

FASA Friday Facts for January 9, 2009

Good morning!

This week in Tallahassee, the Republicans in the Legislative Special Session continue to move in lock-step to close the state's \$2.3 billion budget gap in a predictable fashion: by cutting \$1 billion, mostly from public schools, nursing homes and social services. They want to balance the budget on the backs of our state's neediest, and least powerful, individuals.

Meanwhile, Democrats and education advocates are asking why the Legislature is rushing to cut \$1 billion, mostly from public schools, nursing homes and social services, when President-elect Barack Obama is promising a large economic stimulus to the states.

FASA's position is simple. There is no fat or even muscle left to cut in our school budget. After the new \$500,000,000 cut in THIS YEAR'S remaining budget that is almost sure to come out of the Special Session, we will be whittling away on bare bone. FASA believes that these cuts to education never heal.

And I want to thank each of you who took the time to respond to our "Action Alert" this week. Over 4,000 of you responded to that email. It is important that the legislature hear from you. But the truth is, there is little we can do to change the outcome of this Special Session. It is already pre-determined by our state's Republican leadership who have spent the last decade not only rejecting any tax increase, but giving away billions of dollars in tax breaks to special interests.

That philosophy must change. No one likes paying taxes; but tax is not a four-letter word! FASA's Legislative Platform points out that we are one of the few states that does not tax internet sales and we have some of the lowest cigarette and alcohol taxes. Given the simple fact that smoking alone COSTS Florida over a half billion dollars a year in health-related expenses, these sources of new revenue should be no-brainers. If our state's leaders can't take off their "ideological blinders" then it's time to change leaders!

It's also time to prepare for the general Legislative Session that begins in March. Public schools have never been more at risk and we simply can't afford to remain silent. The legislature will hear from FASA, but they must also hear from you, Florida's school leaders. No one understands what these continued cuts are doing to our children than you do.

We are working to help you do that as fast and easy as possible. On the FASA website we are creating a new "one-click" link that will allow you to send a single email to every member of the Florida legislature at once. You will find the names and emails of all education committee members along with talking points that you can use. But remember, your personal story and real-life examples carry the most weight.

This new Action Alert feature will be ready and in place shortly and in time for the legislative session. We understand how full your in-box is everyday, so we will use it sparingly, only during key votes or on major issues. We are working to keep you informed and connected. And to make sure your voice is heard.

Have a great day!

Jim Warford

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