

# Committee Meeting

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before

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

and

ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

"To receive public testimony on the topic of  
Revising the Quality Education Act of 1990 (QEA)"

**LOCATION:** East Orange High School  
East Orange, New Jersey

**DATE:** December 16, 1992  
4:00 p.m.

**MEMBER OF SENATE COMMITTEE PRESENT:**

Senator John H. Ewing, Chairman

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Kathleen Fazzari  
Office of Legislative Services  
Aide, Senate Education Committee



***Hearing Recorded and Transcribed by***  
The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,  
Hearing Unit, State House Annex, CN 068, Trenton, New Jersey 08625





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**New Jersey State Legislature**  
**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**  
**ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE**  
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625-0068  
(609) 984-6843

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**NOTICE**

**TO: MEMBERS OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**  
**MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**FROM: SENATOR JOHN H. EWING, CHAIRMAN**  
**ASSEMBLYMAN JOHN A. ROCCO, CHAIRMAN**

**SUBJECT: COMBINED COMMITTEE MEETING - December 16, 1992**

*The public may address comments and questions to Darby Cannon, III, or Kathleen Fazzari or David C. Hespé, Aides to the Committees, or make scheduling inquiries to Mary C. Lutz or Bernadette Kmetz, secretaries at (609) 984-6843.*

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The Senate Education and Assembly Education Committees will hold a combined meeting on Wednesday, December 16, 1992 at 4:00 P.M., East Orange High School, 34 North Walnut Street, East Orange, N. J. in order to receive public testimony on the topic of **Revising the Quality Education Act of 1990 (QEA)**.

Issued 12/09/92

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J O H N H O W A R D, J R., Ph.D.: May I have your attention, please? For those of you who don't know me, my name is John Howard, Superintendent of Schools in East Orange.

I want to welcome Senator John Ewing, Republican from Somerset, to talk about the education reform funding plan of 1992. This is a formal legislative Committee hearing. The format for the hearing will be organized and conducted by Senator Ewing.

Before we get into the formal presentation by Senator Ewing, I want to introduce a few people who are known to me at this point in the East Orange community and surrounding areas. Of our School Board, Mr. Ed Taylor. Mr. Taylor. (applause) Representing the City Council and Quilla Talmadge, Council Chairlady Jeweline Grimes. (applause) Local Superintendents being represented by a good friend of mine from Columbus, Ohio, Dr. Rogers Lewis. (applause)

I want to pay particular attention and special recognition to the high school principal at East Orange High School, Dr. Steve Cowan. (applause) Also, Roxie Potter for organizing this particular effort on behalf of Senator Ewing's office of EO. (applause) The National Honor Society, the ROTC Program, and the TV Taping Program Channel 34 of East Orange High School, which is responsible for the services this evening on behalf of the students. (applause)

Again, I want to very quickly run through what I think is the-- And James Harris, I wanted to introduce, from New Jersey Black Issues Convention. James Harris. (applause) I want to very quickly give you what I consider to be a synopsis of the historiography of what has led us to this point. We can go back to the Abbott v. Burke, which struck down the old minimum basic funding formula. We ended up with QEA I. We had QEA II. We had the Law Center's challenge to QEA, and now we have the Public School Reform Act of 1992, which was sponsored

by Senator Rocco -- I'm sorry, Senator Ewing and Assemblyperson John Rocco, of Camden, under Assembly Bill No. 3 and Senate Bill No. 1370.

During this period of time, the New Jersey Association for Public Schools -- NJAPS -- organized an interim funding formula for 1992. Also, the New Jersey BIC organization -- Black Issues Convention -- had a counter position that they wanted known in this particular situation. As a result of the New Jersey Association of Public School officials being sponsored and represented by the New Jersey School Boards Association, the New Jersey School Administrators Association, the New Jersey Education Association, the New Jersey School Business Association officials, the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, the New Jersey Council of Parents and Teachers, and the Education Law Center organized a coalition in response to the education reform funding plan of 1992.

With this, the legislators, under the auspices of Senator Ewing, decided to hold four public meetings beginning in November of 1992 -- November 23 -- the first one being held in Trenton; November 24 in Toms River; December 1 in Bridgewater; and December 2 at Saddle Brook. There was a concern that the urban school districts were not represented en masse regarding these public presentations, and Senator Ewing took the time to make himself available to the East Orange community, and that is where we are today.

Memos were sent by the BIC organization and the New Jersey School Boards Association requesting Senator Ewing to make himself available to the urban centers as soon as possible. As a result, during the past week, a compromise, or a substitute bill, has been organized by the legislators, the Governor's Office, and the NJAPS organization. What the Senator is going to be talking about this evening is probably the substitute bill, as well as the original 1992 School Funding Reform Act.

Various provisions -- and I know Senator Ewing will go through them -- are: a \$115 million increase for urban schools; \$50 million funding for capital projects; \$46 million to increase State aid for wealthy districts; \$4 million for transportation; \$1 million for Vocational Ed in Hunterdon County; a \$76 million increase for the teachers' pension fund and Social Security; a freeze on categorical and bilingual funding; a 5 percent allowable increase over last year's budget, with a bipartisan commission being organized for school year 1993-1994 to do a thorough investigation of funding throughout the State of New Jersey.

It appears on one hand that we move toward parity. On the other hand, there is an unfreezing on the cap; requirements for wealthy districts which on one hand may be counterproductive regarding the amount of moneys that your Districts G, H, and I's will receive regarding this new approach.

At this point I want to turn the meeting over to Senator Ewing and later allow the public to make comments regarding this presentation. Senator Ewing. (applause)

**SENATOR JOHN H. EWING (Chairman):** Dr. Howard, thank you very much for that exceptional briefing you gave the audience regarding what the bill now contains. I appreciate your having this meeting here, and I certainly appreciate Dr. Cowan's keeping this part of the school open, and am appreciative, also, of the various organizations, the Air Force Junior Group that's here and some members of the Honor Society who escorted me up here from the Principal's office. It was certainly well organized, and I appreciate the attention you are giving us.

As was stated, this bill is ready to be voted on tomorrow in the Senate and the Assembly. The hearings that we started on this piece of legislation started, I would say, 10 to 11 months ago. I am a Republican. I come from Somerset County, and I represent the major part of Somerset County. I

have been down there for 25 years, and I have served on the Education Committee, both in the Assembly and in the Senate.

We felt that the QEA was just not right for education in the way it was devised. There is no question whatsoever in most of our minds -- and certainly in mine -- that the so-called special needs districts do need extra help. There is no question of that. But what we want to make sure of, and the taxpayers of New Jersey want to make sure of, is that the money is going to the child. That is the most important part of our education. Because you have taken the interest to come out here, you all know it, certainly, and thousands of others realize it, but, unfortunately, there are many others who don't; that without an education you are not going to move ahead. The problems that the urban areas have are not just their problems. They are the State of New Jersey's problems. This is something many of us recognize. We have to keep working at it.

One of the biggest problems I had with the original QEA was the amount of money that was dumped into the special needs districts, without really any follow-up or auditing of how the money -- or how the money could be spent that quickly, because it was so massive all at one time.

Last year, a certain amount of funds was taken out to give taxpayer relief. I am not going to take sides on that. You know, it was done by a party down there. So, we have been looking at it. We went around to the various places that Dr. Howard has said we have been to to get input. From that input we developed the concept document. Then we had some more hearings from educators, etc. From that we developed the legislation. Like all legislation, we wanted to, certainly in the education field, have the administration -- the Governor's backing on it, so that we would not have a fight with them and then have to try to get an override on a veto, if he vetoed it.

Also, just for the best interest of education, it was best to come up with a plan that everybody could agree to. I know it is not satisfying to everybody, and the bill we have is really not that satisfying to me. But in the best interests of the child, we made the compromise. That is the bill that is ready to be voted on tomorrow.

I don't want you to feel that because we are having this meeting so late that nothing can be done if you bring up some very interesting points or something that can be worked on. It certainly is true that unless it is of a major significance -- and I can't believe any of the education associations have not brought it to our attention already -- there is very little likelihood that we would amend the bill tomorrow. One of the reasons is, there are certain parts of the bill certain legislators on both sides of the aisle in both Houses do not care about. Once you open a bill up for amendment, you are apt to start opening the floodgates, and they want to amend a whole lot of different things.

So, it is much easier to go the way we are. But I promise you that we will look at any substance matter that you bring up that you feel is of really great importance, because in my mind there is no bill that goes in that that's it for the rest of its life. One of the compromises we made with the administration is that it would be a one-year bill. And, to be purely political about it, Governor Florio wants to be able to tell people he kept the QEA going. The Republicans want to be able to say, "We stopped QEA, and started a new track." So this is what you are going to hear in the forthcoming campaign. One side is going to say this, and the other side is going to say that. But we are changing the QEA. There is no question about that.

