

# SCHOOL BOARD notes

## NJSBA: Overdue Changes Must Accompany State Aid Cut

In his budget message on Tuesday, Gov. Chris Christie said direct aid to public school districts will decrease by \$820 million, marking the first time in memory that a governor has sought a statewide school aid reduction as part of a recommended state budget.

Christie said the proposed cuts result from a \$10.7 billion budget gap. "No fiscal crisis we have had in New Jersey's history compares to this one," he said.

Christie's proposed state budget totals \$29.3 billion, almost \$3 billion less than 2009-2010. Besides cutting K-12 aid, the proposal will reduce funding for municipi-

palities, colleges and other areas.

It appears as if all school districts will see a reduction in direct state aid. Cuts in aid will be capped at an amount equal to 5 percent of the district's operating budget. About 60 districts will lose all their direct aid.

Most districts will continue to receive state funding for extraordinary special education costs and debt service.

**Labor Changes** Christie recommended changes in labor law to strengthen local school boards' position in negotiations, many of which NJSBA has long sought.

"Along with painful cuts in school funding, Gov. Christie provided encouragement that the state might reverse a generation of political decisions that have put local boards of education at a distinct disadvantage in labor negotiations," said Marie S. Bilik, NJSBA's executive director.

"For too long, too many state leaders have criticized local school boards for contract settlements that, in fact, were made possible by union-initiated proposals that were put into state law," she continued.

The governor, for example, recom-

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## State Senate Confirms Schundler as N.J. Education Commissioner

The state Senate last week confirmed Gov. Chris Christie's nomination of Bret Schundler to serve as New Jersey's Commissioner of Education. Schundler has been serving as acting commissioner since Jan. 20.

"The New Jersey School Boards Association looks forward to working with Commissioner Schundler as we advance education for our state's schoolchildren," Marie S. Bilik, NJSBA's executive director, said after the March 11 confirmation.

Schundler's nomination was released by the Senate Judiciary Committee following hearings last week. In a Feb. 18 letter to the committee's chairman, Paul Sarlo, Bilik expressed support for Schundler.

"Mr. Schundler is an education leader not afraid of innovation or of changing long-standing practices to achieve school

improvement," she wrote. "At the same time, he approaches issues in a thoughtful and collaborative manner.

"I cannot guarantee that the New Jersey School Boards Association will agree with Mr. Schundler on every single education policy matter," Bilik continued. "However, I am confident in his desire to work with all elements of the education

community and his sincere interest in the education of our state's children."

Schundler, who previously worked as chief operating officer at The King's College in New York City, was formerly a mayor of Jersey City, gubernatorial candidate, and served as the first president of Golden Door Charter School, one of the first charter schools in Jersey City. 🍏

### Draft of National Standards Introduced

A single set of national education standards is one step closer to reality.

A group representing 48 states and two territories announced on March 10 a final draft of new common standards in language arts and math for kindergarten through 12th grade students.

The draft standards, from the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers, detail the skills that students should learn each year. However, they do not specify curriculum, which remains the responsibility of local school districts.

The standards have changed since previous versions, according to Willa Spicer, New

*continued on page 4*

# Changes Proposed to No Child Left Behind

On Saturday, President Obama announced he would send a proposal to Congress to reauthorize the Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA), more widely known as *No Child Left Behind*.

The administration's "Blueprint for Reform" keeps some features of the existing law, most notably the requirement for annual reading and math tests. However, it also proposes significant changes.

The existing law requires every child to achieve grade level proficiency in reading and math by 2014, a goal considered unrealistic. The new proposal calls for all students to be prepared for college and career upon high school graduation. That standard would take effect by 2020.

One criticism of the existing No Child Left Behind law is that since states set their own standards, the act created incentives for states to lower academic standards in order to meet federal progress benchmarks.

The new plan calls for states to develop and adopt standards in language arts and

math in common with other states, such as through the common standards process proposed last week by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. Alternatively, states may work with their university system to develop their own college-ready standards. In addition to measuring performance in math and reading, schools could include student performance in other subjects to prove students are making progress.

