

NEW YORK
STATE
SENATE

ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247



January 2, 2008

Honorable Eliot L. Spitzer
Governor
New York State
State Capitol
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Spitzer:

Throughout Long Island, rising property taxes have imposed an undue burden on homeowners, strained household budgets and compromised the quality-of-life enjoyed by the region's residents. As such, we are writing to request that your Executive Budget fairly apportion the distribution of new state education funding to more accurately reflect Long Island's share of student enrollment and deliver real relief to the region's property taxpayers.

Last January, your first Executive Budget slashed Long Island's share of new state school aid by nearly 40%. Moreover, you proposed the complete elimination of the property tax rebate check program and the creation of a Middle Class School Property Tax Relief ("STAR") initiative that the Long Island Association ("LIA") concluded would cause "a significant percentage of residential taxpayers...to lose money."

According to the Office of the New York State Comptroller, property taxes in Nassau and Suffolk counties increased by 74.8% and 63.8%, respectively, between 1995 and 2005. While the New York State Legislature has aggressively acted to assume county Medicaid costs and expand state revenue sharing with municipal governments, school property taxes grew by 50% during the first half of this decade. Across Long Island, school district levies now constitute 70%, or more, of the exorbitant property tax bills that imperil the future of our region.

Although Long Island's Senate Majority Delegation remains the most ardent champion of the region's property taxpayers, this is not a partisan issue. To this end, New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli noted that school districts "should be looking at ways to save money and still provide the best possible education for our students" and Nassau County Executive Thomas R. Suozzi recently highlighted the gravity of this issue in his presentation to the Citizens Budget Commission.

To solve the property tax crisis, the state must (1) promote cost containment and efficiency in the delivery of municipal government and school district services and (2) bear a larger proportion of those expenses historically funded through local property taxes. As a Delegation, we believe that both are required to achieve true reform and provide real relief to property taxpayers.

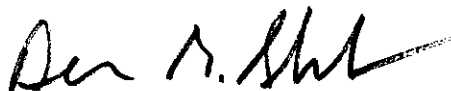
As you know, the enacted 2007-08 New York State Budget restored Long Island's traditional share of state education funding by maintaining the High-Tax Aid program and correcting many of the flawed assumptions contained within your original plan. In addition, the Senate Majority successfully preserved the property tax rebate check program and dramatically expanded your proposed income qualifications that discriminated against middle-class Long Island families.

While our Delegation has joined the Long Island Association, Long Island Education Coalition, Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association and the Long Island Federation of Labor AFL-CIO to advocate for a school aid allocation that reflects the region's 17% share of statewide student enrollment, your 2007-08 Executive Budget would have reduced the region's share of new state school aid to 8.16%. Notwithstanding your pronouncements relating to the reduction of property taxes, the LIA determined that the cumulative impact of your proposed education and property tax relief policies would produce higher residential and commercial property tax levies.

During the forthcoming State-of-the-State Address and the submission of your new Executive Budget, we encourage you to support the New York State Senate Majority's proposal to triple the amount distributed to each homeowner through the property tax rebate check program and eliminate your eligibility limitations. This would provide immediate and meaningful relief to Long Island's beleaguered property taxpayers. Further, we must explore and embrace innovative, long-term solutions through which the state enhances the accountability of school district budgets and more efficiently deploys state resources to absorb burgeoning school district expenses, while ensuring that the resultant savings directly benefit property taxpayers.

The State-of-the-State Address and the Executive Budget provide you with a tremendous opportunity to advance real solutions that significantly reduce property taxes and protect Long Island's overburdened homeowners. As a Delegation and, collectively, the voice for over two million New York State residents, we anticipate your support for these necessary measures.

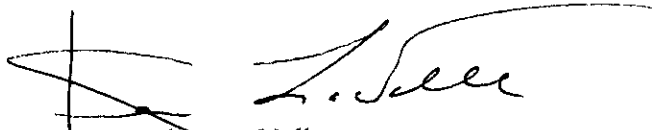
Sincerely,



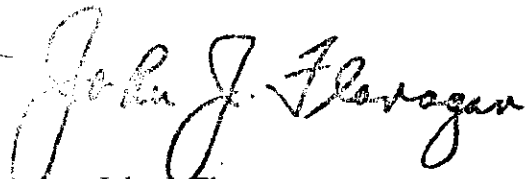
Dean G. Skelos
Senator, 9th District




Owen H. Johnson
Senator, 4th District




Kenneth P. LaValle
Senator, 1st District



John J. Flanagan
Senator, 2nd District



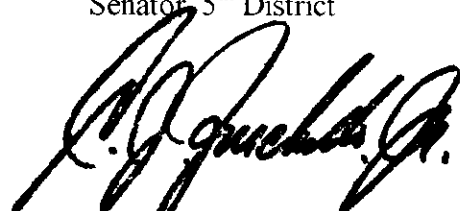
Caesar Trunzo
Senator, 3rd District



Carl L. Marcellino
Senator, 5th District



Kemp Hannon
Senator, 6th District



Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr.
Senator, 8th District