



BY JOHN F. McKEON
COMMENTARY

Some recent discussion on Gov. Chris Christie's school aid allocation would have received an "incomplete" from New Jersey's many fine teachers.

Many articles note the governor increased school aid, but that's only part of the story. In fact, the governor – by once again protecting tax breaks for 16,000 millionaires and line-item vetoing the Democratic budget – dramatically reduced potential school aid to suburban and rural school districts throughout New Jersey.

That's a major loss for our children and New Jersey's property taxpayers that shouldn't be glossed over by spin from the governor's office.

Taxpayers and schools throughout the state, no matter their locale, deserve fair and adequate funding. That's why our responsible budget plan was based on the simple concept of treating everyone fairly, whether they live in a city or a suburb.

We provided means for full funding to schools throughout the state, but the governor has different priorities, and it's very unfortunate that his decision is costing districts sorely needed school funding.

In fact, thanks to the governor, suburban schools are getting \$492 million less than they could have received, meaning a lot less property tax relief and education aid for taxpayers and children.

Let's review what unfolded.

The governor's original budget plan failed to follow the state school funding formula, which essentially calls for sending adequate aid to each and every New Jersey school district, no matter whether they be located in cities or suburbs.

The Supreme Court ordered the governor to provide that missing aid to the poorest schools. The governor complied, but did it with a tantrum and without any plan for suburban schools.

Denying such aid to suburban and rural schools may be fine with New Jersey Republicans, but it wasn't acceptable to Democrats. That's why I sponsored legislation to increase the income tax rate on 16,000 millionaires and also, by the way, provide a much-needed tax break to senior citizen retirement income.

In these difficult times, we've seen working class and senior and disabled citizens bearing the heaviest burden, but a call for shared sacrifice should include all residents of New Jersey, including the most affluent.

This was a reasonable request. Under the bill, each additional \$100,000 earned above \$1 million would cost that taxpayer an additional \$1,780.

And this isn't to vilify millionaires. Such success is what America can be all about, and we celebrate it. There's just so much talk about shared sacrifice, but truth be told it's only been applicable to some. Many millionaires, I think, are more than willing to be a part of the solution, yet the governor again vetoed the concept.

The result – the governor cut \$492 million for suburban and rural school districts. He also eliminated language that required all the additional money be spent on classroom and students services.

This was another chance for Republicans to do the right thing and support quality education and property tax relief for all districts. Their failure should not go unnoticed.

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