

SCHOOL BOARD notes



NJSBA: Suspend 2010 School Budget Election

With local school boards facing an uncertain state funding picture, NJSBA is urging the Legislature and the Administration to suspend the 2010 school budget election.

The suspension would apply only to districts' base budget proposals. Under NJSBA's plan, board member elections, second ballot questions and construction bond referendums would still take place at the Annual School Election on April 20.

Funding Questions "Local school boards must finalize proposed budgets for placement on the election ballot by April 3, three weeks after Gov. Christie's budget message," explained Marie S. Bilik, NJSBA executive director. "Uncertainty over state school aid, along with the compressed budget development timelines, will pose a burden to local school districts in develop-

ing intelligent, responsible budgets."

In addition to concern about next year's state aid, more than 500 school districts are still wrestling with a \$475 million freeze in current-year state funding, which will force them to use excess surplus and dip into certain reserve accounts – action that will also affect 2010-2011 school budgets.

Sample Resolution The budget election suspension would require legislation. NJSBA has sought the suspension in testimony before the Legislature and in conversations with administration officials.

To advocate for the election suspension, local boards of education should also reach out to their legislative representatives. NJSBA has prepared a sample resolution, which local school officials can download from NJSBA's "State Aid Freeze 2010" Web page, accessible through www.njsba.org. If

possible, boards may consider adopting the resolution at their next meeting. The resolution can also serve as the basis for a letter to legislative leaders, or talking points when discussing the issue.

Taxpayers Safeguarded "Proposed school district budgets are controlled by a tax-levy cap, undergo thorough review by the state's executive county superintendents with the express purpose of ensuring efficiency, and are subject to public hearing," said Bilik. "So clearly, the taxpayers' interests are represented without having the proposals go to referendum.

"Suspension of the 2010 school budget election would also spare municipalities and school districts the time-consuming and unnecessary exercise of negotiating over rejected budgets, which are bare bones to begin with." 🍷

Assembly Announces Its Version of Pension Reform

The Assembly leadership last week announced its version of a pension/health benefits reform plan. The four major components – three bills and a constitutional amendment requiring the state to pay its annual pension obligations – are identical to measures that were introduced in the Senate on Feb. 8. The upper house passed the three bills, by a 36-0 vote, 14 days later.

It is clear that the Assembly plans to move on the issue at a slower pace. Consequently, the reform package will not be on Gov. Christie's desk by his March 16 budget message, a goal expressed by the

administration and Senate leadership.

Release of the actual text of the four Assembly measures is expected on Thursday, March 4. The bills have not been formally assigned to a committee. Most likely, Speaker Sheila Oliver will place them with the Assembly State Government Committee.

On Thursday, another Assembly panel, the Budget Committee, will hold a hearing with invited speakers to discuss the status of New Jersey's pension system. The meeting, however, will be discussion only and will not involve action on any bills.

Major components of the Assembly plan include the following bills:

A-2460 (Senate version, S-3) would require public employees to pay 1.5 percent of their salary toward health benefits after the expiration of a current contract. NJSBA had supported an amendment to the Senate version, which extended the mandatory contribution to all school district staff members, whether they are covered by the School Employees Health Benefits Program or a private carrier. It is not clear if A-2460, as introduced, will

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Senate Panel Approves Schundler

The Senate Judiciary Committee on Monday approved Bret Schundler for the position of the state's next commissioner of education.

Gov. Chris Christie's pick to head the New Jersey Department of Education was

interviewed for two days by the Senate Judiciary Committee on issues ranging from vouchers to sex education programs. The committee voted 11-0 to clear Schundler, but it did so "without recommendation."

The acting commissioner now needs

confirmation from the full Senate. That vote could be held as early as March 11.

Schundler, formerly a Jersey City mayor and gubernatorial candidate, most recently worked as chief operating officer of The King's College in New York City. 🍌

Briefings Set for School Board Candidates

NJSBA will sponsor three briefing sessions this month to give local school board candidates an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of local boards of education.

Candidates will receive information on what to expect if they are elected to office during the Annual School Election, slated

for April 20. The briefings will cover issues such as school policy, administration, finance and budgeting, collective bargaining and community relations, as well as relations among the board, superintendent and staff.