The Obama plan calls for federal intervention in failing schools, including possibly closing the school. It also calls for rewarding, and reducing federal interference in, top-achieving schools and those schools that have made progress in student achievement. More federal funding would move to competitive grants, similar to the Race to the Top program.

Anne L. Bryant, executive director of the National School Boards Association, called the plan a "vast improvement," but cited misgivings about linking a state's fed-

eral funding to the adoption of common standards.

The full text of the blueprint is available online selecting the "No Child Left Behind" link of the U.S. Department of Education's policy section of its Web site, [www.ed.gov/policy](http://www.ed.gov/policy).

## Resolutions Subcommittee to Meet



In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, notice is hereby provided of a meeting of NJSBA's Resolutions Subcommittee. The meeting previously scheduled for April 3 will be held on March 25 via teleconference at 3 p.m. at NJSBA's temporary headquarters, 850 Bear Tavern Road, Suite 302, Ewing. The meeting is open to the public.

The agenda, to the extent known at this time, will include review and action on two resolutions which will come before the Annual Delegate Assembly on May 15. The resolutions that will be considered by the subcommittee are listed below by sponsor, including the topic.

Notice is also provided that the Emergency Resolutions Subcommittee may be required to meet on May 10 at a place to be determined if any resolutions are received by the Association to be considered as emergency resolutions for the Delegate Assembly agenda.

**Glassboro (Gloucester County)** The resolution requests that NJSBA policy be revised to allow districts to charge students domiciled in the district for remedial and/or advance classes taken during a summer school program.

**South Plainfield (Middlesex County)** The resolution proposes that NJSBA policy be revised to include that school districts are permitted to and may take whatever action they deem appropriate to protect their students from harassment, intimidation and/or bullying, even when there is an ongoing criminal investigation; and further, that such language should not be construed as authorizing school districts to interfere or intercede in any way with an ongoing criminal investigation involving district pupils.

For more information, contact Barbara Deveney at (609) 278-5256.



## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

### Panel Holds Bill Requiring Public Records to be Posted Online

The Senate State Government Committee on Monday held a bill that would require all government records to be posted online in a searchable format. The bill, as introduced, would give school districts and other government entities 30 days in which to post records created after the measure becomes law, or six months in which to post public records created before the bill becomes law.

The bill, S-201 (Whelan), was held from moving forward after NJSBA and other groups provided testimony that raised concerns about costs to taxpayers. While NJSBA policy strongly supports the public's right to access government records, the Association explained that the bill would have the unintended consequence of increasing costs to districts – both in staff as well as equipment such as scanners and servers – all of which would increase the amount of tax dollars spent outside of the classroom.

NJSBA proposed amendments calling for a grant program to assist school districts with the costs. NJSBA also called for the formation of a study panel consisting of key stakeholders – both requesters and providers – to address accessibility and financial issues.

**Eco-friendly Schools** The Senate Environmental Committee released a bill on Monday that would require school construction to meet environmentally friendly standards. The bill, S-239 (Bateman/Turner), would mandate that school construction incorporate the U.S. Green Building Council's standards, called "Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design." The "LEED" guidelines address issues such as classroom acoustics, master planning, mold prevention, and construction that is healthy, comfortable and cost effective. Such standards are already in place through the New Jersey State Board of Education's regulations, and S-239 would make the standards a statutory requirement set by the Legislature. The bill is poised for a vote by the full Senate.

# 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

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*

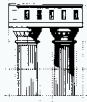
## Presenters:

**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  
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**YOU CAN REGISTER ONLINE NOW AT [WWW.NJSBA.ORG/EARTH10](http://WWW.NJSBA.ORG/EARTH10).**

The school district accountability law places travel restrictions on school board members. Travel approval is required in advance. For information, visit [www.njsba.org/accountabilityact/](http://www.njsba.org/accountabilityact/). For possible program cancellations or postponements due to inclement weather, call (609) 392-2000.

Please register me for the **NJSBA Earth Summit: How Your School Can Go Green**, Saturday, April 24, 2010, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. (registration 8:30 a.m.), The Willow School, 1150 Pottersville Road, Gladstone, NJ.

