

School District Tool Kit To Advocate for Elimination of the GEA



January 29, 2014

Fellow School Board Members,

The Westchester Putnam School Boards Association is embarking on a campaign to encourage our legislators to eliminate the Gap Elimination Adjustment as part of the state aid formula. This "adjustment" has cost our school districts in Westchester, Putnam, Dutchess and Rockland more than \$500 million in the last three years. In a time of significant revenue restriction due to the property tax cap, these lost dollars represent an extraordinary opportunity to help our local districts maintain important programs without further burdening the taxpayer.

We are undertaking a number of efforts to raise awareness about this issue, including regional newspaper advertising, lobbying our legislators and a special GEA forum with the legislators on January 30, to which all school board members are invited. But we can't do it alone. The efforts of our individual districts are crucial to letting our legislators know just how important this issue is to the districts and their supporting taxpayers, and we are asking you to energize your community in support of the effort.

Specifically, this toolkit offers you materials that can be used to raise awareness in your district. We are encouraging you to schedule a Board of Education discussion about this issue, contemplate the resolution contained here, educate your community with the sample newsletter/web article, and encourage residents to visit our website to sign the advocacy letter that will be forwarded to legislators. It's that simple, and that powerful!

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Westchester Putnam School Boards Association

Susan Elion Wollin

Jusan Elion Wollin

President

Lisa Davis

Executive Director

Lisa Devis

Restore OUR School AID!

RESOLUTION TO RESTORE OUR SCHOOL AID

Whereas,

The NYS Deficit Reduction Assessment was originally instituted (in 2009) to reduce the State's \$10 Billion deficit, and

Whereas,

For the past three years this reduction has gone under the name Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) and has lowered state aid in our area by 16% on average by taking \$586 Million of owed State Aid education monies and re-allocating it to other areas of the State Budget, and

Whereas,

This State strategy to "seize" education dollars has happened at the same time that State-imposed financial demands on our school district have continued to grow, common core standards and new high-stakes assessments have been implemented, and the local tax levy has been capped, despite minimal State mandate relief and

Whereas,

The NY State Budget now projects a \$2.2 Billion surplus while schools across the state have already cut 10,000 teachers in addition to other personnel, programs & services which support our students,

Therefore, Be it Resolved that,

We the People demand an end to this grievous wrong by eliminating the GEA deduction from the final State Aid calculation for every school district in NYS. The NYS constitutional right of our children to a "sound basic education" has been seriously compromised for too long. Eliminate the GEA and Restore our School Aid.

Legislative Advocacy Letter

Dear ______,

You can relay this letter to legislators by visiting the Westchester Putnam School Boards Association website at www.wpsba.org.

As a voter, taxpayer and resident of the school district, I urge you to join the fight to
repeal the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA). Formerly called the Deficit Reduction
Assessment, its sole purpose is to dramatically reduce the state's financial obligations to our
local public schools in order to close the state's own budget deficit. This annual cutback is
detrimental to the quality of public education in our region and is not acceptable to the loca
taxpayers who must bear the burden. Now is the time to work together to eliminate the GEA
and recoup the state education funding owed to our children.

The success of our public schools in Westchester and Putnam Counties is well-known and a great economic driver of our region. But over the past four years, the GEA has reduced state aid to these school districts by 16% on average, and the GEA reduction has totaled more than half a billion dollars for districts in the Lower Hudson Region (Putnam, Westchester, Rockland and Dutchess Counties). In an attempt to lessen the destructive effect of the GEA and other State issues, school districts have reduced the number of teachers, administrators and support staff; reduced academic programs; consolidated or closed schools; increased class sizes; diminished and/or completely eliminated sports programs, music and the arts, and enrichment and summer programs; delayed facilities maintenance; and drawn from rainy day reserve funds. At the same time, mandated expenditures which school districts have no control over – such as pensions, health insurance, and other benefits – continue to escalate. (INSERT SPECIFIC INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT HERE.)