If the bill doesn't go through -- and I am sure that it will go through -- but if it should not go through, then we revert back to the QEA. If you get the QEA, pensions and

Social Security would then come on the backs of the local municipality. This bill -- the Committee substitute -- has pensions and Social Security staying at the State level; that they will be responsible for it. When the bill is passed and signed into law, they will stay there until a new law is put into effect and signed into law that would take it away from the State's obligation. So, with the passage of this bill at least the communities would not have to be responsible for the pensions and Social Security.

The other major parts of the bill Dr. Howard gave out. The so-called "wealthy" districts, though-- They do not get an increase. There is Transition Aid, and then the Foundation Aid districts. The majority of the money is going into the so-called special needs districts.

Here in East Orange -- and I just got the data -- it ought to be interesting to know that starting back in the 1987-1988 year -- and I am just going to round out the figures -- you got \$44,700,000; in '88-'89, \$49,150,000; '89-'90, \$53,000,000; '90-'91, \$54,300,000; '91-'92, \$63,600,000; '92-'93, you will get \$77,941,000. So there is a substantial increase in there. Excuse me. And for '93-'94, it will go up to \$82,755,000.

You also read about the problems we are having with the budget again because of the economy. It is also interesting to note that the 30 special needs districts, comparing the last two years to the '90-'91 year, received \$470 million in extra money. We feel, in many instances, as I have said before -- and I will repeat myself -- that all of that did not get down to the children, and that is where we want it to go.

In our original bill -- and I was very disappointed with NJAPS and with the administration -- we made some very strong pleas for preschool, or prekindergarten and kindergarten, and that has been downgraded to a great degree.

Those of you who are educators, I am sure realize that the prekindergarten and kindergarten are really very, very vital to bring the students along, particularly in the special needs districts.

So, that is what we have right now. I would ask anyone who wants to speak, or who wants to speak about the bill to give us their suggestions, to sign one of these slips and we will call you up. I will stay here as long as anybody wants to -- well, not as long as any one individual wants to talk, but as long as people come in and want to be heard, I will stay here. But I do not plan to have people making long, long statements of 15 or 20 minutes regarding their particular feelings. So, if you have some substantive matters, we certainly want to hear them. And if you have some things you just want to say, we will listen to them, too. But, don't be surprised if somebody starts giving a long, long talk if I ask them to stop as soon as they can.

Also, one thing I have learned from these go-rounds, is that in the future any hearings or meetings I hold in public, we will make sure that we go to more urban areas than we did this time. We went to Trenton, and we are here. We certainly want to hear what people have to say, because you are the ones living in the area; you are the ones who have children in the schools; you are the ones who are working in these particular school districts and know the problems, which we do not know unless they are brought to our attention.

When anyone comes up to speak, will you please give your name and what association you are with, or group, or whether you are a parent, or just whatever group you are with, because we need it for the transcribers. This whole meeting is being recorded and there will be a transcript available at some future time after it is done.

The first person will be Kabili Tayari. Is he here right now? (no response) Well, we will get back to him

later. Anna Taliaferro. Is Anna here? (no response) Jim Harris? (affirmative response from audience)

If there are questions you want to ask me, ask me and I will answer to the best of my ability. If I can't answer them, I will get your name and address or phone number, so that I can get the answer for you. I am not going to sit up here and pretend that I know everything about education, because I don't.

Thank you, Mr. Harris.

**JAMES HARRIS:** Good evening, Senator Ewing. Thank you for coming to East Orange, where the poor people live; where black people live. We are really happy that you responded to the request we made in Saddle Brook to have more hearings in the places where education is of particular critical concern.

I would like to say a couple of things: One, I think the process you described in bringing this hearing here a day before the vote is to take place is unfair, unfortunate, and I can't help but interpret it as a lack of respect for the type of input that you think you might have gotten before the bill was revised from people who live in the cities. But I do appreciate the fact that you are here. I am happy to see so many other people here, so that you can see, in one of your rare visits to an urban district where black people live, that black people care about the education of their children.

With regard to the bill, I am amazed at how much is taken out of the original 39 pages down to these, I guess, six or seven pages. But there are a couple of things that we would want to point out. While this bill is a compromise, it does not meet the mandates of the Supreme Court decision in Abbott v. Burke, because one of the provisions in that Supreme Court decision was that parity should take place within a reasonable time. And, yes, it is true that \$115 million additional has been allocated for the 30 special needs districts. We have

also allowed additional funding to go back to those districts that really can afford to pay for their education -- the wealthy districts and the middle-class districts.

So, using the formula that is in this bill, it will take a very long time for urban districts in this State, as required by the Supreme Court decision, to reach parity.

Secondly, the suggestion of that coalition of a commission to study how to come up with a permanent funding process leaves out some very important people. The commission, as proposed by that coalition, has already received a letter from BIC, every last one of them, protesting the omission of any organization that would guarantee the presence of an African-American or Latino on the commission.

Now, NJEA-- I am sure if they had to send one person to the table to represent them, it probably wouldn't be anyone who looked like me. That would be very different from what they have done in the past. The same is true of all of those other organizations that want to be a part of the commission. So, we would hope that whatever that commission ends up being, if it ends up being, that some assurances would be placed there so that African-American -- urban African-American participation is guaranteed.

The other thing that this bill obviously does, is that it gives back to districts that can afford to pay more, additional moneys. We are almost back to some of the things that the Supreme Court decision indicated would have a disqualifying effect. The Court decision was very clear that the State assuming the costs of teacher pensions would have a disqualifying effect, and I see that we are back to the State assuming that.

I am glad that this time around we are not talking about education reform on the one hand and property tax on the other, because I think it was incorrect and confusing for them to be combined in the first place.

The other thing about this bill is, I notice that on page 3, paragraph 5., there is a reference to 1993-1994 where the New Jersey Economic Development Authority would have a capital construction account to the tune of \$50 million. Well, \$50 million probably would come close to giving East Orange and Newark what they need to fix up some of our buildings that are over 100 years old, but it doesn't come anywhere near meeting the capital needs of the special needs districts that have buildings that absolutely put the youngsters in the schools at a disadvantage as far as facilities are concerned. I am told by some of my urban superintendent colleagues that in some places they have computers, but the problem is finding adequate space to house those computers so the computers can have the type or quality temperature or climate control they need. So, the \$50 million is welcome, but it comes nowhere near the parity that is implied in the Supreme Court decision.

I noticed in reading the bill that what they basically did was to say that nobody would lose any money from what was planned. Under QEA I and QEA II, clearly we were going to wean some of the districts -- some of the fat cats off the bottle. This legislation says the fat cats will continue to have their bottles, and we are going to give a little bit more milk to the people who have empty bottles. I think that principally there is a problem with people saying, "I don't want to give up my money in order to support people who don't have money." The problem that is endemic in the State of New Jersey, as I analyze the educational process-- We have two big problems: We have people who have wealth who say, number one, "I want to pay for my child's education, but I don't want to pay for other people's education." That wouldn't be so bad if the second part of the equation was true.

They also say when we try to come up with a regionalization plan: "I am not sure I want to live and send my kids to school in districts where there are a lot of poor

people." So on the one hand people don't want to live near poor people, and on the other hand they don't want to send the moneys to bring about parity. So the Black Issues Convention's primary objection to this bill is, number one, it does not meet the Supreme Court decision of reaching parity within a reasonable time. And number two, the people who have come together in the coalition have shown no interest, no way of guaranteeing that people from the urban districts who have so much to lose and to gain by an adequate funding system, are included in the commission that is talked about in this.

I would hope, and would respectfully request, that from your position as Chairman of the Committee, since it is already on the floor, that you would do whatever you need to do to ensure that some guarantee is put in there so that African-American and Latino people will be, in fact, represented if that commission is to go forward.

I want to thank you for listening to our comments, and they will be followed up with written comments. Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Mr. Harris, just a second. There are going to be six public members appointed by the Governor.

MR. HARRIS: Well, maybe you have more faith in the Governor than I do. I have seen a lot of things that the Governor has put together that do not have black folks on them.

SENATOR EWING: But also, the interesting part of this whole NJAPS group -- and it includes Marilyn Morheuser, who has brought the case, and she has signed off on this bill-- She has agreed as to the way it is being done. Now, as I have said, not everybody -- not all of NJAPS, not all of us legislators -- agree to the whole thing, but as a compromise we said yes, and she has gone along with it, which is very interesting to us.

MR. HARRIS: I was hoping that you wouldn't bring that up. We have some concerns about that. We think that Marilyn Morheuser has crawled into bed with the wrong people. She was

the lead litigant in the interest of the urban students for the last 20 years. I don't know -- and I hope you will ask some of the urban superintendents who are sitting in this room today -- whether Marilyn Morheuser conferred with them and got their consent, since they are-- We have several superintendents who are party to the suit. So I did not know, and BIC is an amicus in the Supreme Court case. We were not conferred with. In fact, to this day, as far as I know, we have not been informed of any compromise that was proposed or that would go down.

