

**WOODBURY CITY PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
25 NORTH BROAD STREET
WOODBURY, NEW JERSEY 08096
(856) 853-0123, EXTENSION 230**

Joseph Jones, III
SUPERINTENDENT

June 8, 2009

Senator Stephen M. Sweeney
935 Kings Highway
Suite 400
West Deptford, NJ 08086

Dear Senator Sweeney:

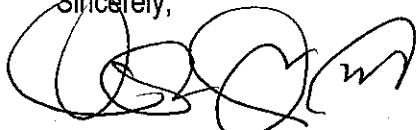
I sent the information contained on the following page to Senator Dana L. Redd, Assemblyman Joseph J. Roberts, Jr., and Assemblywoman Nilsa Cruz-Perez, but I thought that you would also be interested – given that your roots are here in South Jersey. The underfunding of the new School Funding Reform Act (SFRA) in the current budget proposed by the governor is negatively impacting Woodbury and many of the Gloucester County school districts.

Additionally, I have enclosed for you a chart containing information regarding the underfunding of SFRA in Gloucester County school districts as compiled by the Educational Law Center.

I would be more than willing to discuss this issue with you if you have any additional questions. It is difficult for Woodbury and these other districts to see how the goal of full funding will ever be realized given the arbitrary manner of the proposed rate of increase included in the current budget. What makes it more complicated to explain to the local taxpayer is that many school districts across the state are already fully funded by the state under SFRA.

I appreciate any help that you can provide to see that Woodbury and other districts in a similar position are funded at the appropriate level by the state.

Sincerely,



Joseph Jones, III
Superintendent

Text of letters to Senator Redd, Assemblyman Roberts, and Assemblywoman Cruz-Perez:

The Woodbury City Board of Education was pleased with the recent ruling by the New Jersey Supreme Court regarding the constitutionality of the state's new funding formula for schools – the School Funding Reform Act (SFRA). Woodbury has benefited from the new funding formula due to the fact that the educational needs of at-risk pupils are recognized regardless of where those children attend school.

As you are aware, the funding formula caps growth for districts severely underfunded – like Woodbury. Thus, for the first year the formula was applied (2008-09 school year) Woodbury's increase in state aid was capped at 20% even though the computation of the formula without a cap would have resulted in a substantially greater increase.

Given that we are still in a serious, underfunded status as determined by the new SFRA formula, it was the district's expectation that we would again receive another 20% increase for the 2009-10 school year; this is what the funding formula indicates. Even an increase of this size would still not meet the state's obligation under SFRA if uncapped. Nevertheless, the process would have moved us closer to full funding.

Unfortunately, our increase for 2009-10 was arbitrarily capped at 5% when funding information was released this past March. The New Jersey Supreme Court indicated:

Our finding of constitutionality is premised on the expectation that the State will continue to provide school funding aid during this and the next two years at the levels required by SFRA's formula each year. [emphasis added]

In addition, the court noted an expectation that there may be a need in the future to adjust the formula to keep it operating at its optimal level:

Our approval of SFRA under the State Constitution relies, as it must, on the information currently available. But a state funding formula's constitutionality is not an occurrence at a moment in time; it is a continuing obligation. Today's holding issues in the good faith anticipation of a continued commitment by the Legislature and Executive to address whatever adjustments are necessary to keep SFRA operating at its optimal level. The three year look-back, and the State's adjustments based on that review, will provide more information about the efficacy of this funding formula. There should be no doubt that we would require remediation of any deficiencies of a constitutional dimension, if such problems do emerge.

Regardless of any future need to adjust the formula, **the Woodbury City Board of Education wants to call your attention to the additional funding currently required by this funding formula.** For Woodbury, this expected funding amounts to an additional \$1,704,290 for the upcoming 2009-10 school year.

Additionally, SFRA language expands high quality, full-day preschool to all at-risk three and four year olds in the state. Woodbury City Public Schools submitted a plan that anticipated 54 students receiving full-day programming for the 2009-10 school year. We stand ready to provide the services as outlined in our plan but require the additional state funding to accomplish this mandate of SFRA; this state aid is also missing in our current allocation.

Again, we are excited to have a formula that recognizes the need for funding to follow the challenges associated with students living in difficult financial circumstances. Woodbury City celebrates the SFRA as a victory for Woodbury students. Unfortunately, as the Supreme Court indicated, the formula only works if it is fully funded.

The ability of the state to provide for school districts in an equitable fashion will create a more balanced property tax situation. Currently, the Woodbury City resident manages an equalized school tax rate that is in the top 20 of the state and nearly twice as high as the median rate school tax rate. Appropriate SFRA funding will help this school district reduce its portion of the local tax burden.

I thank you for your time in this matter. We at Woodbury desire to see steps taken to have this matter is quickly addressed by the state government in time for corrective action in advance of final budget approval.

2009-10 Proposed Formula Aid Underfunding*

County	District	DFG	FY09 % Free and Reduced		2009-10 Aid Loss	Per Pupil Loss
			Lunch	Loss		
GLOUCESTER	CLAYTON BORO	CD	39%		\$1,381,091	\$1,905
GLOUCESTER	CLEARVIEW REGIONAL	FG	8%		\$2,063,384	\$841
GLOUCESTER	DELSEA REGIONAL H.S. DIST.	CD	21%		\$1,802	\$1
GLOUCESTER	DEPTFORD TWP	CD	31%		\$2,368,210	\$561
GLOUCESTER	EAST GREENWICH TWP	FG	10%		\$411,939	\$450
GLOUCESTER	FRANKLIN TWP	CD	19%		\$3,925	\$3
GLOUCESTER	GLASSBORO	B	34%		\$280,478	\$125
GLOUCESTER	GLOUCESTER CO VOCATIONAL		17%		\$1,104,374	\$1,162
GLOUCESTER	HARRISON TWP	GH	6%		\$894,684	\$626
GLOUCESTER	KINGSWAY REGIONAL	FG	11%		\$1,143,867	\$637
GLOUCESTER	LOGAN TWP	FG	13%		\$164,822	\$134
GLOUCESTER	MANTUA TWP	FG	10%		\$657,361	\$452
GLOUCESTER	MONROE TWP	CD	26%		\$4,950,616	\$825
GLOUCESTER	NATIONAL PARK BORO	B	30%		\$180,609	\$627
GLOUCESTER	NEWFIELD BORO		32%		\$207,010	\$864
GLOUCESTER	PAULSBORO BORO	A	69%		\$1,777,733	\$1,472
GLOUCESTER	SOUTH HARRISON TWP	FG	8%		\$181,328	\$533
GLOUCESTER	SWEDESORO-WOOLWICH	DE	9%		\$869,695	\$551
GLOUCESTER	WENONAH BORO	I	2%		\$76,645	\$309
GLOUCESTER	WEST DEPTFORD TWP	DE	12%		\$470,517	\$150
GLOUCESTER	WOODBURY CITY	B	50%		\$1,704,290	\$1,086
GLOUCESTER	WOODBURY HEIGHTS BORO	FG	12%		\$104,749	\$428

* Source: NJ DOE, Projected 2009-10 State Aid Profiles