an overall increase of \$1.4 billion in general state support for public schools, an approximately six percent increase bringing total state aid to \$23.5 billion. The budget included the accelerated elimination of \$603 million, or more than half, of the remaining GEA in the 2015-16 school year. At that time O'Mara said that state senators were committed to fully eliminating the GEA for the 2016-17 school year.

O'Mara and his Republican colleagues are now calling on Governor Andrew Cuomo and the Assembly Democratic leadership to do away with the remaining GEA as part of the 2016-17 state budget due to be enacted by April 1.

Cuomo is set to unveil his 2016-17 proposed state budget on Wednesday.