

## **Good Schools Pennsylvania**

For Immediate Release

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### **Senate Budget Poses Threat to Students, Schools and Communities**

Harrisburg, Pa. (May 4, 2009) -- The Senate's education budget is being met with alarm in school districts throughout Pennsylvania.

Senate Bill 850, introduced earlier today, would roll back state support for public education to at least 2006-07 levels, and use approximately \$728 million in federal stimulus dollars to bring the total back up to 2008-09 levels. The governor's budget, in contrast, proposes to hold state funding at 2008-09 levels, and use federal stimulus dollars to support school districts in meeting their own increased public education costs.

"We are fully aware of the challenges confronting the General Assembly in this current economy," said Janis Risch. "However, if the Senate cuts education funding, many school districts will face the predicament of having to eliminate essential programs AND raise property taxes."

According to a 2007 costing-out study, many of Pennsylvania's school districts have no spare room to make cuts, underfunded as they are by \$3,000 to \$5,000 per student. Moreover, as a result of declining tax bases, they already shoulder some of the highest local tax rates in an effort to keep their schools solvent.

"While the recent global economic downturn is affecting everyone, these communities are still trying to recover from a 30-year system of education finance that actually contributed to their economic decline, as well as failed to provide a quality education for students," said Risch.

Further issues raised by Good Schools Pennsylvania include questioning the method of rolling back the funding. "Just as a formula is used to distribute funding, some kind of a formula is implicit in cuts," said Risch. "While we haven't seen any district-specific data yet, we'd be very concerned if this roll-back resulted in disproportionate cuts to economically disadvantaged communities."

Good Schools Pennsylvania is a statewide advocacy organization whose mission is to ensure an effective system of public education to meet the needs of students, schools and communities.

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