We have passed the point where we can do more with less. We are now doing less with less. The GEA, combined with a major state aid reduction from which we have not recovered, insufficient mandate relief and the property levy cap, has created irreversible financial consequences. Our schools are at a crossroads. Restoring GEA funds is a key step towards ending unacceptable state practices that chisel away at school funding, and will ultimately erode the quality of the education system that our children need and deserve and that we as taxpayers expect.

We can no longer bear the burden imposed on local taxpayers by the GEA. I am asking you, as our elected representative, to be our voice in Albany and take effective action. Now is the time to work together to Eliminate the GEA and Restore our School Aid!

Sincerely,

Restore OUR School AID!

Sample Newsletter Article

_____ joins with the Westchester Putnam School Boards Association to end the GEA and Restore Our State Aid.

Our school district has joined a campaign spearheaded by the Westchester Putnam School Boards Association (WPSBA) to restore a loss of more than half a billion dollars in state aid to school districts in our region due to the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA).

WPSBA has made the elimination of the GEA one of its highest priorities for the 2013-14 school year. It is working to convince legislators that the GEA should be eliminated, thereby helping school districts in a time of great financial constriction and ever increasing mandated services.

The GEA is a formula in the state budget that reduces the amount of state aid each school district is entitled to receive. It was introduced in the 2009-10 school year to partially offset the state's own \$10 billion budget deficit. Over the past four years, the GEA has negatively impacted school districts statewide, reducing state aid by approximately \$8.9 billion. WPSBA strongly believes this unfair reduction to our state aid must stop and is aggressively engaged in a campaign to seek legislative support to eliminate the GEA.

The GEA, along with state aid reductions, insufficient mandate relief and the enactment of the property tax levy cap, has created irreversible financial consequences for schools within Westchester and Putnam counties, along with our sister regions in Dutchess and Rockland. As a resident of _______, a taxpayer and a voter, your participation in this important initiative is critical to the success of our combined efforts to eliminate the GEA.

All residents are encouraged to join our campaign to eliminate the GEA by participating in a letter writing initiative to Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and our legislative representatives in Albany. Please visit the WPSBA website at www.wpsba.org to learn more about the negative financial impact of the GEA on our schools. You can also link to this page from our district website (insert here). We encourage everyone to use the electronic advocacy system on the WPSBA website to send the sample letter asking Governor Cuomo and our legislators for their support to eliminate the GEA beginning in the 2014-15 school year. Your participation is critical to our efforts to eliminate the GEA and restore state aid to our schools.

Newsletter/Web Graphics

You can use these graphics on your school district website or in printed materials like your newsletter. Download the graphics from the Westchester Putnam School Boards Association website by visiting www.wpsba.org.

State Legislators: Eliminate the GEA

Restore OUR School AID!

Eliminate the GEA

Restore OUR School AID!

State Legislators: Eliminate the GEA

Restore OUR School AID.

Eliminate the GEA

Restore OUR School AID!



HOW DO YOU SPELL RELIEF?

ELIMINATE THE G-E-A!

What you need to know:

The Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) is a formula in the state budget that reduces the amount of aid each school district is entitled to receive. New York State introduced the GEA in 2009-10 when it was known as the Deficit Reduction Assessment in order to partially reduce the state's \$10 billion budget deficit. It was used in 2011-12 to allocate an unprecedented \$2.56 billion statewide cut in aid. Over the past three years, it has been used to reduce state aid to school districts by 6.35 billion.

What we need to do:

Eliminate the GEA in 2014-15: Provide school districts with the full amount of aid generated by all of the existing funding formulas without the GEA deduction.

The GEA reduced aid to the Lower Hudson Region school districts by over \$134 million this year and approximately \$586 million over the past four years.

