



## **Legislative and Agency Update**

**February 2009**

### **Governor's News**

#### State Budget Message Delayed

Governor Jon S. Corzine has requested a delay in the date by which he would deliver his Fiscal Year 2010 budget message to the Legislature. Based on the Governor's request, both the Senate and Assembly are considering legislation to extend the date from Feb. 24 to March 12. The governor asked the legislature for the extension to provide more time to get detailed information about the provisions of the federal economic stimulus package recently passed by Congress.

Anticipating the delay in the budget message and the release in state aid figures for 2009-2010, Katie Atwood, the Department of Education's Assistant Commissioner for Finance instructed school districts to use their 2008-2009 state aid figures in developing their preliminary budgets for next year. In her letter to superintendents and school business officials, Atwood noted that the use of 2008-2009 figures is for planning purposes only and is no indication of the final state aid allocation for 2009-2010.

#### Current Year School Aid Cut Planned

In an unprecedented move, Governor Corzine notified local school districts that he intends to implement a \$75 million mid-year school aid reduction as part of an effort to reduce state spending and to close the \$812 spending gap in the current state budget. No details about which programs or aid categories will be reduced were provided with the announcement.

## **Legislative News**

### New Bill to Reduce Funding for Municipal Libraries

A-3753 sponsored by Assemblyman Vincent Prieto was introduced earlier this month. This bill, if enacted, would reduce the tax levy for free public libraries to one-sixth of a mill from the current 1/3 mill level. Libraries funded at the current minimum of 1/3 mill could see their funding cut by fifty percent. NJLA strongly opposes this legislation.

[http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2008/Bills/A4000/3753\\_I1.PDF](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2008/Bills/A4000/3753_I1.PDF)

### Pension Deferral Legislation

Legislation is proposed to permit local school districts to defer contributions to the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) which covers most non-certificated school personnel. Under this legislation, school districts that elect to defer their PERS payment will have their state aid reduced up to one-half of the deferred contribution resulting in a net savings to both local school districts and the state. Similar to other state initiatives, this legislation has been proposed in an effort to close the state spending gap in the current budget.

[http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2008/Bills/S3000/2507\\_R1.PDF](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2008/Bills/S3000/2507_R1.PDF)

## **Department of Education News**

### Revised Core Curriculum Standards Posted for Review

As part of its overall effort for high school redesign, the department has reviewed and revised the state's Core Curriculum Content Standards. The revisions are intended to address the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Knowledge and Skills themes and must be adopted by the State Board of Education following the 60 day public comment period which ends in mid-April. You can review the proposed revisions and provide comments using the department's online evaluation tool.

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/aps/cccs/2009/>

### Community Learning Centers

New Jersey has received \$12 million in federal funds to support high quality academic and enrichment programs for students when school is not in session. The Department of Education is accepting grant applications from any private or public agencies that serve students in any grade level between 4 and 12.

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/grants/discretionary>

## State Board of Education

### New Board Member

At the Board's business meeting on February 18, Ilan Plawker was sworn in as the newest member of the Board. Mr. Plawker is from Bergen County. He is a retired small business owner and served on the Englewood Cliffs Board of Education for fifteen years.

### New High School Graduation Requirements

On February 19, the State Board of Education approved the Commissioner's proposal level regulations to revise the state's requirements for high school graduation and receipt of a state-endorsed diploma. In the near future, the proposed rules will be published in the New Jersey Register for a 60 day comment period. Immediately following the board meeting, the department issued a press release which provides the following summary of the proposed new requirements:

- *Language Arts Literacy* -- 20 credits aligned to grade 9 to 12 standards
- *Math* -- 15 credits including algebra I content (effective with the 2008-2009 9th grade class), geometry content (effective with the 2010-2011 9th grade class), and a third year of math that builds upon algebra I and geometry and prepares students for college and 21st century careers (effective with the 2012-2013 9th grade class)
- *Science* -- 15 credits including laboratory biology (effective with the 2008-2009 9th grade class); chemistry, environmental science or physics (effective with the 2010-2011 9th grade class); and an additional lab/inquiry-based science (effective with the 2012-2013 9th grade class)
- *Social Studies* -- 15 credits including histories and integrated civics, economics, geography, and global content
- *Economics* -- 2.5 credits in financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy (effective with the 2010-2011 9th grade class)  
<http://www.state.nj.us/education/news/2009/0220req.htm>

Submitted by:  
Peg Lawlor [pegl812@comcast.net](mailto:pegl812@comcast.net)  
NJASL Government Relations Consultant

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