BIC's position is the same position we took when we filed amicus to the Supreme Court decision. We therefore stand by that decision. We think that is the way to get to educational equity; that is, parity and equity in funding. You know, I hate to say that in this forum, but I figured that when I saw Marilyn Morheuser and the Education Law Center on that list of supporters, it seemed to me that it was out of kilter, because every other organization listed there was a professional group of educators. I have never perceived the Education Law Center as an educational group with a membership made up of people from education.

I think, you know, that you and the Governor might have made out pretty lucky with Marilyn crawling into that issue, but we are very uncomfortable with that. We do not necessarily support the Education -- the people who represented us for the last 20 years being on that side on this issue.

SENATOR EWING: Well, I had nothing to do with the NJAPS group. I mean, I didn't form them. You know, I didn't work with them, or anything. We worked with them in reforming the bill, yes, but I didn't say who was going to be in NJAPS and who wasn't. It shocked me, and surprised me, to see them all climbing into bed with Marilyn.

MR. HARRIS: Well I would hope that in the future when you really want to know what people think about education, that you include a group like the NAACP, which is the oldest civil

rights organization in this country, which had a lot to do with the 1954 Supreme Court decision -- all of that.

SENATOR EWING: Mr. Harris, let me just interrupt you. Excuse me. I worked with Kabili before. We wrote to Kabili again and tried to sit down at another meeting with the NAACP, but we never heard from him. Then he showed up in Saddle River with you. So please don't say to work with him. We asked them; they did not come. I can't do anything more than that. Why they didn't come, I don't know.

MR. HARRIS: New Jersey Black Issues will be wherever you want and will offer their opinion.

SENATOR EWING: Well, they weren't there on this bill. I am not going to argue with you, but they did not--

MR. HARRIS: Are you talking about the NAACP?

SENATOR EWING: That's what I said -- the NAACP.

MR. HARRIS: Well, Mr. Tayari I'm sure will be here a little bit later on to speak for himself.

SENATOR EWING: We wrote to them, and we never heard back from them again. The one time we had a meeting with them -- I met with them in Trenton -- and then when we finally got down to doing the bill again, we asked, as we did the other groups -- all the groups, the different types of superintendents, urban, the Garden State group, all of those -- but we never heard from them again until Kabili showed up. So, I am just telling you.

MR. HARRIS: Well, NJBIC-- I Chair that committee, and I can guarantee my presence, or somebody to represent our position.

SENATOR EWING: Well, maybe we ought to put you on our list instead of Kabili.

MR. HARRIS: Keep two. We ride real well together. But you cannot ignore the NAACP.

SENATOR EWING: We certainly want the input. I agree with you. Thank you very much.

Ann Moore? Is Ann Moore here? (affirmative response from audience)

**A N N M O O R E:** Good afternoon, Senator Ewing. My name is Ann Moore. I am a resident of East Orange, and an executive officer of PAGE (1), a Parent Advocacy Group for Education in Essex County.

Time is fleeting. As we sit here this afternoon testifying about a right that is due all children of all socioeconomic situations, urban children are continually falling through the cracks. In The Star-Ledger newspaper article of yesterday, December 15, Assemblyman Rocco stated that he desired fairness in the compromise bill presented before the Committee.

We don't want a compromise; we want what is due urban students and parity with all students throughout New Jersey to ensure a thorough and efficient education for them. This bill that will be up for approval on Thursday will only be like a Band-Aid on the problem, but the wound will not heal because the problem is not receiving the proper treatment. We don't want temporary solutions disguised as the answer.

I disagree with the NJEA concept that we need breathing room to study school funding complexities. Don't you believe that we have done this already? Let's get on with the business of educating our urban children. Why move closer to per pupil spending? We want parity.

Yes, we graciously welcome you to East Orange, making this hearing accessible to persons supporting equal funding for urban districts. Please remember that concerned and committed parents can make the difference. Many parents are concerned about the lack of their numbers here today, which is because of employment constraints. They could not attend at this inconvenient time. I trust that you and your Committee will consider, when scheduling the next hearing, that the time should be later in the evening. Nevertheless, my presence

represents many voters and parents who are committed and concerned about a thorough and efficient education for our children.

We love our children, and we desire the best for them. Most of the parents are convinced of the importance of an annual medical checkup for their children, but what about an annual education checkup? Bill Nos. SCR-64 and ACR-7 threaten every child's constitutional right to an education, and jeopardize New Jersey's future. Don't water down our children's rights. SCR-64 and ACR-7 would replace the requirement that the State guarantee children a thorough and efficient education, requiring the State to provide only the educational opportunity necessary for our children to function politically, economically, and socially. These bills erode the constitutional rights of children and remove any State responsibility for educational equality.

Our children in the urban districts have extraordinary educational needs. Residing in communities with few resources, their needs are more to enable them to be equal with children from communities able to invest more in education. Dr. Martin Luther King, in his letter from the Birmingham jail, expressed eloquently: "For years now I have heard the word 'wait.' It rings in the ears of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This wait has always meant never. We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurors, that justice too long delayed is justice denied."

The "Malcolm X" movie is a wake-up call. Let's move forward now. Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Ms. Moore, you mentioned about the time. What time would you suggest?

MS. MOORE: Well, most of our parents in this area are working. I would say that 7:00 in the evening would be better for those parents. There are a lot of parents who are very concerned, but because the flexibility is not there on their

jobs, their place of work, they cannot attend. I have talked to quite a few, and we are very concerned about that.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: I would just like to add one other thing: You say "no compromise," but really the only way to get legislation through is to come up with a compromise. We took for granted that the education groups -- the NJAPS -- were willing. You know, they are the ones who came forward with these different changes which the Governor agreed to, so we went along with those. If they were not representing all their people, then it is unfortunate. But you are never going to get 100 percent consensus on something. I guess they felt this was the best they could do, without going back to their individual groups and getting votes from them.

MS. MOORE: Yes, I understand that, but I do feel that compromise sometimes would be for if you had more input from the districts these bills are going to have the impact on. Then I think the compromise would be better accepted.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

Jeweline Grimes?

JEWELINE GRIMES: To Senator Ewing: My name is Jeweline Grimes. I am a Legislative Aide to Assemblywoman Quilla Talmadge of the 27th Legislative District. I am here today to represent her, not to testify for her. She sent some information that she wanted me to pass out to people. But I am saying for myself that, although this bill is a compromise for one year, I feel we still have some concerns, because next year we will probably go through the same thing again with the bill, probably getting some more compromises.

The bill summary she sent me to pass out to people, I think maybe they can understand a little more -- it more or less details -- because the bill they are actually reading sometimes is hard to understand. It also has the position on

the bill that the New Jersey Association of Public Schools, the NJEA, the New Jersey School Boards Association, the New Jersey Association of Principals and Supervisors, the New Jersey Association of School Administrators, and the Department of Education-- They are supporting these compromise bills. If anyone in the audience needs a summary of this bill, please feel free to get it. It may help you to understand.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Are the summaries over there, or what?

MS. GRIMES: No, I brought them from my office. Do you want one?

SENATOR EWING: Yes, I would like one, please. Thank you very much.

Ernestine Harris and Jackie Hill. Do you both want to come up at the same time? (Ms. Harris' response from audience indiscernible; no microphone) Does Jackie want to come with you? (response from audience indiscernible) Well, we will get her later.

ERNESTINE HARRIS: My name is Ernestine Harris. I am a parent and a resident here, and a member of PAGE (1) -- Parent Advocacy Group for Education.

SENATOR EWING: Will you speak close to the microphone, please?

MS. HARRIS: Oh, okay. With regard to the bill -- and I don't know the number offhand -- that was passed, what I am calling the "compromise," and I think we all are, I still think that is slightly dancing around the issue of the QEA original bill. I feel that even though the NJEA has agreed with it, it will not really suffice the needs of our children in receiving the academic skills they need to go onward.

I feel that that should be looked into again. We should not be willing to compromise. Here in the State of New Jersey, it has been proven that we have been compromising in how we allot money to different school districts based on where

the children's parents reside. I feel that should stop. It should not be based on where you live as to how well your child is educated. In the State of New Jersey, all of our children should be educated equally with regard to the tools they are given. As you know, that is not the case here, from all the information and statistics we have seen over the last two years.

The other day I listened to President elect Clinton when they were talking about education at a conference. Through the whole 10-hour conference, not once did they mention how your child will be educated based on where you live. And here we are in New Jersey determining that because of where you live, that is how the State is going to allot your money. I am quite sure that if we give it some thought-- We know that is the wrong direction to take. We should not be concerned with where a parent lives to determine how the child is going to be educated, as far as funds being allotted by the State.

Also, I would like to say that I realize this is a very political issue. If we would stop just looking at the hill and just look at the valley, because in the valley we do have children. They are children that can be vital instruments in the country we live in. I mean, we complain that we don't have the right people out there with the right skills to do the job, and therefore we can't buy American. And here we are deciding that because a child lives in the valley, he is not deserving of the same type of funds being given to the ones on the hill. I think we are really doing our kids an injustice by not ensuring that they receive a thorough and efficient education, and the funds should be given to their districts so they can be equipped with that.

