

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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STATEMENT

In light of the severe budget crisis facing our state and local governments, we understand the need to balance the state budget and we appreciate Governor Kaine’s efforts to minimize the cuts for public schools up until now.

We thank the Governor for cutting education less than any other program. However, we cannot cut one-half billion dollars from Virginia schools without adversely affecting what goes on in the classroom.

We recognize that cuts had to be made in these tough times, but the cuts we most object to are the \$340 million of changes in the underlying funding formula, which will go forward long after this recession ends.

As the following chart demonstrates, Virginia places the overwhelming burden of funding public education upon local government and local taxpayers.

Sources of Public Education Revenue for Virginia’s Schools						
Average Per-Pupil Revenue 2006						
	VA %	US %	VA Rank	VA \$ Per Pupil	US Average	VA Rank
State	39.6	46.6	41 st	\$4,244	\$5,018	37 th
Local	53.7	44.4	9 th	\$5,734	\$4,779	14 th
Federal	6.7	9.0	42 nd	\$714	\$974	42 nd
Total				\$10,672	\$10,771	20 th

Source: Congressional Quarterly Press’s Education State Rankings 2008-2009

The chart above shows the percentage of state funding for public elementary and secondary education and the dollar amount. Virginia provides an average of \$4,244 per student. This ranks Virginia 37th in the nation, a low ranking for a wealthy state.

Although state policymakers assert that the state now pays 55% of the cost of the Standards of Quality, the SOQ provide a minimum foundation program which sets the floor far below what students need to prepare to compete in the global economy. That is why the state actually now provides only 39.6% of the cost of funding our schools. **This percentage of support ranks Virginia 41st among the fifty states.**

As the majority of the funding for our schools comes from local sources, the budget shortfalls on the local level resulting from falling local revenue collections have already had a profound impact on our classrooms.

Some examples from across Virginia:

Fairfax County

In Fairfax County, bleak fiscal forecasts point to a potential **increase of as many as 2 1/2 children a class next school year, a bump of more than 10 percent in elementary classrooms.** That would come on top of a half-student per class increase in September. *Washington Post 12-5-08*

King William County

Superintendent Mark Jones said he has cut 10 percent from each department for the current school year and has hired people only for required positions, such as special education. He said the school system also has planned three budget scenarios, with cuts at 5 percent, 10 percent and 15 percent. *Richmond Times-Dispatch 12-12-08*

Suffolk

Suffolk has one high school that is not hiring substitutes, causing teaching staff to provide coverage on a rotating basis. Another school is going to paperless Fridays where no paper is used. Staff is limited to 3 sheets per week the rest of the week. *VEA Field Staff*

These are but three examples that make it clear that the recession already is exacting a toll on local school systems.

The proposed state cuts on top of the local cuts will be a one-two punch to public education in Virginia – and one that will reach deep into the classroom.

The Virginia Education Association has joined with our education partners in the Virginia Education Coalition, and we offer the following statement to guide legislators as they react to the Governor's budget:

Children Deserve Our Best: Coalition Urges No Permanent Cuts to Education

In the midst of financial challenges, Virginia faces tough choices. Already, localities feeling the pressure of decreased revenues are cutting back on school programs and services. We can be sure that further cuts in state aid will only worsen their plight, and that the result will be larger class sizes, a reduction in vital services such as counseling and paraprofessional classroom support, and fewer opportunities for Virginia students to master our Standards of Learning.

The members of the Virginia Education Coalition (VEC) believe that any cuts in public education funding should be minimized and of a temporary nature. One-time cuts should be employed only if necessary. There should be no changes to the funding formula, which would reduce education funding even after the economy improves.

We must not forget that Virginia, the 9th wealthiest state in the nation, has slipped to 37th in state per pupil funding for public education. Our children deserve better.

Prior to making cuts, both sides of the ledger should be considered. For example, tax policies such as reinstating the estate tax, raising the tobacco tax, closing corporate loopholes, and revisiting the sales tax dealer discount are just a few examples of how we could find funds to reduce the need to cut education funding. In addition, we support using funds from the Revenue Stabilization Fund to reduce cuts to public education.

In summary, the VEC supports these points:

- **Eliminate or limit cuts by considering all funding options**
- **If funding cuts are necessary, they should be made temporary rather than long-lasting or permanent.**

Virginia Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (VACTE)
Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals (VAESP)
Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS)
Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals (VASSP)
Virginia Congress of Parents and Teachers (VAPTA)
Virginia Counselors Association (VCA)

Virginia Education Association (VEA)
Virginia Middle School Association (VMSA)
Virginia Professors of Educational Leadership (VPEL)
Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA)
Virginia School Counselors Association (VSCA)
Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (VASCD)

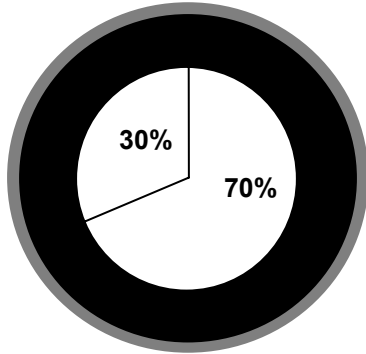
Cuts Are Cuts

Cutting investment in public education, whether the cuts come from local, state, or federal sources, ultimately hurt kids. State-level cuts, even if directed at administrative and support areas, will still reach deep into classrooms.

Here's one way to look at the funding equation.

Virginia spends an average of \$10,672 per pupil. The sources are, in percentage terms:

- Local: (in black) 53.7%
- State: (in white) 39.6%
- Federal:(in gray) 6.7%



As the graphic displays, a reduction of the funding of a portion of the 30% of SOQ funding now going for administrative and support components will shrink the size of the circle and reduce per-pupil student funding overall, causing further erosion of instructional programs as stressed localities scramble to make up for the loss in state funding.

The Governor suggests that one can cut components of state funding without adversely affecting instruction; however, any reduction in the low level of funding now provided by our Commonwealth will result in increased class sizes, reduction in supply accounts, and compromised student achievement. Localities have few alternatives.

We anticipate cuts, but let them be temporary in nature. Do not let us return to better economic times having slipped even further behind our current state ranking of 41st in the nation.