



Legislative and Agency Update

March 2009

Governor's News

State Budget Proposal for FY 2010

Education Commissioner Lucille E. Davy applauded Governor Corzine for making education a top priority in next year's budget and committing an additional \$300 million to education funding at a time when states around the nation are proposing drastic cuts.

The Fiscal Year 2010 budget as proposed this week includes \$7.9 billion for K-12 education costs - an increase of nearly \$148 million. Additional funding also will be provided to existing high-quality preschool programs around the state and incentive funds will be available to help school districts leverage federal funding for new or expanding preschool programs.

Governor Corzine's budget also maintains his commitment to the School Funding Reform Act (SFRA) enacted last year. No school district will see a decrease in state aid and 171 districts with budgets below the adequacy benchmark will receive increases of up to 5 percent.

In a memo to school district officials, the commissioner provides links to state aid profiles and district aid summaries. <http://www.nj.gov/education/sff/memo.pdf>

NJ Supreme Court Decision on School Funding

On March 25, the NJ Supreme Court ruled that the new school funding formula implemented first in FY 2009 'represents a well-considered, even expansive, formula to allow a thorough and efficient education for all children in our state'. The ruling came after weeks of hearing and testimony on challenges filed with the court claiming that the new formula did not adequately address the needs of children in the former Abbott school districts.

Legislative News

On March 9, the Senate Education Committee released S2647, legislation to require school district volunteers to undergo a criminal history record check.

In late March, the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee held two public hearings and the Assembly Budget Committee held three hearings for the public and special interest groups to testify on the Governor's proposed budget. Testimony was submitted by NJASL President Angela Crockett Coxen to both committees on March 26.

Neither the Senate nor the Assembly is scheduled to hold a session until sometime in May. Likewise, legislative committees are not scheduled to meet until May with the exception of the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee and the Assembly Budget Committee. Over the next several weeks, these committees will hold public meetings at which each department of state will present their proposed budgets and respond to questions submitted by the committees in advance of the scheduled meetings.

Commissioner Lucille E. Davy will meet with the Assembly Budget Committee on April 28 and the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee on April 29 to provide legislators with information on the department's proposed budget and to answer questions.

Department of Education News

Commissioner Lucille E. Davy announced a change to the highly qualified teacher requirements for teachers of general education and special education students in grade five. <http://www.nj.gov/education/profdev/nclb/memos/030209grade5.pdf>

State Board of Education

Interdistrict Public School Choice

The State Board discussed the readoption with amendments of the Interdistrict Public School Choice regulations proposed at N.J.A.C. 6A:12 on March 18. The proposed amendments are at first discussion and testimony will be accepted by the Board over the next several months. [Interdistrict Public School Choice](#)

Pending Bills on Libraries

The following bills are pending in the New Jersey State Legislature and no action is scheduled at this time.

- A1981 Permits municipal board of library commissioners to reduce library tax rate when municipality acquires new ratables.
- S650/A2620 Increases the maximum amount of bonds issued by the New Jersey Educational Facilities Authority for the Public Library Project Fund from \$45 million to \$95 million to provide library construction and technology grants.
- S881/A1139 Removes appropriations for municipal library purposes from the four percent municipal property tax levy cap. 10/2/08 Reported from Senate Community and Urban Affairs committee with amendments.

- S1306/A1567/A2516 These bills would reduce the cap for the annual increase in the amount required to be raised by taxation for the municipal library from 15% to 4%. This change would bring the municipal library cap in line with the 4% tax levy cap for municipalities imposed pursuant to P.L.2007. The 4% cap could be exceeded only with the approval of the State Librarian.
- A2107 would provide \$ 1 million to continue the New Jersey Knowledge Initiative until June 2008.
- A3089/S2274 concerns the dissolution of free public libraries. It was introduced to address a recent judicial decision which held that there was no mechanism in statute to facilitate the dissolution of free public libraries as a result of decreased circulation or a desire to share library services with adjoining municipalities.
- A3753 proposes to reduce the tax levy for free public libraries to one-sixth of a mill per dollar of assessable property.
- AR177 memorializes the President the Congress to use a portion of the expected stimulus money to update and renovate deteriorating public libraries.
- S2728 introduced on March 16, 2009, this legislation encourages municipalities to enter into joint library agreements. Additionally, this bill will modify the membership on the newly created joint board of library trustees.

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Volume 11 - 3/30/09