

## **GEA Update, 1/15/2016**

For the last five years, New York State has been reallocating state education aid for other purposes; it's referred to as Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) and it needs to end.

**The Irvington school district has lost approximately \$3 million in state aid due to the GEA.** While last year the legislature was focused on education policy, there is a shift now to spending and how much Albany will provide to us for 2016-17. This shift is due in no small part to recent efforts from school districts across the state (including the Irvington PTSA's recent "phone the governor" campaign) to eliminate the GEA.

The "State of the State" address, which was given on Wednesday, January 13, 2016, has enabled the PTSA to better understand the Governor's intention on this issue. Irvington School Board President, Phil Whitney provides an important clarification: "Yes, Cuomo did say 'we must eliminate the GEA'. But, unfortunately he wasn't clear about when. In fact, a closer reading of the budget fine print shows that he's only restoring half of what the state owes schools for 16-17. The rest will theoretically be restored the following year. The good news is that the State Senate Leader is on record that he won't support any budget that doesn't eliminate the GEA THIS YEAR. So, in effect, we have to keep fighting."

As Mr. Whitney explained, State Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan (Republican, Long Island) supports total elimination of the GEA. In his response to the State of the State address, Senator Flanagan reiterated that any budget passed will require that "every dollar" of the GEA be eliminated. He also spoke of assuring that there will be a

"record increase in school funding". Similarly, while the Board of Regents backs a \$2.9 billion increase in education funding for 2016-17, Assemblywoman Cathy Nolan (Democrat, Queens, chairing the Assembly Education Committee) indicated that that number is merely a starting point, and her hope is that the legislature will "perhaps ... even surpass that...."

**Stay tuned for more news on how we can best communicate with the legislature to assure that our representatives don't give up the fight for total elimination of the GEA.**