"School board membership is both a challenging and a rewarding form of public service," said Harry J. Delgado, NJSBA

president. "These evening programs, conducted by NJSBA's Field Service Representatives, will provide candidates with a better understanding of those challenges, and the roles and responsibilities of school board members."

There is no charge for attendance, but registration is required. To register, e-mail contact information (name, address, phone number and e-mail) to callcenter@njsba.org. Additional information can be obtained by calling NJSBA toll-free at (888) 886-5722, ext. 5260. Dates, times and locations of the briefings are:

Northern Region:

Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Morris, Passaic, Sussex and Warren counties, Tuesday March 9, 7 p.m., Parsippany High School cafeteria, 309 Baldwin Road, Parsippany

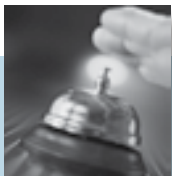
Southern Region:

Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem counties, Wednesday, March 10, 7 p.m., Hammonton High School library, 566 Old Forks Road, Hammonton

Central Region:

Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, Somerset and Union counties, Monday, March 15, 7 p.m., Middlesex County Vocational and Technical School cafeteria, 112 Rues Lane, East Brunswick

Registration for each program begins at 6:30 p.m. Registrants should check NJSBA's Web site before the program for any change in time or location. 🍌



NJSBA AT YOUR SERVICE

School Election FAQs

The 2010 annual school election is Tuesday, April 20. To assist current and prospective board members, NJSBA's Legal and Policy Services Department has posted a document, *School Election 2010 Questions and Answers*, on the NJSBA Web site, www.njsba.org.

The document covers a wide range of topics, including details on the specific election responsibilities of a board secretary, the legal requirements to become a board member, campaign expenditure reporting requirements, what happens in the event of a tie vote on either the budget or among school board candidates, and more.



NJSBA Audit Committee to Meet

In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, notice is hereby provided of a meeting of the New Jersey School Boards Association's Audit Committee. The meeting will be held at the Wyndham-Princeton Forrestal Hotel and Conference Center, 900 Scudders Mill Road, Plainsboro, at 6 p.m. Friday, March 12.

The meeting is open to the public. For further information, contact Joan Campbell at (609) 278-5211.

NJSBA Board of Directors to Meet

In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, notice is hereby provided of a meeting of the NJSBA Board of Directors. The meeting will be held at the Wyndham Conference Center, 900 Scudders Mill Road, in Plainsboro, at 7:30 p.m. Friday, March 12. The meeting is open to the public.

The agenda, to the extent known at this time, will include discussion and/or action on open session minutes of the Jan. 22 meeting; advocacy update; headquarters renovation update; Governance and Operations policy update; 2010 legislative agenda; donation for NSBA's Center for Public Education; and reports of the president and executive director.

For further information, contact Nancy Fletcher at (609) 278-5214.

NJSBA Earth Summit: How Your School Can Go Green

Saturday, April 24 • 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. (registration 8:30)
The Willow School, 1150 Pottersville Road, Gladstone, NJ
Registration: www.njsba.org/earth10/

Interested in making environmentally conscious changes for your school? Budgets are tight, but it doesn't take money to start the conversation. Schools can directly benefit from implementing energy conservation education and actions by reducing their energy consumption by as much as 18%, a significant cost savings.

Our expert line-up of presenters will show you ways to "green" your schools and ways to build sustainability into the curriculum. Learn what can be done with our current resources, and the role of leadership in the change process. Tours of the Willow School's platinum LEED Certified green buildings and more will follow the presentations.

Keynote Speaker Sponsored by Parette Somjen Architects:

Jaimie P. Cloud, Author & Sustainability Expert,
Founder & President of the Cloud Institute for Sustainability, NYC

Presenters:

Mark Biedron, Cofounder, the Willow School
David A. Mooij, Superintendent of Schools, Neptune School District
Winnie Fatton, Project Manager, Sustainable NJ
Dr. Monica M. Browne, Superintendent of Schools, Upper Saddle River



Cost: Free
Academy Credits: 1
CBM and MBM Core Areas: Covers All Areas



Pension Reform continued

include that provision.