We are not asking you for a handout. We are asking you to be fair in how you allot the money to all the children in New Jersey. And begging-- No, I am not begging. I heard someone mention begging. I am not begging. What I am saying is, our children deserve a chance to be educated with the right

tools. They need the right tools to do the job. They need the right tools to gain that knowledge so that they can go out and aspire to their goals. At this point, we are not doing that here. We are not being given the funds so our children can go out and compete.

So what we are saying is, with all the compromising-- Let's stop the compromising and deal with the real thing. Deal with the kids. They are tomorrow. Where we sit today, one of our children will sit. But if they are not equipped with the skills and the knowledge, who is going to run this when we are gone? We can't sit here forever. We have to move on, so we have to educate all children, no matter whether they live on the hill or in the valley. They all deserve a thorough and efficient education.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: I am not sure how much aid you get from the State proportionately, but I know, like, up in Newark, the State aid makes up about, I think, 85 percent of the overall school bill. So, more money is being given to the so-called people in the groups in the valley, as you point out.

MS. HARRIS: Yeah, but if you ever came down to the schools and saw how many we have in a classroom-- We may have 30 to a classroom. If we had the funds, we could expand our school. We could have more classrooms and more teachers. Right now we can't. We don't have the money.

SENATOR EWING: You need the buildings and the space in many, many instances. That's true, very true.

MS. HARRIS: We do, but we need the funds in order to get the job done. Getting the job done would enable our children to have the skills and knowledge to go on with. Right now, yes, we do have children who are breaking through and making headway in what they are trying to do, but it's hard. I mean, when we have nine kids sitting at one computer, and go

five minutes away and have five children to a computer, because we don't have the funds--

SENATOR EWING: The funds, right. I understand. Thank you.

Gerald Somerville.

GERALD SOMERVILLE: Senator Ewing, my name is Gerald Somerville. I am a parent, and also a member of the Clifford J. Scott High School PTA. I am also a paid-up dues-paying American citizen; three years in the Army, and a Vietnam era vet. So I am entitled to all the rights and privileges of every citizen in this country.

I am here to push for parity. About a year ago, I was parked on a neighborhood street in Jersey City. The neighborhood was a working class one, and the people were predominantly Hispanic. We all know that this was a place where immigrants had always settled when they first came to this country looking for the American dream. The names were Mueller, O'Malley, Esposito, Goldberg, etc. Today the names are Garcia.

In this neighborhood was a strong looking school building built about 1920, or something. Chiseled on its marble front were these words: "The future of a society is in the education of its youth." The neighborhood had changed because the people who lived there before had now gotten the kind of education they needed to move up and out of the stranglehold of poverty. Many of them now are your constituents in Somerset County. They did it because they lived in a society that was committed to making a better future for this country and its people. They lived in a society that constitutionally guaranteed them, and all students, a thorough and efficient education. They lived in a society that had a vision.

The current attempt by our Legislature to dilute, or to totally rescind this guarantee is not predicated on moral,

noble, or visionary objectives, but rather, I feel -- as do many of my colleagues in the areas where we live in East Orange feel -- that this is a selfish, this is a mean-spirited, and this is a very, very immoral way of going about denying us our equal rights; the slide around this guarantee via revisions to the QEA to take us back to the dark ages where the survival of the fittest was the creed for the day. But the survival of the fittest is not the creed for America; it is not the creed for the State of New Jersey.

This bill, as written, will maintain the status quo as it is today. It will maintain inequality in the funding levels for every student in this State and in the country -- in our urban areas. It will continue to give the privileged a legal edge on the underprivileged. It will prevent some of the cream in the urban districts from rising to the top. It will not move us forward toward parity, as the Supreme Court has decreed, but it will move us backward.

To follow this philosophy to its obvious conclusion down the road will then turn this great State of New Jersey into the Mississippi of the North, where the privileged will have the best facilities, and the poor will have one-room schools with potbellied stoves. Maybe not the same, but the same principle.

We must not let our vision of a better America for all its people twindle, for it is written in the King James version of the Bible that "where there is no vision, the people shall perish." It doesn't just say some of the people; it doesn't just say the poor people; it doesn't just say the black people, nor just the white people. It says, "the people." We must have the vision for all of our people, or we won't be here very long, not in the position that we are in now.

So I ask you, sir, you and your Committee, and the State Legislature, to please consider what this is worth to all of us and to give us the parity which the law says. If we in

this district are to teach our children respect for the law and to obey the law, then isn't it so with the Legislature that they should also respect and obey the law?

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you, Mr. Somerville. We are putting \$372 million more this year into education.

MR. SOMERVILLE: Sir, does that bring us to parity?

SENATOR EWING: Parity is being stretched out by another year or so in the particular type of legislation that is before us to vote on tomorrow. It is stretching it out. I think you would agree-- I know in the Legislature that we have lawyers on one side who will say something is constitutional, and lawyers on the other side who will say it is not constitutional. We feel, from the best information we have, that this bill would stand up under the Court's eye. Only time will tell. It is moving towards parity. It is not there right now.

MR. SOMERVILLE: Do we have a timetable whereby we will reach parity within the next two to three years? Is that the goal? I do not see it in the bill.

SENATOR EWING: The goal, I think, is '96 and '97.

MR. SOMERVILLE: That we will be at parity?

SENATOR EWING: That is what the plan is.

MR. SOMERVILLE: Well, I certainly hope so, although that is too long. I just want a commitment from the leaders of this State that we are moving, or we will have parity in the school fundings for all of the people in this State. We are not here as beggars, sir. We are dues-paying citizens of the United States of America with the full rights and privileges. Maybe some of us don't have the income, but that still does not take our rights away from us.

SENATOR EWING: I think there are some districts in the State that are going to have to get more money. You say "parity," everybody gets \$10,000 per pupil. It is not going to

work in some districts. They are going to need more than that, frankly, because I think there are needs out there which people--

It is very interesting. When we started our hearings and everything, I wrote to the 30 special needs superintendents. I said to them, "Will you please send me a list of those items which do not deal with education, are not really education, they are not teaching math or science or geography or English, such as security in the halls, security in the playgrounds? The money schools do not get for the food program, which is so vital in so many areas -- the Breakfast Program, the Lunch Program. Nutrition is so important for a child to learn and to retain the learning; things of this nature. Some districts have day-cares for the infants of girls who are attending school. In my mind, those are not educational expenses.

Approximately 15 of the 30 superintendents wrote back and gave me the information. One of them was very kind. He gave us a budget to look through. But the others didn't. I just found out in the last three or four weeks that they felt there was something sinister about my request, so they weren't going to send the information in. So if you can tell me how the hell we can try to improve things if we are not going to get the cooperation of your superintendents-- It is beyond me.

We will get the information, because I feel that some day, not tomorrow, not next year, we should pull those expenses out and have them funded separately. It is not right that a school district has to provide guards in the playgrounds, or guards within the building. People in my area -- I live in Bedminster -- wouldn't even think of such a thing. They don't think of that at all, but it is an expense that you should not have to bear. That money should go to get the computers, get teachers' aides, and things of that nature. This is what we have to strive for. It is not coming tomorrow.

MR. SOMERVILLE: That's true, to an extent.

SENATOR EWING: I was thoroughly shocked and frightfully disappointed with those 15 special needs superintendents who didn't bother to send us the information.

MR. SOMERVILLE: Well, sir, because we don't have the so-called parity which the Supreme Court has decreed, and because this issue has been in the courts for years upon years and nothing has been done about it, then I don't see how you could question why some people would be suspicious and have a sinister attitude, believing rather that the leaders in the State Legislature would have a sinister motive, when they haven't really complied with the Supreme Court.

We have been sitting here in our urban districts-- My children have graduated. I have one more left. Three of them came into the kindergarten and graduated high school and are now attending a university. Nothing has changed towards a thorough and efficient quality education, Abbott, etc., etc., but there has been a lot of rhetoric. So I don't see where you can blame people for being a little bit, you know, cynical towards that.

SENATOR EWING: I think we are following the Court decision and gradually getting there. As I said, in the two years, this school year end and last school year, those 30 special needs districts got \$470 million in extra money, over and above what they had gotten previously -- the previous year. You know, there is just so much money available. We have to keep working on it. No question about that. I am not saying, "stop it," but, you know, it has to be spent properly.

MR. SOMERVILLE: I believe now is the time; I really do, because, like I say, I have been waiting patiently for years upon years. I have seen my kids go into kindergarten, come out of kindergarten and go into high school, and graduate high school, and I don't see the Supreme Court's decree being upheld. I see it trying to be scurried. I see people moving

around it and fighting this and fighting that, but we are still being hit with inadequate education. It is reminiscent of the Mount Laurel decision in the housing area, although I am not-- Even the Mount Laurel people have circumvented that, and the Supreme Court has decreed. We were raised to believe that a Supreme Court decree should be upheld, not circumvented.

SENATOR EWING: You have seen no improvement in East Orange in the two years that the QEA has been in effect?

