

# *Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign*

*Successful Schools... Successful Children... Successful Communities*

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## **Senate budget is bad for kids and local property owners**

The state budget bill passed by the Pennsylvania Senate today reneges on the state's responsibility to adequately fund public education and irresponsibly balances the state budget on the backs of local property taxpayers, according to the Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign. The budget cuts more than \$728 million in state funding for public education and uses federal stimulus funds to flat fund the basic school subsidy at 2008-09 levels, compared with Gov. Rendell's proposal to use stimulus funds to increase support for basic education.

"With nearly half of the school districts in the state indicating their revenues are below budget and 60% indicating they are using fund balance to offset deficits for this fiscal year, flat state funding will assure that schools will be forced into higher property taxes to balance their 2009-2010 budgets," said Jay Himes, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials.

Senate Bill 850, the budget bill passed by the Senate today, was introduced by Senate Republicans and approved along party lines. "It will not only further shift responsibility for education from the state to local taxpayers at a time when state support for K-12 education in Pennsylvania already ranks near the bottom among the 50 states, but will undo progress on the significant school funding reform initiated by the legislature last year," said Ron Cowell, PSFC spokesman and President of The Education Policy and Leadership Center. "Further, it will cause districts to cut programs proven to help students achieve, programs that were made possible by

the General Assembly's commitment last summer to a six-year plan to reform the state's school funding system."

"The Senate proposal, at least as it addresses the basic education subsidy, raises questions in the education community about whether the progress that was made in the last two years on recognizing districts' needs and beginning to address those needs will serve as a building block for future discussions or will be forgotten," said Tim Allwein, Assistant Executive Director of the Pennsylvania School Boards Association.

The state legislature's own Costing-Out Study released in November 2007 found that public schools in Pennsylvania were being underfunded by \$4.3 billion. Consequently, the General Assembly enacted a six-year funding commitment to public education, as part of Act 61 of 2008, to ensure school districts will be funded in a more adequate and equitable manner. Based on this six-year funding formula, the Governor's proposed budget and available federal stimulus dollars, school districts now working on next year's budgets had reason to expect a \$418 million increase for the next year.

Joe Bard, speaking for the Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools, said "The passage of the Republicans' alternative budget by the Senate is an incredible step backward for this state. Should anything remotely like it end up being put in place, Pennsylvania's children and economy will suffer a blow that will take more years to recover from than this recession."

The Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign is a statewide coalition of individuals and organizations representing hundreds of thousands of parents, students, educators, school board members, administrators and other concerned citizens advocating for comprehensive, systemic reform of Pennsylvania's public education funding system. For more information about the Campaign, visit [www.paschoolfunding.org](http://www.paschoolfunding.org).