As in the Senate version, A-2460 would result in any employee contribution going to the local school district – and not to the state – to offset the cost of health coverage. The bill is based on recommendations of the Legislature's Special Session on Property Tax Reform, which addressed strategies to reduce local tax levies and expenditures.

A-2461 (identical to S-2) would alter the

calculations of pension payments. It would roll back a 9 percent increase in benefits put into place in 2001; average the highest five years of salary rather than three years to determine pension payments; and ban future part-time workers from participating in the pension system.

A-2459 (identical to S-4) would cap payment for unused sick leave at \$15,000 for all public employees, reflecting the limit already in effect for state employees. It would also limit carry-over of vacation time for public employees. 🍏

NJSBA's Southern Town Hall Meeting Postponed

NJSBA's Southern Region Town Hall meeting, originally scheduled for March 13, has been **postponed**. The new date and more information will be coming soon.

NJSBA believes it would best benefit its members to hold the Southern Region Town Hall meeting when the new education commissioner or other state officials can attend. Also, holding the meeting after the governor's budget address will provide a better opportunity to discuss school funding and education policy issues.

Bret Schundler, New Jersey's commissioner of education, and several legislators will attend the March 6 Northern Region Town Hall meeting at the Harrison High School. School officials who can not attend the March 6 event in person can view the panel discussion live online. To register to watch the event online, go to <http://03062010.eventbrite.com/>. To register to attend the March 6 meeting, check the What's New section of NJSBA's Web site, www.njsba.org.

Deadline Approaches for Special Education Awards Entries

The deadline for the Innovations in Special Education awards program is quickly approaching, as entries must be postmarked by Friday, April 2.

The awards program, which recognizes exemplary programs for special education students, is sponsored by NJSBA and ASAH, the Association of Schools and Agencies for the Handicapped, which represents private special education schools.

Entries will be judged on content, including degree of innovation, how well it addresses student needs, its integration into the curriculum, evaluation strategies, and parent/community involvement. Presentation of the entry will also be considered.

Selected programs will be honored at a special event held in conjunction with Special Education Week in New Jersey in May 2010.

More information is under the "What's New" section of NJSBA's Web site, www.njsba.org.



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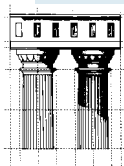


Gov's Budget Message is Focus of Lunchtime Program

Gov. Chris Christie's March 16 budget message will be the topic of a Learn@Lunch program to be held on March 24 from noon to 12:30 p.m.

Join NJSBA's governmental relations staff and fellow board members for discussion and analysis of what the proposed state budget means for your district. The Association's series of lunchtime webinars, Learn@Lunch, makes learning convenient. Participants can watch the webinars live from any computer; questions will be taken from the audience.

NJSBA members can also replay the recorded webinar on demand at a later date. To register for the program, go to www.njsba.org/learnatlunch and scroll down to March 24.



Last Chance for Mandatory Training

Board members have had nearly a year to meet their mandatory training requirement under the state's accountability regulations. But for board members now in the second or third year of their first term, or in the first year of a subsequent term of office – and who have not been able to attend training – there is one last chance to fulfill the obligation.

NJSBA has prerecorded, Web-based training that allows board members to complete the mandated training requirement at their convenience from their home or any public computer with an Internet connection.

The last day to register for training is Thursday, March 11. The last day to complete training is Friday, March 12. To register for the Web-based training, contact NJSBA's Call Center at (888) 886-5722, ext.5260.



C A L E N D A R

March 24

- ▶ Somerset County School Board Association meeting, Somerset Vo-Tech, Bridgewater, 6:30 p.m.
- ▶ Learn@Lunch: Discuss Gov. Christie's Budget Address, online, www.njsba.org/learnatlunch; register by selecting the link under March 24. 12-12:30 p.m.

March 27

- ▶ County Association Leadership meeting, Robert Wood Johnson Health and Wellness Center, Mercerville, 8:30 a.m.

▶ Denotes pre-registration required

For more information about county school boards association activities, go online to www.njsba.org and select the name of the appropriate county association.