MR. SOMERVILLE: Any improvement? A little, but not that much, sir.

SENATOR EWING: Okay. Thank you.

MR. SOMERVILLE: Not that much. I see plans, but I don't see fruition.

Thank you. I hate to give it to you so hard, Senator, but that is the way it is.

SENATOR EWING: No, no, that's all right. That is what we are here for. Don't worry. Thank you.

Clifford Rogers? (no response) Kathleen Witcher? (affirmative response from audience)

**KATHLEEN WITCHER:** I am Kathleen Witcher, 14 Garwood Place, Irvington. I am President of the Essex County Council Parent Teachers Association. I thank you, Senator Ewing, for hosting this hearing so that parents from special needs districts could have the opportunity to come. However, I want to object to what I think is the lack of sincerity of hosting a hearing without a formal public notice. (applause)

I know that I called the offices in Trenton as early as July requesting information on this bill. I did not receive anything until something was hand delivered from the New Jersey Black Issues Convention on Sunday. I think that is a slap in the face to the PTA Presidents with whom I work, because many of them have come out here on last minute notice representing schools in Newark, Montclair, Irvington, and East Orange today.

SENATOR EWING: Excuse me for interrupting, Ms. Witcher, but a notice was sent out on our regular-- It certainly went to the PTA and the NJEA and people like that. Then it was up to them to distribute the information. I grant you-- I could not agree more that it was done fairly quickly, because Kabili is the one who brought it to our attention up in Saddle River. That night I said we would get something set up. Then it took a few days. He came back to us with a school, which was this school, and then the notice went out as soon as we had the location. But, nobody was being slighted. There was no effort made to do that whatsoever. Otherwise, I would have come up here by myself and talked to one person and then left.

But, we sent the notice out the way we always do. So I am sorry it took so long for you and others to learn about the meeting.

MS. WITCHER: That is why I just make the suggestion that in the future perhaps they would offer you some space in the local newspapers. That would give mass notice.

SENATOR EWING: No, excuse me. We do not pay for advertising in the newspapers.

MS. WITCHER: Well, you know, community events, they might give you a free space. But certainly I would like the Essex County Council PTA to be notified, because we have a newsletter, and there are other organizations that have newsletters.

SENATOR EWING: Well, I will have to check with the New Jersey PTA and see what they did about sending an announcement out, if they bothered, you know, how they distributed the information out.

MS. WITCHER: I would like to say further that the timing, as Ms. Moore said -- timing is not considerate of the business community which would like to participate. In the A-3, November 11 bill, it said that the business community is a

part of the modern school community, and that you would like their cooperation along with other sectors of the community. So the hour is not that convenient.

I have been a supporter of Quality Education Acts I and II, because the implementation of the Quality Education Act assures our children an opportunity to groom themselves academically and offers a fair chance to meet the challenge of America 2000.

In the special needs districts, our children need the same programs afforded by the wealthier districts in our State, in order to get our children ready to compete. We need libraries where our children can work. We need our old and crumbling buildings updated. We want our children to attend full-day kindergarten. We want our magna children -- the gifted and talented in particular -- out of the closets, as they are in Irvington, and into laboratories. Many of our children in the schools my children have attended have no cafeteria. They eat in hallways. Talk about the safety and health of the children, much of that is not afforded in the funding.

How can we expect that you are sincerely committed to the goal of providing new and progressive educational programs that focus on critical thinking or higher order skills, when you propose making such drastic cuts in funding, making the excuse that further funding is not available? Funding might be available if you would deal with the parity of providing to special needs districts, and not throwing extra funds to the wealthier districts. Now, in Essex County we have both. There needs to be some thought given to trying to get other resources, such as how much can be gotten from the Lottery for funding of the districts.

The monitoring of expenditures that you mentioned can be accomplished with the cooperation of the State Department of Education; those trained professional educators, and

collaboration of a total team effort of school associates and professional organizations, which are described in the original A-3.

Our children's lives are at stake. It is hardly their fault that school facilities are worn and broken, or that programs and techniques are not in place because instructional staff have not been retrained yet, or because the new graduation requirements, the early warning test, the HSP all speed along too rapidly for our children, who already have a number of social and academic difficulties to keep up the pace.

We want you to search your conscience to find a way to provide a thorough and efficient education for all the children. There is no reason to educate some, but not all of the children. We must all live in this society together. We must all try to survive.

I have basically a two-part question, and then one more question: I would like to know what the per capita funding proposed is for special needs students, the at-risk aid, and I would like to know the per capita funding comparatively for children in wealthy school districts.

My second question is: I want to know if you have made a tour of the conditions of the schools in our special needs districts.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: The at-risk money has been folded into the overall funding that you are getting. It is not a separate amount of money. As far as the per pupil amount of money that the State is giving the various districts, I do not have any data here with me. But we do have your name and address, and I will see what we can dig up and we will send you something on that.

As far as touring this district, I have not. I have been down in Pemberton, which is a special needs district, and then about a week or two ago we made a tour up in Jersey City,

the takeover district. It has been quite a few years-- I was up in Newark quite a few years ago; quite a few years, no question about that.

The building program is a monumental problem and it has to be attacked. I am not going to hold out a lot of hope that it is going to be done quickly, unfortunately. The figures that we get in the State will run up into the billions of dollars to bring every school up to a decent level for life, safety, size of rooms, etc. The \$50 million that was mentioned earlier, in this bill is just a piddling amount, a drop in the bucket towards doing some of the things.

We are hopeful that there will be another bond issue on the ballot next November for, I think, around \$375 million for education, but even that is such a small amount compared to the billions that are needed for the replacement of old, old buildings. It is a very, very difficult thing. The problems, how they have been caused, I don't know, but, I mean, municipalities, school boards, county governments, State government-- They're all the same. They postpone any work being done on repairing a roof or repairing a leak as long as they can. As a result, buildings start to deteriorate; schools start to deteriorate. The State has done the same thing, and as a result we are in a frightful condition, and you need decent conditions for the teachers to teach the children. They can't come into-- When Elena Scambio went into Jersey City, there were some buildings that had not been painted in 33 years, and that is no type of condition to ask a teacher to teach children in from a socioeconomically deprived area. She has done tremendous-- I think there are only about seven or eight more schools that she has to get painted. They have all been painted at least, and gradually she is getting them up--

But, I have no quick fix. I can't say, "Well, don't worry, we are going to do that next year," because that is not true, but we have to keep working at it.

MS. WITCHER: In the meantime, my concern -- and I taught for 26 years -- is that children are going to lose out again. That is another generation down the drain. They have to live.

SENATOR EWING: Continue to lose out, right.

MS. WITCHER: That's right. You see, when we are talking about the buildings, that is one aspect. Then if you want children to compete, they need to be in laboratories; they need to have computerization; they need to have libraries; they need to have textbooks. There are districts where they haven't had new textbooks in 12 years, but then you ask the children to pass HSP 11.

SENATOR EWING: Well, Ms. Witcher, you know, that sort of subject is annoying to me because, what is the School Board doing? Why aren't they spending the money for the children's books? You know yourself that up here in East Orange several years ago there was one hell of a mess. That money was being taken from the children. I personally feel that the people involved in that should have gone to jail for a long, long time.

But, you know, it is happening all over, not just in big cities. It is happening in small communities, too. It's not right. But I'm saying to you, if they haven't had new school books in 12 years, I don't understand what the Board is doing then.

MS. WITCHER: No, it is just a matter that you can't translate the funds for everything when you have salaries and everything else to pay. The operating expenses are not the same as before. Your textbook for math was \$12 ten years ago; now it is \$25. Those same children who need that textbook are not going to get that same instruction which they need now. So it is just an excuse for another excuse, but it needs to be rectified. Maybe you can't place the blame anywhere, but our children should not be shortchanged. That is my point. I think that represents the feelings of the parents, those who

are not here, those who have come out, those who might not be informed, because every child should go one step, at least one step, one level ahead of their parents, not go behind. I can say for my own family, and I have relatives, those children who should have gone ahead are not making it. They are not meeting their skills.

Just as the speaker prior to me said, we want thorough and efficient education for our children. We want it now. We don't want to wait, and we don't want to hope that they get it, because that generation will be gone and the next generation will already be down the drain.

I thank you. I don't want to occupy the time of others. I wish tomorrow that something could be done to defer the bill. Let's go, because I think if Dr. Morheuser sat in committee, I'm sure she didn't agree with everything that came out in this bill. I'm sure that the Dr. Morheusers of the world know that we are not going to translate anything about thorough and efficient education without getting parity.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you. I think, also, that you will find a big change when Dr. Fitzgerald takes over. I feel she is an outstanding individual. I think we will find her a great benefit to all of education in the State.

Patricia Foster?