IMPACT OF THE GEA LOWER HUDSON REGION 2013-2014

DISTRICTS	13-14 GEA	DISTRICTS	13-14 GEA	
ROCKLAND DISTRICTS				
CLARKSTOWN	-\$4,687,140	PORT CHESTER	-\$1,587,052	
EAST RAMAPO	-\$7,410,490	RYE	-\$437,404	
HAVERSTRAW-STONY POINT	-\$5,094,259	RYE NECK	-\$219,665	
NANUET	-\$1,226,681	SCARSDALE	-\$793,279	
NYACK	-\$1,422,343	SOMERS	-\$1,294,855	
PEARL RIVER	-\$1,143,214	TARRYTOWN	-\$1,000,878	
RAMAPO	-\$2,355,253	TUCKAHOE	-\$285,242	
S. ORANGETOWN	-\$1,737,217	VALHALLA	-\$706,154	
TOTAL	-\$25,076,597	WHITE PLAINS	-\$2,252,724	
		YONKERS	-\$20,718,680	
WESTCHESTER DISTRICTS		YORKTOWN	-\$2,001,075	
ARDSLEY	-\$849,951			
BEDFORD	-\$1,103,797	TOTAL	-\$71,907,537	
BLIND BROOK-RYE	-\$283,486			
BRIARCLIFF MANOR	-\$552,155	DUTCHESS DISTRICTS		
BRONXVILLE	-\$239,773	ARLINGTON	-\$5,967,850	
BYRAM HILLS	-\$535,586	BEACON	-\$2,512,857	
CHAPPAQUA	-\$1,166,974	DOVER	-\$1,122,154	
CROTON-HARMON	-\$712,726	HYDE PARK	-\$2,855,871	
DOBBS FERRY	-\$559,957	MILLBROOK	-\$512,828	
EASTCHESTER	-\$752,176	NORTHEAST	-\$629,526	
EDGEMONT	-\$470,898	PAWLING	-\$526,498	
ELMSFORD	-\$265,352	PINE PLAINS	-\$1,242,576	
GREENBURGH	-\$696,970	POUGHKEEPSIE	-\$2,754,851	
HARRISON	-\$773,465	RED HOOK	-\$1,163,298	
HASTINGS-ON-HUDSON	-\$788,973			
HENDRICK HUDSON	-\$1,066,943	RHINEBECK	-\$435,823	
IRVINGTON	-\$403,890	SPACKENKILL	-\$1,244,417	
KATONAH-LEWISBORO	-\$1,240,608	WAPPINGERS	-\$6,970,637	
LAKELAND	-\$3,496,640	TOTAL	-\$27,939,186	
MAMARONECK	-\$980,652			
MOUNT PLEASANT	-\$952,801	PUTNAM DISTRICTS		
MOUNT VERNON	-\$10,243,952	BREWSTER	-\$2,166,552	
NEW ROCHELLE	-\$5,125,880	CARMEL	-\$2,325,887	
NORTH SALEM	-\$371,463	GARRISON	-\$92,682	
OSSINING	-\$1,977,756	HALDANE -\$418,010		
PEEKSKILL	-\$3,386,967	MAHOPAC -\$3,438,620		
PELHAM	-\$860,980			
PLEASANTVILLE	-\$642,792	PUTNAM VALLEY -\$644,670		
POCANTICO HILLS	-\$106,966	TOTAL	-\$9,086,421	

Lower Hudson Region Total

-\$134,009,741

Source: 2013-14 Property Tax Report Card

Legislavive Stave Aid Runs 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14

