



Legislative and Agency Update

June 2010

Statehouse News – FY 2011 State Budget

After months of deliberation and debate, the legislature passed Governor Chris Christie's \$29.4 billion budget with bare majorities in both houses. The spending plan cuts state spending by 2.2 percent or 8.6 percent including federal funding over the current year's budget. The governor cited the deep cuts to programs both large and small as necessary to close a \$10.7 billion deficit without raising taxes. Aid to public schools and the public employee pension system saw the largest reductions. The Governor signed the budget into law on June 29.

Library Funding

One of the most contentious issues in the proposed budget was the initial cut in funding for libraries around the state and the elimination of funding for essential programs. The initial budget proposed by Governor Chris Christie slashed total funding including the State Library by 74 percent and eliminated much of the support for local libraries. Librarians throughout the state successfully lobbied the Governor and state legislators to restore funding for library services and programs in the budget bill. The final budget provides funding at the 2010 level for the State Library and \$4.3 million in local library funding for the NJ Network. Unfortunately, funding for NJKI and Virtual Network Aid was not restored. The total state contribution for libraries in the FY 2011 budget is \$15 million.

Education & Pension Funding

While the FY 2011 budget provides \$10.3 billion in funding for public school programs, it reduces school aid by \$820 million below the 2010 level. Also, the budget forgoes the state's \$3.1 billion payment into the public employee retirement systems. Unfortunately, the school funding provisions passed by the legislature do not earmark or dedicate funds for school library programs or staff.

Proposed 2.5% Cap on Property Taxes

Before the ink was dry on the state budget, the Governor directed the legislature to convene a special session to consider his proposal for a constitutional amendment that would cap future increases in property taxes at 2.5%. All 120 members of both houses were ordered to report to Trenton the very next day to take up the measure. It is expected that Senate President Steve Sweeney and Assembly Speaker Shelia Oliver will meet with the Governor and hold intense negotiations on the procedural issues related to the Governor's directive as well as his proposal for a "hard cap" on property taxes.

Department of Education News

Commissioner of Education Bret Schundler presented the State Board with his plan to reorganize the staff and offices of the Department of Education.

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/genfo/overview/orgchart.pdf> Schundler recommended and the Board approved the following staff appointments:

- Norris Clark as Director of the Office of Parental Information.
- Christopher Emigholz as Director of the Office of Legislative Services.
- Alan Guenther as Director of the Office of Public Information and Records.
- Valarie Smith as the Director of the Office of Inter-District Choice and Opportunity Scholarships.
- Eric Taylor as the Director of the Office of Statute and Code Review.
- Stephanie Wilson as the Director of the Amistad Commission.

State Board of Education – June 16, 2010

The Board's nominating committee recommended the following candidates to serve as officers during the 2010-11 year: Arcelio Aponte for President and Ronald Butcher for Vice-president. The Board will vote on the recommendations in July.

Evaluation and Performance of School Districts – QSAC

After a six month delay, the Department recommended the readoption with amendments of the NJ Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) N.J.A.C. 6A:30 and the Board voted to adopt the recommended changes.

When the proposal was initially introduced NJASL submitted recommendations for amendments to provide a measure of accountability for school districts to document that they provide school library media services under the direction of a

certified School Library Media Specialist as stipulated in N.J.A.C. 6A:13-2.1(h). Specifically, NJASL recommended wording for the Regular DPR for Instruction and Program, Section C. Instruction Indicator #8 as follows:

“The district requires and verifies that teachers and other instructional staff effectively use ***school library resources*** and technology to support learning, increase productivity, and create products across all NJCCCS areas.” Suggested documentation should include the addition of: ***K-12 Library Skills/Information Literacy/Library Media Curriculum.*** (NJASL’s recommended addition is in bold and italics.)

The department recommended that the Board include the words “school library resources” in Indicator C.8. The documentation suggested by NJASL will be included in the department’s guidance document but not in the regulations. Thanks to everyone who submitted comments, testified and otherwise supported and advanced the amendments to QSAC submitted by NJASL.

Common Core Standards

The Board adopted a resolution to adopt the final K-12 Common Core Standards in Mathematics and Language Arts.

Role of the State Board of Education

The Board discussed its statutory authority with Commissioner Schundler and expressed interest in meeting annually with the Governor to understand his vision for education and education policy making. During the discussion, the Board also expressed its desire to:

- establish a more active committee structure in order to have a more participatory policy development system;
- develop working relationships with members of senior staff to foster more effective policy development;
- conduct an orientation meeting with department staff;
- explore methods of communicating information between the Board and the department;
- become a partner with the Governor and Legislature in the legislative process; and
- restore some level of authority for the appeals process to the Board.

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