

How to use this Legislative Position Paper to Lobby for Key Proposals affecting the Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake School District

The Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Board of Education is very concerned about what the Governor's proposed state aid cuts would mean for our school district in 2009-10. On February 10, 2009, board members approved the following letter that summarizes their most urgent concerns. Copies of this letter were sent to the key state leaders shown below.

The attached version of the school board's letter is designed for easy use by residents as well. Just print this file and copy the name and address of the legislator you wish to mail it to in the blank area on the top of the front page. Then sign your name and any additional comments you may have on the bottom of the back page.

The more times legislators receive this or similar letters from BH-BL residents the stronger our message will be! Thank you for helping us communicate with state officials on these urgent issues.

How to Reach Key State Leaders

Assemblyman representing the BH-BL area

Assemblyman James Tedisco
Room 933, LOB
Albany, NY 12248
(518) 455-3751
Email: tediscj@assembly.state.ny.us

Senator representing the BH-BL area

Senator Hugh T. Farley
Room 412, LOB
Albany, NY 12247
(518) 455-2181 or (800) 224-5201
To email, go to www.senatorfarley.com & click "Contact"

Leader of the NY State Assembly

Assemblyman Sheldon Silver
Room 932, LOB
Albany, NY 12248
(518) 455-3791
Email: speaker@assembly.state.ny.us

Leader of the NY State Senate

Senator Malcolm A. Smith
Room 909, LOB
Albany, NY 12247
(518) 455-2701
Email: masmith@senate.state.ny.us OR go to
www.nyssenate14.com & click "Contact"

Chair of Assembly Education Committee

Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan
Room 836, LOB
Albany, NY 12248
(518) 455-4851
Email: nolanc@assembly.state.ny.us

Chair of the Senate Education Committee

Senator Stephen Saland
Room 708, LOB
Albany, NY 12247
(518) 455-2411
To email, go to www.senatorsaland.com & click "Contact"

Governor

Governor David Paterson
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224
(518) 474-8390
To email, go to www.ny.gov/governor & click "Contact"



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Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central Schools

*Ensuring
opportunities
for learning,
personal growth
and social
responsibility.*

Board of Education

Robert Speck, *President*

John Blowers

Elizabeth Herkenham

Timothy Kelliher

Patre Kuziak

Joe Pericone, Jr.

Michael Wolf

Dear

The Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Board of Education and administration have been following developments on the economic crisis at the state and federal levels closely. We have a number of concerns about Governor Paterson's executive budget proposals. Like the Governor, we are in favor of property tax relief, so we call upon state leaders to give us the means to limit local property taxes.

Here are several key requests that will enable us to limit the tax implications of the current crisis on BH-BL residents.

1. Restore aid fairly.

A. There are a number of proposals before both Congress and the state Legislature to stimulate the economy and assist local entities including public schools. However, time and again these are aimed solely at high-needs communities. Average-needs school districts are facing hardships too, particularly in communities with no manufacturing and a very limited commercial tax base like Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake. For instance, responding to cost increases and the loss of \$1.6 million in aid under the Governor's plan means that BH-BL may need to make reductions that would impact upwards of 40 staff positions (teachers, administrators and support staff) next year. Any additional aid that the Legislature is able to access needs to be shared with ALL school districts in proportion to their Deficit Reduction Assessment.

B. Do not cap total aid to schools (i.e., Foundation aid plus expense-driven aids) going forward. Capping state aid to schools ignores the fact that conditions change. Fuel costs change, enrollment changes, and special education pupils' needs change. Inflation happens. Schools need state aid formulas that are dependable, fair and realistic.

2. Don't shift costs to schools.

Don't pass costs currently paid by other governmental entities onto the schools without a corresponding increase in state aid. We are particularly opposed to the Governor's plan to shift 15% of the cost of preschool special education from the counties and the state onto local school districts. This is a direct contradiction to the Governor's stated goal of reducing unfunded mandates on schools! In fact, given the number of preschool special education children in our district, this proposed change would create a NEW unfunded mandate of more than \$100,000 for BH-BL in 2009-10.

We are seriously alarmed that such a shift would make it increasingly likely that schools would be called upon to assume a greater and greater share of preschool education costs in the



future. Shifting a cost from a larger tax base (the state and counties) onto a small tax base (school districts) is unwise. Nor would it be based on districts' ability to pay, and thus would be particularly burdensome for poorer districts.

3. Give schools a way to reduce pension costs.

We support the Governor's proposal to create a new "Tier 5" for new public employees in the state retirement systems. This would significantly reduce long term retirement costs for both school districts, counties and the state. It is also a change that appears likely to generate much citizen support since it would bring public pension benefits more into line with what is offered in the private sector.

We urge the Governor and Legislature to consider the points listed above because the severe aid reductions supported by the Governor would result in serious harm to BH-BL children. We hope we will not be forced to reduce academic offerings, restructure summer school, reduce sports programs, and increase class sizes. However, all of these appear likely without more state aid.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Schultz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

Jim Schultz
Superintendent

I am a resident of the Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake School District, and I support the above statements.