I would like to just add one other thing that Ms. Witcher brought up about the Lottery. The Lottery money which comes in, which is substantial -- I guess over half-a-billion dollars-- In the budget, there are items in Education, Higher Education, and Human Services, and there is an asterisk there that those particular funds come from the Lottery money. So if the Lottery money wasn't there, either those particular programs would not be funded or we would have to have other taxes. So we can't say, "Use the Lottery money to give more to education," because it is already divided up. When the

citizens voted for the Lottery, it was spelled out that it was for Human Services, Higher Education, and Education, and that is where it is going. It is in the budget.

Yes, I'm sorry, Ms. Foster.

**PATRICIA FOSTER:** Good evening, Senator. My name is Patricia Foster. Were we supposed to be addressing a Committee here this evening, or you, individually?

**SENATOR EWING:** I am representing the Committee.

**MS. FOSTER:** So the other Committee members weren't supposed to be here?

**SENATOR EWING:** Well, I don't know what their other appointments were.

**MS. FOSTER:** That wasn't my question. Were they supposed to be here, or are we just addressing you? Will you make sure that our concerns get to the whole Committee, or should we be addressing all of them?

**SENATOR EWING:** Oh, yes. This meeting is being recorded and will be transcribed. A printed copy of the transcript will be sent to all the members of the Education Committees.

**MS. FOSTER:** Thank you very much.

My name is Patricia Foster. I am President of the New Jersey Association of Parent Coordinators. We are a statewide organization that seeks to improve the education of students throughout the State of New Jersey who are enrolled in our schools by involving parents in every aspect of the education system.

The New Jersey Association of Parent Coordinators is strongly opposed to this bill because it does not comply with the Supreme Court mandate contained in the Abbott v. Burke decision of 1990. We are happy to see that this bill provides for the special inclusion of parents in various aspects of school operations, because we believe this should be the case. But there must be adequate funding for every school district to

educate children and prepare them to compete in this society. All children deserve a thorough and efficient education. Under the Quality Education Act of 1990, parents and community were very hopeful that the Senate and the Governor would be committed to equity and parity, but this bill says just the opposite.

Yes, this bill will increase funding for the special needs districts, but it also returns money to all other school districts as well. How can school districts achieve equity and parity under this bill? As you know, urban districts require massive increases in order to make major improvements in the education of our children. This bill allows for few improvements, while leaving a great many unmet needs. The New Jersey Association of Parent Coordinators respectfully requests that you improve this bill by restoring the funds that are so necessary to bring about parity.

Finally, the New Jersey Association of Parent Coordinators is offended by the scheduling of this hearing after the bill was released. The hearing in an urban area should have taken place before the bill was released from Committee so that our concerns could have been incorporated into this. We hope that you, Senator Ewing, will take personal responsibility for amending this bill on the floor tomorrow before the vote is taken.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Ms. Foster, I want to be very honest with you. I am not going to be amending the bill on the floor so I don't want you to go away with the impression that I will be.

MS. FOSTER: I am making the request. What you do about it is up to you. I am just requesting that you do that.

SENATOR EWING: I want to be up-front with you and say I will not be amending it.

MS. FOSTER: I would like to be up-front with you as well. That is my request.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

Ann Taliaferro? Are you here now? (affirmative response from audience)

ANNA TALIAFERRO: Good afternoon, Senator Ewing. Once again I am appearing before you.

SENATOR EWING: Would you please give your name so the transcriber can have it on the tape?

MS. TALIAFERRO: Anna Taliaferro.

SENATOR EWING: And what organization do you represent?

MS. TALIAFERRO: Just say I am a parent advocate. I am here to support the children of New Jersey in the urban school districts.

You know, as I sat and listened to you, and I listened to some of the testimony given here today, it upset me still to think that there is a perception out there that urban school districts have so much money that we don't know what to do with it, so why aren't the boards of education doing the right thing? The reason why it upsets me and concerns me is, that is the same type of mentality that you take into consideration when you consider a compromise bill. The Court, in its most profound wisdom, understood very clearly that New Jersey was the fourth most segregated State in terms of African-Americans, and the third most segregated State in terms of Latinos. So if the Court recognized that and passed down a profound decision that said, "All children are entitled to a thorough and efficient education," I don't even understand what a compromise bill ought to be about.

Now, some might say that is better than nothing. That is like looking at the glass that is half full of water. Some might say it is half empty; some might say it is half full. I am saying that all of us recognize what is coming down the

pike. Next year is an election year, so the message has to be sent loud and clear as to how you represent people and who you represent. But let me tell you, Senator Ewing, you all are treading on some dangerous ground when you continue to compromise all of the children in New Jersey.

The reason why I am emphasizing "all the children in New Jersey," is because if one child goes away from a school system hopeless, that might be the one child that you need to help to save your life. Now, sometimes folks do not recognize that it gets down to that, but it does come to that at some point, so we are intertwined whether we like it or not.

I am asking-- I know this is an impossible thing because, you see, I know that the majority of the people down there don't represent us; don't look like us. Okay? So I know that most times their perception is not the same. But I am asking one thing: that you all dare to go a little further; that you don't stop at this compromising children. You see, I heard you say one thing: "Things are going to get better with Dr. Mary Lee Fitzgerald." I am not under that perception at all. I don't think things are going to get better under Dr. Fitzgerald. I think things are going to stay the same. Do you know why? Because the first thing we hear coming out of her mouth is that there are no two New Jerseys. We are not fools; we are not fools.

I live in Paterson, New Jersey, and I know that the children in my school district are totally different from the kids who go to school in Wayne. I know there is smaller class size there. I heard someone testify about labs, computers. Our children do not have those advantages. I know that the more middle-class and affluent school districts spend a hell of a lot more money than they do in Paterson, New Jersey. If the Court, in its most profound wisdom, understood that we need more money, and we need to reach parity-- The reason why the special needs districts were developed in the first place was

because the Court recognized that they not only needed to be brought up to parity, but they needed to be given that additional money because they were never anywhere near parity.

So when you sit down and you talk about a compromise bill, understand what you compromised. You are not just compromising your political career, you are compromising your and my future. That is what you need to understand. I hope that Dr. Fitzgerald will understand that, yes indeed, there are two New Jerseys, and, yes indeed, she represents the kids in New Jersey, because if she doesn't, some of us are going to be there on her, too. I don't want to keep hearing about the perception and the myth that exist in the urban districts about us having too much money, and therefore we don't know what to do with it. If the Court recognizes it, so should our elected officials.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Ms. Taliaferro, on the computer part, it is very interesting going up through Jersey City to see what Elena has done in getting computers into the classroom, etc. So hopefully Laval Wilson will be accomplishing that up in Paterson. We are going to be having some hearings up there regarding the takeover to see how it is going and to keep an eye on it.

MS. TALIAFERRO: Well, I would strongly suggest to you, Senator Ewing, that you not just come in to hear testimony. You should begin to visit the neighborhoods.

SENATOR EWING: Well, you don't have to tell me. We are going to go around to the schools. I have been around a lot longer than you have, and I go around to places if I have to. I plan to in Paterson, the way I did in Jersey City. So, we'll see you up there.

MS. TALIAFERRO: Also, the point is with Elena Scambio in Jersey City-- If my understanding is correct, she still doesn't have enough money. She threatened to leave that

position because the State was not giving her enough money. Paterson is no different. Laval Wilson is not superhuman. You cannot do it without money.

SENATOR EWING: Well, close to it.

MS. TALIAFERRO: He is, huh? Well, we ain't kissing the feet of-- (remainder of comment indiscernible; witness had moved away from microphone)

SENATOR EWING: I said, "Close to it."

MS. TALIAFERRO: No way.

SENATOR EWING: Susie McGhee.

**S U S I E M c G H E E:** Good evening. My name is Susie McGhee. I am from the Newark Branch of the NAACP. The Newark Branch is the largest branch of the NAACP in the State of New Jersey. We represent the interests of our members in Newark and the interests of black people in general.

The Newark Branch of the NAACP opposes the Public School Reform Act of 1992 -- S-1370. The main reason we oppose the proposed legislation is because it does not meet the mandate of the New Jersey Supreme Court in Abbott v. Burke. This bill will not bring about funding equity and parity as mandated by the Court. The legislation seeks to increase funding for everyone, which will continue to support the inequity that exists between poor school districts and wealthy school districts.

The NAACP considers educational equity and parity as basic rights. Therefore, this legislation does not guarantee the basic rights of urban and poor students. The NAACP was established to eliminate discrimination based on race. If this bill is passed, black children of this State will continue to be victims of discrimination, because wealthy children will continue to receive a better education than the poor child. This is wrong and is not to be tolerated.

The NAACP believes that the funding that was inherent in the Quality Education Act I of 1990 is better than this

Act. Therefore, we believe the funding should be restored to that level.

That ends my statement.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you, Ms. McGhee.

Joseph Arnold.

J O S E P H A R N O L D: Good evening. I am just a single parent, a disabled veteran. I am a graduate of Barringer High, 1974.

SENATOR EWING: Did you get his name?

HEARING REPORTER: Joseph Arnold?

SENATOR EWING: Yes. Do you want to speak closer to the microphone, please, Mr. Arnold?

