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JON S. CORZINE
Governor

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[For Kids](#) April 28, 2009

For More Information:

Robert Corrales

Phone: 609-777-2600

Governor Corzine Comments on School Funding Reform

TRENTON - Meeting the educational needs of all of New Jersey's children in an equitable and fair manner has been the primary impetus behind the State's School Funding Reform Act, Governor Corzine said earlier today.

"We really needed to replace a flawed, decades old, ad-hoc state aid system with something that could deliver a balanced and nonpartisan formula and address the needs of all students, regardless of where they live," said the Governor. "What was developed after intensive work by the Department of Education, administration officials, legislators and stakeholders is a system that puts the needs of all children on equal footing toward future success.

“It also is providing significant relief to local property taxpayers, who for decades have shouldered the important yet growing cost of education. I am confident that this is the right policy from the standpoint of our children and from the standpoint of the law.”

Governor Corzine signed the School Funding Reform Act in January 2008, establishing for the first time in a decade a new system of funding for public school districts throughout New Jersey.

With the School Funding Reform Act, New Jersey is more equitably distributing funds across the state and doing so based on the needs of individual students. Under the new formula passed last year, resources for K-12 education were increased by nearly \$500 million. In the Governor’s proposed FY 2010 budget, direct school aid is increased by another \$300 million.

The State has continued to maintain high levels of funding for the Abbott districts while adding significant aid to districts around the state with high concentrations of low-income students. Under the historic new formula, 51% of districts are receiving at least a 10% state aid increase this academic year. Those are substantial increases for 305 districts that went toward meeting students’ educational needs.

“The School Funding Reform Act is a major step forward for education reform in our state,” said Education Commissioner Lucille E. Davy. “It ties together a number of initiatives that the Governor, the Legislature, and the department have been working on for several years. First, it helps to ensure that all of our children are prepared for success in the 21st century world by providing for an equitable distribution of resources and it increases the resources we are providing. Secondly, it requires districts to adhere to the efficiency reforms embodied in CORE and the district performance accountability reforms embodied in the new state monitoring system and the new student level data base.”

Furthering his commitment to education, Governor Corzine signed legislation last July providing \$3.9 billion in state financing to replace or rebuild dozens of substandard schools across the state. These funds are being used to prioritize vital projects, particularly projects that will address health and safety concerns as well, over-crowding, early childhood education and special education needs.

History of New Jersey School Funding

February 1970 Robinson v. Cahill, the original school funding lawsuit, is filed alleging the state's method of funding public education discriminates against urban districts

October 1970 New school funding law is enacted

April 1973 The New Jersey Supreme Court rules law is inadequate

September 1975 Legislature enacts Public School Education Act, commonly known as the T&E (thorough and efficient) law, but the Legislature does not raise funds to pay for the new school funding formula

July 1, 1976 The New Jersey Supreme Court orders schools closed until the Legislature comes up with a way to pay for the new school funding law

July 8, 1976 Under Gov. Brendan Byrne the state income tax is enacted to provide funding to meet the mandates of the T&E law

February 1981 The Education Law Center files Abbott v. Burke lawsuit, challenging the adequacy of the new funding law

July 1985 The New Jersey Supreme Court orders an administrative law hearing on the merits of the Abbott v. Burke case

August 1988 Administrative Law Judge Steven Lefelt issues 600-page decision finding in favor of the urban school children and recommending a complete revamping of the school funding system

May 1990 Anticipating the T&E law is going to be struck down, Gov. Jim Florio pushes for the introduction of the Quality Education Act along with tax increases to pay for the new law

June 1990 The New Jersey Supreme Court strikes down the T&E law in Abbott v. Burke II and orders the Legislature to close the spending gap between the rich and poor districts and to provide extra funding for programs to wipe out the disadvantages suffered by poor urban students

July 1992 Education Law Center files another lawsuit charging the Quality Education Act does not comply with the mandates of the Abbott II court ruling

August 1993 Superior Court Judge Paul Levy declares the formula unconstitutional

July 1994 The New Jersey Supreme Court concludes the new law is unconstitutional

December 1996 The Comprehensive Educational Improvement and Financing Act (CIEFA) is signed into law by Gov. Christie Whitman

May 1997 The New Jersey Supreme Court declares CIEFA unconstitutional as applied to the Abbott districts

January 1998 After eight weeks of hearings in Trenton, Appellate Division Judge Michael Patrick King recommends to the New Jersey Supreme Court a series of supplemental programs to help close the learning gap between the rich and poor districts

May 1998 Using Judge King's recommendations as a benchmark, the New Jersey Supreme lays out supplemental programs that are required under Abbott ruling including pre-school for 3- and 4 -year olds, social services, increased security, after school and summer programs

1998 to 2002 CIEFA is funded bringing parity to school districts

March 2000 The New Jersey Supreme Court rules the state has failed to provide high-quality preschool programs as required

May 2000 The New Jersey Supreme Court issues ruling requiring the state to pay for school construction in the Abbott districts

July 2000 The Legislature passes the Educational Facilities Construction and Financing Act, providing funds for school construction statewide including Abbott districts

February 2002 Gov. Jim McGreevey announces plans to work with the Education Law Center to craft a law that meets constitutional muster

March 2002 The Education Law Center agrees to a McGreevey administration proposed one-year freeze on increases in funding

2002 to 2006 CIEFA is no longer funded and state aid to non-Abbott districts is increased across-the-board on a percentage basis or held flat

October, 2006: Joint Legislative Committee on Public School Funding Reform begins hearings.

December 2006: DOE releases the Report on the Cost of Education (RCE) which outlines the components of a school funding formula. <http://www.state.nj.us/education/sff/archive/report.pdf>

December, 2006-December, 2007: DOE holds a series of school funding formula public hearings and meetings with legislators and other stakeholders

Dec. 12, 2007 Gov. Jon S. Corzine publicly announces a proposed new school funding law – the School Funding Reform Act -- which creates a comprehensive, unified and equitable school funding formula

Dec. 13, 2007 Legislative hearings are held on the proposal

Jan. 7, 2008 Legislature passes the School Funding Reform Act (Assembly 41 to 37 and Senate 23 to 13)

Jan. 13, 2008 Gov. Jon S. Corzine signs the SRFA

March 18 2008 The Attorney General's Office files a petition asking the state Supreme Court to uphold the SFRA as constitutional

Nov. 18, 2008 The New Jersey Supreme Court orders a lower court hearing to determine if the new formula is constitutional

February/March 2009 Superior Court Judge Peter Doyne holds hearings on the constitutionality of the new

funding formula

March 2009 Judge Peter Doyne recommends to the Supreme Court that the school-funding formula provides more than sufficient resources to provide a thorough and efficient education, rejecting arguments advanced by lawyers for the 31 Abbott school districts and paving the way for a more equitable distribution of school aid

April 28, 2009 Oral arguments are held before the New Jersey Supreme Court on the new school funding formula

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Photos from Governor Corzine's public events are available in the Governor's Newsroom section on the State of New Jersey web page, <http://www.nj.gov/governor/news/>

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Office of the Governor

PO Box 001

Trenton, NJ 08625

609-292-6000