

**VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS  
PRESS CONFERENCE**

**Remarks by Milton Liverman, President-elect of VASS and  
Superintendent of Suffolk City Schools**

My name is Milton Liverman. I am currently superintendent of Suffolk Public Schools and president-elect of the Virginia Association of School Superintendents. My comments will be brief so as not to repeat those of my colleagues. We all have a story to tell because all of us will be hurt by the proposed budget cuts.

The impact in Suffolk is significant and contrary to everything being said, will impact what is happening in the classroom. We anticipate a loss of approximately \$6 million dollars. The loss of support teachers, lead teachers, clerical, administrative and other positions will shift the burden of getting essential tasks completed to teachers. Some of the cuts we make may even negatively impact our pre-accreditation status. These things will impact classroom instruction.

Like many other divisions, Suffolk Public Schools struggles to meet State and federal mandates. Our organization has gone on record as supporting the suspension of the No Child Left Behind mandates until adequate funding is provided by the federal government. Also included in our legislative priorities is the opposition of all unfunded NCLB mandates. I believe these positions are even more important given the economic crisis we face.

Although I have grave concern about the proposed cuts, I have even greater concern that there may be those who would seek to make these cuts permanent. The long term negative impact on Suffolk would be devastating. We would not be able to maintain the continuous progress we have been making and would likely begin to see some level of regression.

The timing of this discussion is ironic considering that education week's annual Quality Counts analysis has just named Virginia's education system as the fourth best state in the nation. According to the Virginian Pilot, Virginia outscored the nation in every area measured except school finance where the state received a C. The school finance grade was based on finding equity between divisions and the amount spent per pupil. Obviously, the reform that is needed in Virginia support of public education should be focused on improving support rather than using the unfortunate circumstances of our current economy as a cover for permanently reducing state support.

If I could make one point that everyone would remember, it would be this. These cuts will have a negative impact on our ability to deliver the same quality of educational experience for our students. All of us will do our best to minimize that impact but there will be a negative impact. In Suffolk, we are losing 7% of our state revenue. We have no ability to replace that revenue. We have had no ability "set aside" funds for a time like this so the only thing we can do is cut. Understand, these cuts mean cuts in

programs, positions and people. Importantly, many of the things we will be cutting are the very things that we have added in recent years to help us achieve full state accreditation for all of our schools. We will be cutting the same things that have helped us make progress towards the unfunded mandates of No Child Left Behind. We will be cutting the same things that have helped us achieve division-wide accreditation from the Southern Association. We will be cutting those things that are helping us move from good to great.

I understand that these are circumstances that require difficult decisions. It is my highest hope, however, that those who are making these decisions understand the impact of those decisions. It is my most sincere prayer that we will all, educators and politicians alike, will work through this situation to protect our progress, to protect our children and to provide the best for them.

Thank you all for being here today and for all you do to help make the Commonwealth of Virginia one of the best places in the country to educate children.