MR. ARNOLD: I am a Barringer graduate of 1974. I had two years of calculus coming out of Barringer, so as far as the public school system being inadequate or inefficient, I won't buy it.

What I see, being a resident here in this community for roughly three months now, is-- I see total inefficiency at the administrative end. I don't see how rewarding more money for a system that is operating as inefficiently as this one is would help the situation. I think we need to get more adequate leaders, more accountable for their responsibilities and their duties, on the bottom line. I also think the bill supplementing just the educational end is, like, a waste of time if you don't include community support and strengthening the family unit. If you don't have that, these kids are whipped before they even walk through the door. Okay?

An example of what can be done through determination and guidance is the group that was here that escorted you in. The name of that group is the Eagle Flight Squadron, Inc., and it is commanded and was founded by the Reverend Russell White. What he does there is instill pride and self-discipline and self-respect in the youth of this community.

of before. What I propose is, if you do plan on a lot more finances, which I think is the bottom line for these bills, before you just pour gasoline on the fire, I think you should analyze the people who are doing the job and doing it right, and aware the funds to them appropriately to give them the incentive to keep on doing what they're doing.

Since I have been sitting here, I have been hearing a lot of excuses about parity, we don't have this and we don't have that, according to what somebody else has. You know, I am a father of two sons, and I wouldn't buy that if they came up to me with that, because if one loses sight, you don't give up. You acquire a better sense of feel and touch. You don't give up and quit. You adjust to the situation. What is the sense of asking for more fish if you don't know how to fish? Okay?

I am totally frustrated because-- The reason why I am here is, I received this notification about this meeting. This has nothing to do with you. It says: "The East Orange School District, Office of the Superintendent." It is dated December 11. That means they had five days for this letter to arrive at my residence. I received the letter roughly four hours before the meeting was supposed to start. It was in an envelope, unsealed, and the occupant/head of household they had was-- My first born son's name was listed twice on the envelope. I showed that to him as an example of total inefficiency.

Now, how can I prepare him to be efficient in what he does if he is not getting it from the people who are supposed to be educating him? Myself, personally, as a male single head of my household, I figure -- no, I know it is my responsibility to educate my two sons. I am not going to depend on anybody else or any kind of school system to give them the kind of education I feel they will need to survive to carry on my family tree. I am not going to depend on that. I realize the

school is a vehicle for us achieving a common goal; that is to send a productive member into society so America will survive as a whole.

We don't have time in this era of economic deficits and budget restraints for wasted effort and nonefficiency. It is time to trim the fat, because we are competing worldwide now. The sooner we realize that, the better off we will be. If it takes roughly \$32,000 to incarcerate a youth, and roughly \$25,000 a year to send someone to Harvard, you know, pretty soon you are going to have to figure out that we won't have time to waste. If you don't want to get it, if you can't do it and want to be efficient and you want to skim off the top trying to keep up with the Joneses to justify your position and not really care about what you're doing, then we don't have time for that. We are not going to survive as a country like that. Okay?

The youths are the key. The bottom line is taking care and making sure that their needs are met. Personally, funding to a board of education with a whole lot of money is not going to get it unless you involve community and support for the family unit to deal with the environment that they have to deal with, so these kids at least have a chance before they step through the door to put something up in their heads.

That is all I have to say. Thank you very much for your time and concern. This is the Eagle Flight thing, if you want to make note of it. Like, this is a light for what should be happening. You can make a judgment on where the funds should go by this guideline here. (demonstrates) All the rest, I just hear excuses. See what his budget is. See what his bottom line is compared to the Board of Education and see where we can interface and work together and not fight amongst each other over who has what out in someplace else. If they have more, so what? We adjust and we compromise. As a single

parent of two on a fixed income, I have to do that each and every day and instill pride in my sons about doing it.

That's all I have to say. Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: I think your sons are very lucky to have you as their father.

MR. ARNOLD: Well, I was lucky to have a good one, so it goes around.

SENATOR EWING: Dianne Cooper.

D I A N N E C O O P E R: My name is Dianne Cooper. I am President of Sojourner Truth PTO here in East Orange.

I want to open my comments this afternoon -- or, this evening, with a quote. I am not sure who the author is, but I would like to tell it to you just the same. It goes like this: "If you have always done what you always did, you will always get what you have always gotten." I say that to tell you that I want to thank you for having this hearing this evening. The time was not good for parents. I would have preferred, probably, a 7:00 meeting, but I was able to take off a little bit early to get here on time.

I also hope that this is not just a one-time hearing in terms of your plans for setting up hearings. I think Essex County, especially Newark, East Orange, Irvington, and Orange, is the heart of an urban center. I would hope that one of those centers would be on your list of hearing places when you hold hearings in the future.

I don't want to spend time talking about parity. I think we talked about that enough. I do believe that the bill will not bring the urban centers up to parity in terms of what other areas of New Jersey will be receiving. I am opposed to the bill because of that reason; because I see that one of the key things in the urban areas is that there is not enough money. I don't care what people are saying to you, there is not enough money to keep up with the growing costs of education and the technology that comes with education for the year

2000. We are preparing young people right now to function in the year 2000 and beyond. Therefore, if we are going to prepare urban students for their future, we need the money to do that. This bill will not address that.

Also, I don't want to spend too much time with it because this bill is a done deal. It is sad to say that many of us who work are at the mercy of our legislators, who are supposed to keep the entire State in mind when they are preparing bills. It is no secret that New Jersey has a segregated educational system, that it is also a racist State, and that it manifests itself in the type of legislation that comes out of Trenton. Urban and African-Americans are kind of powerless against that type of institution in the State. It is sad to say that until, I guess, we make up our minds that we are going to really stop the State from functioning in the manner in which it is functioning right now, that is to really shut down the racism that comes out of Trenton, and throughout this State-- Until we make up our minds that we are going to just stop it and not accept compromise, not accept the legislation that is coming out, not accept the harassment and everything else that comes to the urban centers--

I may not be able to vote for you. I am no threat to you. You are answering to your own constituents. I am sure your constituents are very pleased with this bill. You are there to represent them.

SENATOR EWING: They want more money, too.

MS. COOPER: They want more money, but do they need more money?

SENATOR EWING: They're not getting it. Bedminster gets \$5000 more this year than last year. Please proceed.

MS. COOPER: The Abbott v. Burke decision was-- Well, it stated that the way school districts are funded -- the urban centers -- is unconstitutional. That was basically the outcome of that decision. And yet, I do not see anyone moving towards

changing that, so we are within the Constitution; that is, providing urban youth with a thorough and efficient education.

What I have seen is a shift to change the Constitution. Rather than prepare African-American youths to have a thorough and efficient education, the move was to take out a thorough and efficient education, thereby rendering the State irresponsible for the education of its youth. That is the mentality that now exists in Trenton. I hope you can sleep at night. I can sleep at night, but many of the people in Trenton, I don't know how they can sleep at night. There does not seem to be any fair feeling or concern about America and the state of America, or citizens in the State.

It is unfair; it is opportunist; and whatever you can grab for the majority group, because you are the majority-- Might is right! It's sad that the only recourse that usually it boils down to-- When black folks get tired and their backs are up against the wall, and they decide to really do something about it, that is the only time change takes place. So, I hope you are getting ready, because I am getting ready for that. I see backs up against the wall. I just hope the State is ready for the backs that are up against the wall.

I really don't have anything else to say.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

We are going to have to move quickly, because evidently there is a Christmas concert here at 7:30 -- 7:00 -- and they want us out of here at 6:30. I didn't realize that when, I think it was Kabili made the arrangements for this school.

So quickly, Sabriyyah Karima Muslima and Valerie Conaway.

**S A B R I Y Y A H K A R I M A M U S L I M A:** Good evening. My name is Sabriyyah Karima Muslima. I am President of the PTA at the 18th Avenue School and the Harold Wilson School in Newark. I am here as a parent and as a concerned

citizen. I am the mother of four. I feel it is really an outrage that in 1992, as a parent, I have to sit before you representing a Committee that shows no concern for urban children at all. I feel that our children are struggling to try to reach to meet the goals of the 20th century -- the 21st century -- and that our children's interests are not being considered at all.

I think it is an outrage that with all the efforts that parents here today have to contend with, that we have to worry about a quality education for our children. I think no consideration at all was given, and, like you said, nothing is going to be changed. I really feel that me sitting here is a waste of time, but I feel that I needed to let you know that I am outraged about what is going on.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

Valerie, do you want to say anything?

**V A L E R I E C O N A W A Y:** Good evening. My name is Valerie Conaway. I am a PTA member, 18th Avenue School, also. I would just like to say this -- and I am going to be very brief because I know there is a concert that has to take place here-- I am so moved with emotion that I really don't know where to begin. Nonetheless, I will begin.

I think it is ridiculous, really ridiculous, that this meeting is being held here, and that it was at 4:30 when the working parents were unable to attend. Nonetheless, we are here.