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**Return to:** New Jersey School Boards Association, Call Center  
413 W. State Street, P.O. Box 909, Trenton, New Jersey 08605-0909 or FAX: 609-278-5280

# Voters Approve \$76.8 Million in School Construction

Voters in two of the five New Jersey school districts holding referendum questions on March 9 approved \$76.8 million in school construction, according to NJSBA.

Of the total amount approved, \$40 million will qualify for state funds, either through one-time school-construction grants, annual “debt service aid” payments to school districts, or rebates through the state’s Clean Energy program. The Educational Facilities Construction and Financing Act of 2000, which provided state funding for school construction, also set the minimum level of state aid

for school construction at 40 percent of eligible costs. Before the law, 240 school districts received no state aid for school construction, and another 108 received less than 25 percent.

Statewide, the total amount approved was \$76,856,887, out of \$128,846,437 requested. The amount eligible for state reimbursement is \$44,065,694.

Voters approved projects in Lumberton and Willingboro townships in Burlington County. They rejected proposals in Springfield Township (Burlington County); Bloomfield (Essex County); and

Robbinsville Township (Mercer County).

School boards may hold special elections on five specific dates a year. The next date on which a school board may schedule a referendum question is the Annual School Election on April 20.

NJSBA is the only statewide organization that tracks the success of all school bond referendums in the state. A list of results of all referendums since 1998 can be found online by going to NJSBA’s homepage at [www.njsba.org](http://www.njsba.org), selecting “Newsroom” and then the “Research” link. 🍌

## NJSBA Testifies Before Red Tape Commission

Barbara Horl, of NJSBA’s governmental relations department, testified March 9 before the bipartisan Red Tape Review Group on the topic of unfunded mandates. The panel, which met at Brookdale Community College in Lincroft, is headed by Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno and is charged with examining the administrative rule-making process in the state.

Horl noted that NJSBA conducted a review of all state and federal education mandates in the mid-1990s; 234 specific requirements were identified.

Some mandates serve a distinct purpose in promoting sound school district governance, or benefit the health and safety of students, she said. Others, however, are costly, do not yield effective results, or need adjustment to better balance the interests of New Jersey students and taxpayers.

**Cost Drivers** Horl spoke about the success of state and federally mandated special education, but noted it has been a major cost driver for local school districts. The problems result from chronic underfunding by the state and federal governments and laws that weigh heavily against school boards in disputes over individual student’s education plans. In particular, Horl urged the group to support the repeal of a 2007

statute that places the burden of proof in special education disputes on the local district, rather than on the party bringing a complaint. She also testified that NJSBA policy supports full state funding of extraordinary special education costs.

In discussing the Accountability Regulations, she pointed out that the Education Transition Team Report found many of the rules to be overly burdensome and onerous, and urged the commission to recommend suspension of the Accountability Regulations. “We agree with both the conclusion of the report and remarks of Acting Education Commissioner Schundler that it makes no sense to require endless reports, especially for districts that are high-performing and successful.”

**Next Meeting** Another meeting of the review group is scheduled for March 23 at 3 p.m. at The Conference Center at Montclair State University, Valley Road & Normal Avenue, Montclair. The topic of that meeting will be “common sense principles for rulemaking.”

The full text of NJSBA’s March 9 testimony is available by selecting the “Newsroom” link on NJSBA’s homepage at [www.njsba.org](http://www.njsba.org).

In addition to Lt. Gov. Guadagno,

the Red Tape Review Group includes Senators Barbara Buono and Steve Oroho; Assemblymen John Burzichelli and Scott Rumana; Acting Department of Community Affairs Commissioner Lori Grifa; Acting Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Bob Martin; and the chief counsel of the Governor’s Office. 🍌

### **National Standards** continued

Jersey deputy commissioner of education. “The standards now proposed are fewer and clearer, and will require that concepts be taught to a deeper level of understanding,” she said.

According to Spicer, the draft standards support New Jersey’s current high school graduation requirements, which were updated last year by the State Board of Education.

Bret Schundler, state commissioner of education, issued a statement urging the education community to review the draft standards and provide input on them. “All of us share the responsibility for educating our young people, and we value public input in this process,” he said.

The complete text of the draft standards is available at [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org). Comments can be submitted through that Web site or via e-mail to the state Department of Education at [commoncore.org@doe.state.nj.us](mailto:commoncore.org@doe.state.nj.us). The deadline for comments is April 2.

