



HOMER CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
P.O. BOX 500
Homer, New York 13077-0500

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(607) 749-2312 FAX

Nancy S. Ruscio
Superintendent

February 8, 2013

Dear Parents:

The Homer Board of Education, along with me, is asking you to write letters to the NY State Assembly and Senate to advocate for equitable funding for NYS schools, and more specifically Homer. Included in this packet is a model letter that you can use that tells Homer's story. In addition, we have included Advocacy materials in case you choose to modify or personalize the letter. Addresses of our Albany representatives are included as well.

The Assembly and Senate come back to Albany on February 11th with their primary task being the NYS budget. We have a short window of time to influence our representatives. Please mail your letters by March 1st. If you prefer to send your letters back to your child's building, we will collect them and mail all letters received to Albany.

I want to thank you in advance for your assistance and as always, if you have any questions, please feel free to call me at 749-7241. The future of our children depends on our actions.

Yours in Education,



Nancy Ruscio

Superintendent

Your Name
Your Address

Date

Assemblyman/Senator/Governor Name
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear _____,

Although committed to excellence for all students, the continuous financial inequities facing the Homer Central School District make high achievement more challenging every year. Aid was cut drastically last year; next year's proposal merely lowers our Gap Elimination Adjustment cuts (GEA). While receiving national recognition for our limited number of AP courses, we continue working to improve programs, but with decreasing support. Yet our taxpayers believe that children in Central New York deserve the same quality programs as students in other, wealthier parts of the state. If the 2013-14 state budget passes as proposed by the governor, essential positions and programs are at risk.

School aid distribution in New York State is wracked with inequity. Rural, low-wealth districts like ours have experienced much more dramatic cuts per student than wealthier districts. This year, Homer's aid cut (GEA) is \$1,583.58 per student, while Scarsdale (Westchester County) cuts were \$192 per student. (With approximately the same size enrollment, Scarsdale's budgeted spending last year was MORE THAN TWICE that of Homer's). Poignantly, Homer is 160th lowest in spending per pupil of 672 districts, according to the 2011-12 SED Real Property Tax Report Card data. The students in wealthier districts already enjoy educational advantages with more extensive program offerings. (Scarsdale offers four languages). Such districts will not experience the disastrous loss of academic and extra-curricular activities that we will for many years. This is wholly unacceptable.

As you know, the schools in your legislative district, many of which are high needs districts, are being hurt more deeply than any others in the state. Changes in the school funding formula must be made through the Legislature so that education aid is distributed to the districts that need it most. Years of reduced aid is irresponsible; balancing budgets on less wealthy children is reprehensible. Equitable education funding is right, not a partisan talking point.

Your constituents need your support now more than ever. Our children and our schools need you to speak on their behalf. Please propose legislation to support a more equitable distribution of education aid and a reduction of GEA.

I believe I can count on you.

Respectfully,

Name

Advocacy Facts

State Says

Governor's Proposed Budget

4.4% increase in school aid is promised for 2013 – 2014.

Homer's Reality

Homer's Reality

Executive Aid run shows aid increasing by 2.19% or \$416,794 for 2013 - 2014.

The missing 2.21% equals **\$419,793**.

State Aid Claim

Average statewide Aid Cut (GEA*)
Equals \$937 per student.

Homer's Reality

Homer Aid Cut (GEA) equals **\$1,389** per student for 2013 - 2014.

Loss of aid (GEA) over last 3 years has totaled **\$10.5 million**.

Reductions and Sharing

Homer's Reality

Homer has made \$1.42 million in reductions in past two years.

Homer has reduced buses and routes and shares a transportation supervisor with Cortland CSD.

Homer has already reduced administrative, instructional and non-instructional positions, across the board since 2010—2011.

GEA = Gap Elimination Adjustment, which is the State's reduction of aid to schools and local governments to lower its budget deficit. For schools, it has meant a loss of statutory, planned increases in under the Foundation Aid formula.



Homer's Albany Representatives

Senator John A. DeFrancisco

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416 Capitol
Albany, NY 12247
United States
Phone: (518) 455-3511

Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton

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Phone: (518) 455-5444

Senator James L. Seward

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172 State Street Room 430, Capital
Albany, NY 12247
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Assemblyman Gary D. Finch

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LOB 448
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Phone: (518) 455-5878

Senator David J. Valesky

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172 State Street LOB Room 512
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Phone: (518)-455-2838

Assemblyman Al Stirpe

Albany Office
LOB 656
Albany, NY 12248
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Phone: (518) 455-4505

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo

Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224
Phone: (518) 474-8390

Lieutenant Governor Robert J. Duffy

NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

SSFC 2013 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

This agenda addresses our goals and mission from the outset: Reform the process for distributing state aid to schools to make it equitable, sufficient and predictable

1. Abolish the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) IMMEDIATELY

- Any aid formula must include a distribution that takes into account both poverty and fiscal capacity
 - Remove any and all money for non-essential programs
 - Avoid performance grants – they are unproven and untested
 - Curtail funding to redundant or unproven programs
- Guarantee that all funds be used for education – not for political purposes
- Increase Foundation Aid to prevent re-creating another “Shares Agreement”
- Cease the highly political practice of awarding Bullet Aid and re-direct those funds to the reduction of the GEA

2. Repurpose the Governor’s Education Reform Commission, or Establish a New Commission, that Includes Experts with Hands-On Experience in Public Education Finance to Propose/Develop Legislation That Will:

- Create a new and equitable Foundation Aid formula for 2014-15
- Add supplementary funds – rather than the current model of re-directing current levels of education aid – to promote and support school district mergers and regional high schools
- Correspondingly, add supplemental funds for Kindergarten and Pre-K programs
- Eliminate or significantly reduce costly, unfunded mandates that impede the mission of school districts, such as...
 - Reform – not abolish – the Triborough Amendment to elevate the fiscal pressures on school districts due to major automatic cost increases
 - Allow school districts to have access to or direct membership in a statewide health insurance plan
 - Establish statewide minimum health insurance contributions for all personnel
 - Order the automatic removal and loss of license of personnel convicted of crimes

3. The Board of Regents Must Also Stand Up and Be Counted by Taking Definitive Action to Support these Efforts by Advocating for:

- State aid distributions as proposed above
- Mandate relief as noted above