
Our Children/Our Schools Campaign

Stop a Rushed and Ill-Informed Vote On Corzine's Flawed School Funding Plan!

Call your NJ Legislative Representatives and Tell Them: No Vote in Lame Duck Session!

So Many Changes, So Many Unknowns, So Little Time...

On Friday, Nov 30, Governor Corzine introduced the first outlines of his education funding plan. He promises that two-thirds of the state's districts will get more money next year. He promises that for two years there will be "hold harmless" aid. The actual numbers will be provided by Dec. 12. Much remains unclear about how it will work, and *what happens in year three*, when the promised "hold harmless" aid disappears for those districts targeted for aid reductions. Corzine isn't saying. What we do know is cause for concern:

The Plan "Levels Down"

- Reliable sources indicate a defined per-pupil adequacy cost of \$10,200 per pupil -- \$1,220 (11%) *below* the current foundation funding level and \$1,704 (17%) *below* the I/J average. The plan is intended to strangle increases in all districts – irrespective of actual needs -- and "*level down*" education in the high-spending districts. *Cuts in staff and higher class sizes will surely result.*
- *Abbott protections would be abolished.* Funding this year will be flat at best. Many proven Abbott programs will be lost, such as tutoring, afterschool, summer school, parent outreach and secondary reform -- *just when so many children were making observable progress. Cuts in classroom staff and higher class sizes will follow.*
- *Wealthy districts will lose entitlement to aid* for at-risk children, special education, etc. as these and other categorical aids are subjected to the wealth-equalizing "local share" calculation. *Many fear higher class sizes* in regular education classes will result as districts are forced to shift existing resources to meet special education legal mandates. *Less aid coupled with tax caps will drive cuts in program and educational quality.*
- All districts face *major reductions in special education aid* from provisions that would ignore some students in the aid calculation to the extent a district's classification rate is above the state average.

Impact for Decades to Come. Get it Right from the Start.

Changes to our state's education funding will have major impact on children and taxpayers for decades. They can determine which communities flourish and which decay. Corzine's proposal has some positive elements (including new support for DFG A&B districts and promised funding for expanded early childhood education). But there are too many troubling concerns about how it will work. What unknown negative side-effects are lurking in the still-secret parts of the proposal? Legislators have an obligation to ensure full public scrutiny and analysis. This must not pass in the few short weeks left in the current lame duck legislative session.

Do the Right Thing – Avoid the Lame Duck Rush to Vote

Corzine wants to rush this through in the remaining few weeks of the "lame-duck" legislative session which ends on Jan. 8 -- *before anyone knows what's hit them. Legislators can't possibly know or understand what they're voting for!* We've seen this before. Past school funding measures were all rushed to a vote, with little scrutiny or debate and **the Supreme Court found each of them unconstitutional because they simply didn't meet students' needs.**

Major organizations across the state are saying – **"DON'T RUSH THIS THROUGH IN LAME DUCK."** Join us. Call your state senator and two assemblypersons today and **register your opposition to this bum's rush into another flawed school funding proposal!** You can make a difference. Legislators do pay attention when lots of their constituents are concerned.

See the next page for information on how to call your legislators and suggested talking points.

Our Children/Our Schools Coalition

Email us at: info@ourchildrenourschools.org

or see our website at: <http://www.ourchildrenourschools.org>

Instructions and Suggested Script for Calling Your State Senator and Assemblypersons

- Go to the following web page to get your legislators' phone numbers: <http://www.nileg.state.nj.us/members/legsearch.asp>
- **Call in the next two-three days.** They are trying to move very fast on this legislation. The longer we take to respond, the more backroom promises will have been made to secure votes.
- **Call both of your assemblypersons and your state senator.** It should only take you ten minutes total.
- **Call during the business day if you can,** when someone will be there. If your legislator isn't there, talk to their staffers.
- If you get voicemail, so be ready with what you're going to say. Leave a message and ask for a call back.
- **Stress a few key points that will be remembered.**
- **Make sure to say that YOU** are very concerned that Governor Corzine is currently trying to rush his plan through.
- Say it in your own words. Modify the points in a way that makes you most effective. **Try to be emphatic.**
- If they say "don't worry, Corzine has promised that your district will get more," then **ask to see the numbers, not just for years one and two but for years three through five** – that's when all the worst impacts of the proposal really kick in.
- **If you live in an Abbott district,** remember that **Corzine has already indicated that your district will get less!**
- They count the calls they get. **Just 100 calls can make a difference.** Ask friends and neighbors to call.

Please report back to info@ourchildrenourschools.org what sort of response you get.

Key points to make to legislators:

1. Slow down and think -- analyze and understand all the impacts before you vote, especially what happens in years three through five! ***You can't possibly know what you're voting for until you do so.***
2. Don't pass this in the lame duck session. You need to hear and respond to all constituent concerns.
3. Don't ***level down*** – ***you should instead level up to I/J standards.***
4. Support – don't penalize – successful special education districts that attract families.
5. Make sure the plan ***meets educational needs*** in the suburbs and cities.
6. The "T&E adequacy amount" must be based on a rational, fully published cost model that uses actual market costs for teachers, fuel costs and all other resources that districts require.
7. ***Making believe*** that needs don't exist ***won't make those needs go away.***
8. Remember, TAX CAPS + EVENTUAL AID CUTS = INCREASED CLASS SIZE!

Suggested script (use phrases in brackets only if they apply to you):

Hi. My name is _____. I live in _____ (town) [and I have ____ children who attend school in the _____ district] [and I'm a member of _____ (your organization and chapter)].

I am calling to urge you in the strongest terms NOT to pass Corzine's school funding plan in the current lame duck session of the legislature that ends in early January. That's not enough time for you to understand what you're voting for, especially the long-term impact on my district. It's not enough time for me to learn about and give you my opinion on the pros and cons of the proposal. We **have a right to know what this legislation will do before it passes.** You have an obligation to really understand what you're voting for. That's why all of the prior education finance laws have failed. There are too many unanswered questions about this legislation. We need to get the whole truth and the legislature needs to understand and fix what's wrong before the legislation is adopted. You can't do that in a few short weeks. Don't pass this in lame duck!