

## **VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS PRESS CONFERENCE**

**Remarks by Stuart Gibson  
President of the Virginia School Boards Association and  
Fairfax County School Board Member**

### **Theme:**

The question is not whether we in public education will educate children to high standards. The question is who will pay when the State does not live up to its part of the agreement. I submit that our children will pay the price when the adults in Virginia fail them.

### **Supporting Points:**

1. State support for many school divisions in Virginia represents a very small part of what it actually costs to educate Virginia's 1.2 million school children.
2. Every locality exceeds the State's low "minimum standards" for educational programs. Because they understand the importance of public education to our quality of life -- and our economic well-being -- local elected officials and local property taxpayers are willing to make the additional investment that the state does not -- but only when the State meets its obligation as a partner in public education.
3. With local tax revenues in steep decline because of the crisis in the housing and mortgage markets, local appropriating bodies cannot make up for large cuts in state funding. This creates a "double whammy" for students.
4. State and Federal government officials -- including the Governor and General Assembly -- expect Virginia's public schools to educate more children to higher standards each year. And yet they expect our students to achieve to high standards, while they pay for only "minimum standards." For FY 2010, they expect us to raise student achievement on far less money than they provided in FY 2009.
5. When the State cuts funding for public education, and localities cannot make up for the shortfall, we have no choice but to reduce services to students.
6. When the State makes those cuts permanent -- by changing funding formulas or imposing artificial "caps" based on available revenue -- the result will be permanent cuts in programs and services for children. There can be no credible promise to restore "permanent" cuts to a child's education.

7. School Board members understand that in times of severe economic downturn -- like now -- the State may have to **temporarily, but not permanently**, cut state funding for public school students. School Board members know that the most effective way to cut state funding without permanently harming students, is to reduce state mandates -- especially those relating to bureaucracy and reporting -- and allow local school systems the flexibility to make cuts that minimize the impact on children.

**Concluding Message:**

It is Virginia's children who will bear the brunt of State budget cuts. Give local School Boards and superintendents the flexibility to manage how to make temporary cuts that minimize the impact on children and families.

I say to the General Assembly, on behalf of 1.2 million children in Virginia: When you make your difficult budget decisions this year, do not shortchange an entire generation of students by imposing permanent cuts. Children do not recover from permanent cuts. And permanent cuts never heal!