



**St. Lawrence-Lewis**  
*Board of Cooperative Educational Services*  
**2016**

### **Eliminate the GEA**

Restore all GEA in its entirety in the 2016-17 state budget. The Governor's State of the State message suggested this be completed in two years. This inequitable and unnecessary diminishment of funds due to school districts must cease immediately. The state has, and is anticipated to maintain, generous surpluses.

### **Foundation Aid Issues**

North Country schools need a fairer, more equitable Foundation Aid formula, and more importantly, adequate funding of the formula for the generally high-needs, low-wealth students we serve. The Governor's proposed budget does not rise to the level of Foundation Aid (\$2.4 Billion) reasonably requested by the Educational Conference Board and others. Schools have done their part since the Great Recession by complying with the tax cap, cutting staff and programs, and reducing fund balance. The state must meet its constitutional obligation and to do its part.

### **Foundation Aid Solutions**

Create and maintain increased equity measures in the Foundation Aid formula and phase in full funding.

1. Use the Alternate Pupil Wealth Ratio (APWR) instead of the Combined Wealth Ratio (CWR) for aid calculations when school districts have lower income wealth values than property wealth values.
2. Enhance the weight of Free & Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) where possible.
3. Reset the IWI floor to zero. It has been set arbitrarily at 0.65 for the current budget.

### **Sensible Property Tax Cap**

- We must make simple, commonsense reforms to the Tax Cap. Basing a school levy limit on CPI is misleading because the CPI does not accurately reflect actual school costs. Limiting the tax levy as a way to rein in taxes is also misleading, because it does not limit costs.
- The law could be simplified by allowing any calculation at 2% or below to be approved by a simple majority. A limit calculated above 2% also would require a simple majority. A supermajority would be required if a district seeks an increase of more than 2%, when their calculation is below that, or when they want to exceed a limit calculated at 2%.
- There would be no need for a local property tax increase if the state were to address unfunded and under-funded mandates, and came through with what is owed in GEA and Foundation Aid.

### **Boost State Education Department Capacity**

We support a bolstered State Education Department (SED) to continue to align stakeholders and resources for our schools. In order for SED to succeed, we must reverse the staffing reductions that occurred over the past few years and ensure that planning and new initiatives move forward smoothly and in a timely manner.



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\*St. Lawrence-Lewis Counties' Council of School Superintendents Legislative Subcommittee Members.

\*\*Non-component district partner.