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PA SENATE GOP ACTION RISKS LOCAL TAX HIKES

Senate adopts partisan legislation to cut school funding, shift burden to local property taxes

HARRISBURG – Ignoring the results of their own Costing-Out Report, Senate Republicans today voted to increase local property taxes for homeowners by refusing to enact a significant down payment on a school funding formula that requires the state to pay its fair share of education costs.

Voting along party lines, the Senate Republicans cut \$118 million out of next year's basic education subsidy – forcing school boards to either hike local taxes or eliminate academic programs for students, or both. By cutting funding by 40 percent, the Senate signaled that it is rebuffing attempts to create a school funding formula and instead maintaining the status quo broken school funding system.

"The Senate Republican bill is a recipe for more of the same: local property tax increases and insufficient resources for Pennsylvania's students," Secretary of Education Gerald L. Zahorchak said. "Real property tax relief requires that the state live up to its responsibility to adequately fund schools – and that is precisely what the Governor's plan accomplishes."

In comments on the Senate floor, Appropriations Committee Chairman Armstrong said that "every district receives a sizeable increase" under the Senate plan – which has not yet been revealed. That raises the possibility that the Radnor Township School District in Delaware County – which the General Assembly's Costing-Out Report concluded spends about \$1,900 per pupil above the amount necessary to educate its students – could receive the same boost in funds or a similar boost as the rural Saint Marys Area School District in Elk County, which according to the General Assembly's report has a funding shortfall of nearly \$2,600 per pupil.

By supporting today's dramatic reduction in basic education funding:

- Senate President Pro Tempore Scarnati voted to cut funding for the Bradford Area School District by as much as \$294,000 – which would require an approximately 3 percent increase in local property taxes to make up the lost funding.
- Senate Majority Leader Pileggi voted to cut funding for the Oxford Area School District by as much as \$769,000 – which would require an approximately 3 percent increase in local property taxes to make up the lost funding.
- Senator Rhoades voted to cut funding for the Shenandoah Valley School District by as much as \$446,000 – which would require an approximately 16 percent increase in local property taxes to make up the lost funding.

- Senator Browne voted to cut funding for the Allentown School District by as much as \$10.1 million – which would require an approximately 16 percent increase in local property taxes to make up the lost funding.
- Senator Armstrong voted to cut funding for the Lancaster City School District by as much as \$5.2 million – which would require an approximately 10 percent increase in local property taxes to make up the lost funding.

For details on Governor Rendell's school funding plan, visit the Department of Education Web site at www.pde.state.pa.us.

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