

November 13th, 2009

The Honorable Owen Johnson
23-24 Argyle Square
Babylon, NY 11702

Dear Senator Johnson:

As a concerned taxpayer and voting resident of West Islip, I am writing about the state fiscal crisis. I understand the magnitude of the state's revenue shortfall, but implore you to fight against mid-year cuts to education aid.

School districts, like West Islip, plan for their school year based on the amount of education aid pledged to them by the state. This planning includes staffing, supplies, and programs. When New York State made mid-year cuts in the early nineties, the results were devastating, and a similar outcome would surely result today. School districts would be forced to slash programs and jobs, make massive property tax increases, or both.

Despite having one of the lowest per-pupil expenditure rates on Long Island, the taxpayers of West Islip are already overburdened by unfunded mandates, insufficient state aid, and dealing with the effects of this economic downturn. If the state reneged on its promise of education aid, the results to the local economy and our children's education would be disastrous.

The governor has suggested that school districts use their retirement reserves to compensate for the state's unfulfilled promise, but he is not willing to use the state's 'rainy day' funds.

In light of all this, I ask you to ensure that the state honors its commitment to education and seeks alternative means to address the fiscal crisis. Anything less will jeopardize our children and be unacceptable.

Sincerely,

West Islip, NY