

Challenging the tax cap

Talking to the media and the community

Need some help when it comes to talking to the media about union issues? The NYSUT website offers a **library of talking points**, outlining the union's position on a variety of issues, to help you stay on message. Structured in a user-friendly "they say/you say" format, the messaging covers issues ranging from the Common Core, to the tax cap lawsuit, to teacher evaluation and tenure. Talking points on

several of NYSUT's hot-button issues are included with this kit. For a full library of talking points, visit the website at nysut.org/leaders. If you're facing an issue not covered in the talking points library, or need personalized assistance, NYSUT's media relations department can assist — contact your LRS for information. No matter what issue you're facing, NYSUT has the information you need to convey your message.



When they say:

You say:

Schools can do fine under a tax cap.

In challenging the cap, NYSUT is going to court to defend quality public education for the state's students on the basis of legitimate constitutional issues surrounding the cap.

Educationally, the tax cap locks in inequity for the state's neediest districts. The tax cap also has undemocratically and unconstitutionally limited the ability of all voters at the local level to determine how much to invest in their own community's schools.

State aid cuts have devastated school districts — especially those with high percentages of poor children and students of color. The tax cap has only worsened that problem, depriving children in low-wealth districts an equal educational opportunity by perpetuating and expanding the gross inequalities in funding, since it is far more difficult in low-wealth areas to raise adequate funding locally, outside of traditional means. The cap's provision requiring a 60-percent majority vote to pass a budget containing a spending increase greater than 2 percent nullifies the democratic notion of one person, one vote.

Taxes in New York state are among the highest in the nation, and a tax cap is not only necessary, but also long overdue.

NYSUT members are taxpayers and they, too, feel the burden of rising property taxes. But the reason for rising property taxes is because the state has failed to pay its fair share. In 2001-02, for example, the state picked up 48.2 percent of the total cost of public education. A decade later, in 2010-11, that percentage had fallen to 39.7 percent. The sharp drop is the result of years of underfunding (as established by the Campaign for Fiscal Equity case) and, more recently, the slashing of state aid to schools.

The tax cap has proven politically popular among the voting public.

NYSUT and its members have always acknowledged the tax cap would be both politically popular and would slow down the rise in local property taxes. But we have said too, and have been proven right, that it also would be a disaster for public education. In fact, the cap enacted has exacerbated the damage of state aid cuts, contributing to further reductions in art, music, foreign languages, guidance counselors and extracurricular programs. Advanced Placement and remedial programs have been slashed. Schools have closed, uprooting children. Since the Great Recession began in 2008, districts have eliminated the jobs of some 35,000 teachers and other education professionals. Meanwhile, public polls consistently show 75 percent of citizens want to invest more in public education.