### Discussion of Governor Christie's Budget Address

#### Featured Presenters:

*Members of NJSBA's Executive Staff*

Governor Chris Christie's March 16 budget message addressed an \$819 million reduction in state aid to school districts, as well as collective bargaining tools designed to help school boards tackle this challenge.

Join NJSBA executive staff members for a discussion and analysis of what the Governor's budget proposal will mean for your district.

Register online now at [www.njsba.org/learnatlunch](http://www.njsba.org/learnatlunch).



Learn@Lunch, our new series of lunchtime webinars, makes learning convenient. Watch the webinars live from your desk or replay the recorded broadcast later, on-demand at [www.njsba.org/learnatlunch](http://www.njsba.org/learnatlunch).



To register or to view the schedule of upcoming Learn@Lunch events, visit [www.njsba.org/learn@lunch](http://www.njsba.org/learn@lunch).

## New Rules Proposed for Athletes with Head Injuries

Athletes who suffer a concussion would need a doctor's approval before being allowed to compete, according to regulations proposed last week.

The New Jersey State Interscholastic

Athletic Association (NJSIAA), the governing body for high school athletics, made the proposal March 8 before the Assembly Education Committee. According to the proposal:

Athletes and coaches would be required to receive annual training on recognizing head injuries, and parents would also receive information at the start of the season.

Athletes who suffered a head injury would need to be symptom-free for a week before being allowed to return to the field. A physician's approval would be needed before the athlete could return.

Any athlete showing symptoms of a concussion would be immediately removed from play.

The NJSIAA, which oversees high school sports for approximately 425 public and private high schools, is expected to adopt the regulations in a month, according to news reports. 🍏

### Sussex Lawmakers Talk Education



Assemblyman Gary R. Chiusano fields a question during the Sussex County School Boards Association's Legislative Meeting on March 10. Standing to the right is Sen. Steven V. Oroho. Both legislators are from the 24th Legislative District, serving Warren County. The legislators discussed their vision for public education during a time of change and fiscal difficulties in Trenton. Sitting at the left is Ray Pinney, NJSBA's member outreach coordinator.



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**State Aid Cut**  
 continued

mended restoring a school board’s ability to implement its “last best offer” when contract negotiations are fully exhausted. That concept, prevalent in public sector labor law, was eliminated through union-backed legislation in 2003.

Christie also called for requiring all school employees to contribute to their health coverage, which NJSBA supports. School districts would also be relieved from certain regulations.

**Cuts Will Hurt** Bilik also stressed the devastating impact of funding cuts, especially for districts reeling from a \$475 million midyear cut this year.

“The additional \$820 million in cuts will mean staff and program reductions for many school districts,” she said. “To deal with the aid reductions and provide an adequate level of education, school districts will need something more in their

toolkits than layoffs.”

**Future Caps** The governor proposed a constitutional amendment to cap future property tax growth at 2.5 percent annually. Such an amendment would not affect 2010-2011 budgets. Currently, proposed 2010-2011 budgets will be controlled by the existing 4-percent tax levy cap.

The Legislature will now consider the budget, which must be enacted by July 1.

“We understand the magnitude of the state’s budget crisis, and we have heard Governor Christie’s proposal to address it,” Bilik said.

“It is now the Legislature’s turn at bat, and NJSBA will urge the lawmakers to make preserving public school programs their highest priority as they deliberate over the governor’s recommended budget.”

**C A L E N D A R**

**April 7**

▶ Learn@Lunch: “Crisis Communications and Dealing with Television Media During a School Emergency.” Online at [www.njsba.org/learnatlunch](http://www.njsba.org/learnatlunch) (scroll to April 7 for the link to register for the program). 12 - 12:45 p.m.

**April 8**

▶ Ocean County School Boards Association meeting, Central Regional High School, Bayville, 6:30 p.m.

**April 10**

▶ NSBA Annual Conference, Chicago, Ill. April 10-14.

▶ Denotes pre-registration required

For more information about county school boards association activities, go online to [www.njsba.org](http://www.njsba.org) and select the name of the appropriate county association.