

# Bully's Pulpit 21

July 7, 2010

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Have you emailed your Congressman today about the Ejobs bill?? There is still time. Do it today, and tomorrow, and tomorrow.

Contact Congressman William Pascrell (see page 24 of the P.E.A. Calendar). Ask him to support Chairman David Obey's changes to the EduJobs bill! Contact your Congressman if you don't live in the 8th CD.

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## The Bully's Budget Deal Will Hurt Kids, Schools

Over the Holiday weekend Senate President Steve Sweeney struck a deal with Governor Christie on a radical new tax cap which is far more restrictive than either the current 4% cap or the new 2.9% cap the Legislature passed earlier last week.

Our local schools have already lost millions in state funding, but this new 2% tax cap is flawed and will make it harder for local communities to fund local schools. This tax cap has no exemption for:

- Special Education. The 2% tax cap as it is currently written has no waiver for rising special education costs in local districts, so parents of students with special needs should prepare for fights with districts over the services their children need.
- Reductions in State Aid. School districts have had to make drastic cuts as state aid has been cut on short notice. This tax cap will not allow local communities to make up for unpredictable state funding.
- Inflation. This cap contains no exception for inflation, including the cost of fuel, textbooks or supplies. As school budgets, which have already been slashed this year, are stretched tighter, deeper cuts in staff and even larger class sizes are inevitable. Parents should prepare to see extracurricular programs eliminated and higher fees imposed on previously affordable activities.

**1. Call Assembly Speaker Sheila Oliver.** Urge her NOT to sign on to the Sweeney-Christie tax cap until we protect special education, and fix the cap to allow for inflation and loss of state funding. Contact Assemblywoman Oliver at 973-395-1166 or email her at <http://www.njkidsandfamilies.org/elected>.

**2. Call and email your Senator and Assembly members.** Tell them to say NO to the Sweeney-Christie tax cap until we protect special education, and fix the cap to allow for inflation and loss of state funding.

3. Please FORWARD this email to your friends and urge them to call and email Assemblywoman Oliver and their own legislators.

The Assembly is caucusing Wednesday and the Senate is voting as soon as Thursday - please call or email today.

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From EdWeek.com

## NEA's Delegates Vote 'No Confidence' in Race to the Top

By Stephen Sawchuk on July 4, 2010 12:38 PM

After a protracted debate, delegates to the National Education Association voted on Sunday to take a position of "no confidence" in the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top guidelines and in the use of competitive grants as a basis for the reauthorization of ESEA.

It was a symbolic slam on the Obama administration. But as with NEA President Dennis Van Roekel's keynote speech, it stopped short of actually calling out the U.S. president, a supporter of the program. And the debate over the item provided

the clearest picture yet of both the internal and external difficulties the NEA faces pushing against an education agenda promoted by a Democratic administration, rather than a Republican one.

For one, the item passed by a razor-thin margin. Most pass with a simple voice vote. New Business Item 2 required a standing vote, where delegates pro and con stand, in turn. The room looked to be divided almost in half, and the item very nearly moved to a roll call vote.

One delegate who opposed it noted the Tennessee and Delaware state unions' participation in their states' winning Race to the Top applications, and feared that the item's sentiment didn't accurately represent the diversity of opinion about the program.

"A number of our state affiliates have signed on to the Race to the Top, as have a number of local affiliates," she said. "To make a blanket statement that we have no confidence in Race to the Top is a conflicting message, and a disunity message."

Others worried about political ramifications. "I agree with the principle of the resolution but not with the term 'no confidence,'" the delegate said. "I'm not sure that's the way we want to go into reauthorization, throwing punches."

Yet others felt that it was time for the NEA to come out more strongly against the administration. "The worst thing that can happen is that we are divided on this, because our opposition will seize on [it]," said one delegate.

Even then, the resolution did not actually name or blame President Barack Obama for the policies. At least one delegate said he felt that those omissions were disingenuous.

"Arne Duncan was not on the ballot. The policies of the Department of Education are the policies of the Obama administration," the delegate said. "We have to step up and say that the policies of the Obama administration, we do not agree with those."

Another delegate seemed to agree, saying that even if NEA wouldn't connect the dots, the media and public would have no problems doing so. "The one line the press will pull from this convention is that we have 'no confidence' in RTTT, which translates to the Department of Education, which translates to Barack Obama," she said.

For the NEA, Barack Obama is quickly becoming the equivalent of Voldemort: He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. Still, the delegates were on the whole worked up enough that they rejected an amendment to strike out the "no confidence" language and replace it with a softer phrase.

The author of the NBI 2, Phil Rumore, president of the Buffalo, N.Y., affiliate, got applause when he was introducing the resolution: "Some people are going to be mad at us if we pass this. Well let the word get out," he said. The program, he added, would exacerbate policies that "brutalize our students with standardized tests, which in my opinion is like giving someone blood tests until they die."

From another supporter: "The Race to the Top is a gun with bullets in it to take out teachers, public education, and the union itself."

Camille Zombro, the head of the San Diego affiliate, seemed to have the last word. "Teachers would never have put together a program like Race to the Top," she said. "Even in states that are trying to make lemonade, ... you were still given a lemon."

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