

NYSUT Press Release on the Governor's Proposed Budget

ALBANY, N.Y. January 19, 2010 - New York State United Teachers today said massive cuts proposed for education would force schools to cut teachers and programs, jeopardizing student progress while stalling the state's ability to create jobs and revitalize the economy.

"How can you race to the top with an education budget that's laden with red ink?" asked NYSUT President Richard C. Iannuzzi. "NYSUT understands the pain that the state's deep fiscal crisis has inflicted on so many; our members and our professions have been hit hard too. Yet, slashing more than \$1.1 billion from public schools and again hacking away at SUNY, CUNY and community colleges totally contradicts the major investment the Obama Administration is seeking for education through Race to the Top."

Iannuzzi said Gov. David Paterson's education budget leaves school districts in the unenviable position of either proposing double-digit property tax increases, or eliminating the programs and teachers that New York's children need. More devastating cuts to SUNY, CUNY and the state's community colleges, already reeling from years of budgetary ax-swinging, "would slam shut the door to higher education for many of New York's students, especially the unemployed seeking retraining and preparation for new careers. This derails the state's efforts to build a knowledge-based, high-tech economy in upstate New York," he said.

Iannuzzi said NYSUT, along with its higher-ed affiliates, have grave concerns about the impact the proposed Public Higher Education Empowerment and Innovation Act impact would have on access to, and quality at, our public university systems.

"The next generation of New York's workers must come from New York public schools and universities," Iannuzzi said. "Employers are going to demand it, and state policymakers must ensure that New York's education system can meet that demand.

"Promising a knowledge economy without an investment in knowledge is a hollow promise," Iannuzzi said.

NYSUT Executive Vice President Andrew Pallotta noted that, historically, the governor's proposal is the first word in the annual budget battle. "We are confident that legislators from both parties will understand the impact this proposal would have on the ability of schools - both charter and regular public schools- to meet the needs of students, and the property tax increases homeowners would likely face," Pallotta said. "As always, we will be working with the Legislature and the governor to improve this spending plan to ensure the final budget - the last word - meets the needs of our public schools and colleges."

NYSUT, the state's largest union, represents more than 600,000 teachers, school-related professionals, academic and professional faculty in higher education, professionals in education and health care and retirees. NYSUT is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association and the AFL-CIO.