



Education Update

From the Senate Education Committee

MARCH 6, 2006

Education Funding Proposal Includes Increases and Cuts

Governor Edward Rendell's FY 2006-2007 proposed budget includes a total of 6.5%, or \$532 million, in funding increases for programs related to basic education and libraries.

In addition to a proposed 5%, or \$224 million, increase in the basic education subsidy, the Governor has proposed substantial increases for special education, charter school reimbursement, accountability block grants, teacher professional development and Head Start supplemental assistance.

The proposed budget also includes funding for two new initiatives. A \$20 million appropriation is included as part of a three-year "Classrooms for the Future" initiative to provide all school districts with lap top computers and an appropriation of \$10 million is included for the Science: It's Elementary program. This initiative would provide school districts with grants to improve their science curriculum at the elementary level.

The Governor has also proposed to eliminate \$50 million in basic education appropriations for programs that were

funded in FY 2005-2006, such as parent involvement, New Choices/New Options and Science In Motion.

Passage of Act 5 Eases Substitute Shortage

The General Assembly has approved legislation to allow retired teachers additional opportunities to serve as substitutes without taking additional professional development courses. Governor Rendell signed the legislation into law as Act 5 of 2006 on February 2.

Under the new law, a retired teacher may serve as a substitute for 180 school days without being required to complete additional professional development courses. In addition, a teacher who retires from school service will have his or her teaching certificate frozen in "active" status so that the teacher may continue to serve as a substitute.

Many Pennsylvania school districts have a severe shortage of eligible substitute teachers. This legislation was designed to ease that shortage by providing a pool of qualified teachers.

Proposed FY 2006-2007 Education Budget Highlights

Program	Proposed FY		
	2006-2007	\$ Increase	% Increase
Basic Education Subsidy	\$4,716,793,000	224,609,000	5%
Special Education Subsidy	991,187,000	38,123,000	4%
Charter School Reimbursement	119,476,000	26,874,000	29%
Accountability Block Grants	250,000,000	50,000,000	25%
Teacher Professional Development	23,367,000	9,500,000	68.5%
Head Start	45,000,000	15,000,000	50%
Science: It's Elementary	10,000,000	10,000,000	n/a
Classrooms for the Future	20,000,000	20,000,000	n/a

Senate Education Committee

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Senator James J. Rhoades
Chairman

David L. Broderic
Executive Director

Senate Property Tax Plan Includes More Property Tax Relief for Seniors

The Senate-designed property tax reform legislation that a Senate-House conference committee will discuss later this month would double the size of the Property Tax/Rent Rebate program to provide substantial property tax relief for senior citizens.

The Pennsylvania Taxpayer Relief Act, which was inserted into House Bill 39 and approved by the Senate on February 6, includes a \$147 million expansion of the Property Tax/Rent Rebate program. As a result, 281,560 new senior citizens would qualify for

the program and see benefits for the first time in 2006.

The plan would also increase benefits available for senior citizens who are eligible for the current program.

Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program Expansion and Simplification Proposal

Proposal Summary				
Household Income Range	Maximum Assistance	Estimated Number of Claimants	Total Property Tax/Rent Assistance	Average Assistance per Claim
\$0 - \$8,000	\$ 650	223,381	\$ 145,197,650	\$ 650
\$8,001 - \$15,000	\$ 500	107,714	\$ 53,857,000	\$ 500
\$15,001 - \$18,000	\$ 300	90,123	\$ 27,038,900	\$ 300
\$18,001 - \$25,000	\$ 250	191,437	\$ 47,859,250	\$ 250
Total:		612,655	\$ 273,950,800	\$ 447

Program Comparison	
Proposed Claimants	612,655
Current Claimants	331,095
Additional Claimants	281,560
Proposed Assistance	\$ 273,950,800
Current Assistance	\$ 126,552,482
Additional Assistance	\$ 147,398,318

Rhoades Introduces Higher Ed Articulation Bill

Senator Rhoades has introduced legislation to require Pennsylvania's publicly-supported institutions of higher education to enter into articulation agreements to ease the transfer of academic credits from one institution to another.

Senate Bill 1147 would require the Commonwealth's community colleges, four state-related universities and the State System of Higher Education to enter into these agreements with one another by June 30, 2007. If the agree-

ments are not executed by that deadline, the Commonwealth would create the articulation agreement structure and require the institutions to participate.

The goal of the legislation is to create a system in which students can more easily transfer academic credits for core academic courses among the colleges and universities.

A public hearing is planned for the bill.

Senate Education Committee Activities

Tuesday, March 14

Room 461
11 a.m.
Committee Meeting
HB 185, HB 1618

Wednesday, March 15

Hearing Room 1
North Office Building
9 a.m. – 11 a.m.
Public Hearing
SB 965, SB 966

For more information or detailed analyses of these topics, contact the Senate Education Committee staff at 787-2637.