

Government Relations Report to NJASL
August 7, 2006

Department of Education: Oral argument is scheduled for Sept. 15, 2006 on the Education Law Center's lawsuit against the Department of Education seeking the release of a 2003 costing out study paid for by the department. The argument will take place in Superior Court in Trenton. As reported in the last government relations report, the Education Law Center sued the department to release the results of this study. For more information go to http://www.edlawcenter.org/ELCPublic/elcnews_060718_NJDOE_RefusestoReleaseStudy.htm

On August 7, 2006, the department announced selection of **30 Best Practice winners and one Star School winner for the 2005-06 school year.** The selections were made as part of a DOE-sponsored program to identify exemplary, home-grown classroom programs and outstanding, high-caliber schools as models for educators throughout New Jersey. Over 400 applications for the awards were submitted. Several of the 30 best practice awards went to reading and library related programs. See below:

A Reading Affair to Remember: <http://www.nj.gov/cgi-bin/education/oipp/bp3.pl?string=recid=0829&maxhits=10000>

Creating Proficient Readers and Writers: <http://www.nj.gov/cgi-bin/education/oipp/bp3.pl?string=recid=0843&maxhits=10000>

Books Breaking Barriers: The ESL Literature Circle: <http://www.nj.gov/cgi-bin/education/oipp/bp3.pl?string=recid=0831&maxhits=10000>

Human Rights and Information Literacy: <http://www.nj.gov/cgi-bin/education/oipp/bp3.pl?string=recid=0845&maxhits=10000>

Medieval Fair: <http://www.nj.gov/cgi-bin/education/oipp/bp3.pl?string=recid=0835&maxhits=10000>

State Board of Education: At its meeting on August 2, the Board considered the department's proposal to readopt N.J.A.C. 6A:14, Special Education regulations at the adoption level; Evaluation of the Performance of School Districts at the proposal level; and the readoption of regulations for education of homeless children.

The next meeting of the board will be its public work session on August 16.

State House: Governor Corzine addressed a joint session of the legislature on Friday July 28, 2006 to open the special legislative session on property tax relief. A transcript of the speech is available at <http://www.state.nj.us/governor/news/news/approved/20060728a.html>. The governor's

speech was well received, interrupted by applause from the floor at least nine times. The governor's "blueprint for tax reform" is as follows:

Basic principles:

- We must offer immediate relief.
- We must control spending at all levels of government.
- We must end the over-reliance on property taxes to fund government and school costs.
- We must have long-term, sustainable reforms.
- We must have sound state finances, and fair aid formulas.

To see the governor's proposals in more detail, go to:

<http://www.state.nj.us/governor/news/news/approved/20060728.html>

In various informal settings since his speech to the legislature, the governor has indicated that he would be willing to consider allowing municipalities to levy their own sales taxes but that he was not inclined to support an increase in income taxes.

The governor has already delivered at least partially on at least one promise by signing, on August 3, a law that authorizes the legislatively appointed state auditor to conduct performance reviews. The auditor currently conducts only analyses of programs after-the-fact. The measure also requires the auditor to report findings to the governor and the Legislature, and allows a joint budget committee to require departments to comply with audit recommendations before funding requests are approved.

The four bicameral legislative committees that are the working groups of the special session have already begun to meet. **The Joint Committee on Public School funding will hold its first public meeting on August 10, 2006.** Its charge is as follows:

It is the duty of the committee to review and formulate proposals that address the manner in which government provides for the maintenance and support of a system of free public schools for the instruction of the children of this State. The committee may consider proposals to: provide State support based on student needs rather than geographic location; eliminate disincentives to the regionalization of school districts; control school district spending, particularly administrative spending; and improve the effectiveness of the current law limiting increases in school district spending.

The members of the committee are as follows:

[Senator John H. Adler](#) - Co-Chair. D, 6th District, Cherry Hill, J.D. from Harvard Law School, chair of Senate Judiciary Committee.

[Assemblyman Herb Conaway Jr.](#) - Co-Chair, D, 7th district, MD, JD from Jefferson Medical School and Rutgers Law School respectively, retired Captain in U.S. Air Force.

[Senator Gerald Cardinale](#) – R, 39th district, Cresskill, DDS from New York University, historical service on local board of education

[Senator Joseph V. Doria Jr.](#) - D, 31st District, Jersey City, Ed.D from Columbia Teachers College, Mayor of Bayonne, Vice Chair of Senate Education Committee, member of Joint Committee on Public Schools, historical service on local board of education

[Assemblyman Brian P. Stack](#) - D, 33rd district, Union City, Mayor of Union City, [Assemblyman David W. Wolfe](#) - R, 10th District, Brick, M. Ed from University of Delaware, Professor, Ocean County College, member of Education Committee and Joint Committee on Public Schools.

The Star Ledger recently reported some interesting statistics on the percentage of special interest money received by these particular legislators. In an August 6 article, it reported that the “powerful New Jersey Education Association” donated \$310,000 to the legislators named to the four special session committees. In addition, the Democrats on the four committees received 74% of the \$1.1 million in donations from the seven top special interest groups. To read the article, entitled, *A \$1.1 million gamble in property tax fight*, go to <http://www.nj.com/news/ledger/index.ssf?/base/news-8/1154887633280380.xml&coll=1>