FOUR-YEAR IMPACT OF THE GEA LOWER HUDSON REGION 2013-2014

	CUMULATIVE		CUMULATIVE
DISTRICTS	LOSS IN AID	DISTRICTS	LOSS IN AID
ROCKLAND DISTRICTS			
CLARKSTOWN	-\$18,998,599	POCANTICO HILLS	-\$625,230
EAST RAMAPO	-\$34,322,552	PORT CHESTER	-\$8,616,702
HAVERSTRAW-STONY POINT	-\$23,616,573	RYE	-\$1,903,383
NANUET	-\$4,784,352	RYE NECK	-\$1,097,837
NYACK	-\$5,583,381	SCARSDALE	-\$3,212,012
PEARL RIVER	-\$4,782,577	SOMERS	-\$4,866,933
RAMAPO	-\$9,733,566	TARRYTOWN	-\$4,757,011
S. ORANGETOWN	-\$6,894,875	TUCKAHOE	-\$1,323,540
TOTAL	-\$108,716,475	VALHALLA	-\$2,735,613
		WHITE PLAINS	-\$9,828,993
WESTCHESTER DISTRICTS		YONKERS	-\$90,447,595
ARDSLEY	-\$3,344,253	YORKTOWN	-\$8,083,067
BEDFORD	-\$4,440,416	TOTAL	-\$306,459,307
BLIND BROOK-RYE	-\$1,328,042		
BRIARCLIFF MANOR	-\$2,313,344	DUTCHESS DISTRICTS	
BRONXVILLE	-\$1,168,177	ARLINGTON	-\$27,528,602
BYRAM HILLS	-\$2,260,785	BEACON	-\$11,699,441
CHAPPAQUA	-\$4,597,008	DOVER	-\$5,294,953
CROTON-HARMON	-\$2,925,542	HYDE PARK	-\$13,245,249
DOBBS FERRY	-\$2,371,313	MILLBROOK	-\$2,170,052
EASTCHESTER	-\$3,069,280	NORTHEAST	-\$3.016,734
EDGEMONT	-\$2,026,156	PAWLING	-\$2,377,927
ELMSFORD	-\$1,214,696	PINE PLAINS	-\$4,916,679
GREENBURGH	-\$2,935,391	POUGHKEEPSIE	-\$15,224,140
HARRISON	-\$3,142,073	RED HOOK	-\$5,627,426
HASTINGS-ON-HUDSON	-\$3,112,502	RHINEBECK	-\$1,876,430
HENDRICK HUDSON	-\$4,159,978	SPACKENKILL	-\$4,934,617
IRVINGTON	-\$1,812,519	WAPPINGERS	-\$32,749,445
KATONAH-LEWISBORO	-\$4,880,800	TOTAL	-\$130,661,695
LAKELAND	-\$15,038,544		
MAMARONECK	-\$3,977,733	PUTNAM DISTRICTS	
MOUNT PLEASANT	-\$3,539,033	BREWSTER	-\$9,683,431
MOUNT VERNON	-\$42,321,689	CARMEL	-\$10,799,094
NEW ROCHELLE	-\$21,897,155	GARRISON	-\$538,681
NORTH SALEM	-\$1,655,566	HALDANE	-\$1,737,821
OSSINING	-\$8,712,381	MAHOPAC	-\$14,094,088
PEEKSKILL	-\$14,450,184	PUTNAM VALLEY	-\$3,306,017
PELHAM	-\$3,486,286	TOTAL	-\$40,159,132
PLEASANTVILLE	-\$2,780,545		

Lower Hudson Region Total

-\$585,996,609

Source: 2013-14 Property Tax Report Card

Legislavive Stave Aid Runs 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14

GAP Elimination Adjustment (GEA) Impact on State Aid

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	Total
Westchester	-\$57,521,337	-\$93,002,353	-\$84,028,080	-\$71,907,537	-\$306,459,307
Rockland	-\$19,730,816	-\$33,788,131	-\$30,120,931	-\$25,076,597	-\$108,716,475
Dutchess	-\$25,153,704	-\$41,005,755	-\$36,563,050	-\$27,939,186	-\$130,661,695
Putnam	-\$7,280,334	-\$12,751,484	-\$11,040,893	-\$9,086,421	-\$40,159,132
Total Loss	- \$109,686,191	-\$180,547,723	-\$161,752,954	-\$134,009,741	-\$585,996,609



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