



Gerard Bringmann
Legislative Activities Chair
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On the federal level, HR 610 – has been introduced. This bill would establish an educational voucher system (thru State Block Grants), which would distribute funds to parents who elect to enroll their child in a private school or would elect to home school their child. To be eligible to receive a federal block grant, States would need to not only comply with the voucher program requirements, but would allow parents to elect to enroll their child in any public or private elementary or secondary school in that state. This bill would also repeal a specified rule that established certain nutritional standards for the national school breakfast and lunch programs. This is a bill that needs to be closely watched.

On the State Level, Assemblyman Dean Murray is looking to re-introduce a bill which would extend a sex offenders time on the registry (we now have Level One offenders dropping off the Sex Offenders Registry for the first time since it was established) from 20 years to 30 years. This bill would also allow local governments, such as Suffolk County, to create “reasonable restrictions” on where a registered sex offender could live. While the bill does have co-sponsorship of two members of the Democratic controlled Assembly (Steve Engelbright & Kimberly Jean-Pierre), both from Suffolk, it still needs a Senate sponsor. However, it does appear that State Senator Croci is considering a sponsorship.

Following up on an issue that I brought up a few months back, it’s been confirmed by a couple of local School Superintendents and an article written by John Hildebrand in Newsday (last month) that the State Education Department is “very understaffed”, which is causing severe delays in getting approvals on both local Bond Issue and Smart Schools spending plans. In an ironic twist, a State Budget Division Spokesman was quoted as saying “Given the resources already available to the department, we believe further investments should be applied to the classroom and not to the “bureaucracy”. There are reported to be 280 staff vacancies in the SED, and it was only until early last month that the division of Budget agreed to fill 150 of them. Two key positions that are yet unfilled in the SED’s Department of Facilities Planning. It is critical that we advocate to get these positions filled, ASAP.

- Another bill of interest that has been introduced is one by State Senator Phil Boyle (R-Central Islip) that bar the sale of machetes to anyone under the age of 18 years old (sale of utility knives & box cutters is already prohibited). The introduction of this legislation comes shortly after more than a half dozen members of MS-13 were indicted in the murders of two females in Brentwood using (among other weapons) machetes. This bill still needs a sponsor in the NYS Assembly.
- In closing, a reminder that **NYS PTA has proclaimed tomorrow (Tues. March 14th) as Virtual Lobbying Day**. Four advocacy positions on critical issues that the State PTA is working on are: 1 - Career & Technical Education and Pathways to success, 2 - Restrict & Ban Marketing of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems to Children, 3 – Support a \$2 Billion Dollar Investment in our Children, 4 – Heroin & Prescription Opiates/Opioids.