I will say this: I am a mother of two children, two and six years of age. My son is in the second grade. His goal in life is to become one of two things: First, an FBI agent, or an architect. Now, he is in his primary years now where he is enthusiastic about learning. How is he supposed to keep this enthusiasm with money being cut?

I read a little bit about this bill in The Newark Star-Ledger, and to me it all boils down to this: Since the

people in the urban districts are not using the money that they already have, why not take it and put it here in Somerset County, or wherever it is that you live. Well, put it in the wealthier counties where we can use it, since, you know, so much money is just being wasted there already.

The money is not being wasted. There is not enough money there. I often thought -- and I have shared this feeling with the Newark School Board of Education -- that I would have to put my son in a private school. But, for God's sake, why should I, when public schools should afford him the kind of education that he is entitled to? His father serves the country. He has been serving it for 12 years in the United States Navy. Where is this going to end? I mean, you have your "Guns and Roses," and we have our "Naughty by Nature." So what? We both have music, nonetheless.

My point is this: Whether they be white, black, Hispanic, blue, or green, these children are entitled to an education. I am sick of getting knots in my stomach, lumps in my throat. Where is this insanity going to end?

I have nothing else to say. I am just really-- I am moved with emotion beyond tears -- beyond tears. Something has to be done. Now, the bill is going to be passed tomorrow, so what I am saying now is a waste of time, of course, anyway. But in the likelihood that the issue should come up again -- and I am sure it will -- something else is going to have to be done. But more money needs to be pushed down to the urban schools. Just because the parents don't make \$50,000 to \$80,000 to whatever amount of money that you guys might make, that does not mean that our children are not entitled to a quality education. They are. They are human beings.

I notice that in certain places I have gone certain cultures refer to other cultures as "you people." Well now, we people are tired of you people shuffling us around. Where is it going to end?

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Well, I hope East Orange spends their additional \$5 million properly then for the children. I'm sure they do, but--

MS. CONAWAY: Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Patricia Bradford. Oh, I'm sorry, Patricia.

PATRICIA BRADFORD: Go ahead, have your sip of something.

SENATOR EWING: No, no, please begin, because we don't have much time.

MS. BRADFORD: I live at 7 Laurel Place in Newark. I want to thank you, first of all, for bringing this hearing to our door. I believe that when you are talking about us, and things are being planned around us, the best place to bring it is to us, and allow us to really have input. So I do want to thank you for having the additional hearing.

I read the article, but I also know how the media will turn around and interpret whatever they want to think you said. So first of all, I am asking: What was your comment that you told the media to put in the paper for Saturday around this bill? Did you make a comment that was publicized in the paper?

SENATOR EWING: No. When we have hearings, an announcement is made by the Legislature down there. It is sent out on a wire or a faxing to a group of organizations that are interested in education. Hopefully it will be spread, and also to the press. Now, what the press prints up, is up to them.

MS. BRADFORD: Exactly. My question is-- I sat and listened to the testimony at the hearing in Trenton, the NJAP plan. They were suggesting that if you did, indeed, pass this bill -- S-1370 -- that it would be for one year with the commission, a group of people, being selected to serve. Is that what the consideration is?

ried: abas SENATOR EWING: Yes, that is in the bill now. That is what will be passed tomorrow.

MS. BRADFORD: Okay, in the bill. This is not ongoing; this is for one year, and it will be brought back with a commission.

I have listened and I have seen all these different people who are always lobbying for us as parents and people in the community. I don't represent anybody. At this point, I am a concerned taxpayer, citizen, and voter. I would like to be able to sit and listen to all of the different facts and serve on the committee, in order to be able to hear for myself, and be able to dissolve what information does come forward, and be able to make a realistic decision, instead of waiting for those other individuals.

In my own self, I feel that I have represented parents beyond the call of duty in terms of seeing to it that programs are monitored; that we are included in the decision-making process in my district. And, I served on the State level of Chapter I, the national level of Chapter I, and I believe that I have enough understanding, my three children having gone through this school process listening to a cat and mouse game, as I have, between the Law Center and the lawmakers.

It is like, "Hey, I'll make the decision. You can't do anything. It will take you years to catch up to me." So what? So the Law Center, and Marilyn-- She is out there all the time and she is telling us and sharing and pleading with us to support things. As soon as she gets to the point where the Court's bring her -- and it comes up, and here comes another catch and loophole that takes us back.

But, beyond that, you still continue to write legislation. So I am asking, because I have the ability to read, write, and understand English-- As a citizen and taxpayer, I feel I have the heart and the spirit of the

community in mind, and I would like to be able to serve on that committee, if you deem it appropriate.

The other thing I am concerned about is, as I testified before, the disparity between our school districts. Right up the street from West Side High School, where I am the PTSA President-- We had the struggle of getting funds together and putting together a plan and putting in two or three new laboratories. However, right up the street, not even three miles away -- right up the street -- we have a district that has monkeys and snakes in the laboratory. We don't even have a live bug. I mean, I am showing you the difference in the quality of that science program in comparison to our school district down the street, where we have to fight with legislators on the local level; then we have to fight with legislators on the statewide level. And all the while that we are fighting--

Let me tell you, my three children went through a high school system with a college prep course, and not one had chemistry. You tell me how that equates? They had to serve in basic skills programs. Sometimes I wonder how this thing even happens. No matter how much my husband and I worked hard and attended to our children-- They went to school every day. If you would check the records, you would find that my children weren't out three times a year. They're so smart, and they're so articulate, they turned my life around. But I want you to know that I also know that they did not get a quality education, an equal education.

I am still here to fight for children to have that, even though mine have passed through the system. I guess I will be like Sojourner Truth and I will be like the Harriet Tubman Underground, and then I will come out periodically and put a gun to your head and say, "I expect and demand that our children of African-American, Hispanic, and Portuguese" --

which is my Mosaic group of Newark -- that they are entitled to funding; funding that is going to bring us an equitable education.

I sat in the Maplewood School District just last week. I looked at their statistics of 19 children in a classroom. You're damned right they can learn. Our children have to be mixed in now with the Special Ed, who have been uneducated over the years, and yet they are not going to be able to get quality education unless we get dollars, because I have seen how many deficit programs we have.

So I am here to appeal to you: Okay, I agree to this legislation for one year, because if it gives us more dollars than QEA did, then I want it. But I also want to know a package that is realistic, so that within my lifetime I can sit down and be able to see a plan and a dollar attached to it that we will be able to see to it that our children have programs. I am hoping that no matter what my community says about me as a person, that you hopefully think enough of me to invite me to serve on that committee. I would be glad to.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you. I don't make up the commission. It will be the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the Assembly. They are the people who select them.

MS. BRADFORD: You can influence them, Senator Ewing, I'm sure. Thank you so much.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Put my name down, too.

SENATOR EWING: Harry Paden. We've only got 10 minutes. I'm not sure we are going to be able to hear you.

HARRY PADEN: My name is Harry Paden. I am from the Irvington Joint PTA, which I am Vice Chairperson of. Also, I am President of the Irvington High School PTSA. I am also a single parent, and I am concerned and a little appalled by several things; one being that you have a Committee, yet,

Senator Ewing, you are the only person from the Committee who chose to come to our particular meeting. That offends me.

I am also offended by the fact that, as was mentioned previously -- at the time and the hour and the lack of notification for this said meeting. That offends me.

What these things say to me is that you guys are not serious about what you want to do within our district to bring our district up to the parity that it needs to be brought up to.

I will not prolong what I have to say, although there is much that I could say. The funding that is provided in this revised compromise -- and compromise, to me, means appeasement-- I think the young lady said it earlier, you are appeasing your constituents. But where I disagree with her is, we do have recourse. As there was a class action suit before many years ago in the '50s, there was also one which brought this action about. There can also be other actions that can change this. This is not etched in stone.

So, as you take this to the table tomorrow, \$50 million that is going to be used towards facility grants for the special needs districts falls short of what is needed. It is a ridiculous sum. The rest of the sums that are there are very inadequate, but facilities particularly. I know in Irvington we are in the process of building a new school. We also have some additions coming, but they still fall far short of what is needed.

I read recently in the paper -- I believe the town was Glen Ridge-- They have their high school over four city blocks. Irvington High School sits on one city block. There are 2400 students in Irvington High in one city block. Glen Ridge has, I believe, 1700 in four city blocks. You can see from this scenario the ridiculousness -- how ridiculous it is when you are talking about \$50 million for 30 special needs districts. That is ridiculous. You said you weren't looking to change anything, but I think you should go into this

seriously and look into that. You're talking about the education of children which seriously needs to be addressed, as far as facilities are concerned.

I know that many of our schools in Irvington have 30 or more students within a classroom. That is inhumane. Any time you put any of God's creatures -- that many in a crowded space, it is inhumane.

I will end with that. Like I said, several of the things that are happening here-- I, unfortunately, do not choose to thank you. You did not do us a favor. If you wanted to really be serious about what you were doing, you would have chosen urban areas before it had to be made known to you that these areas should be included. It should have been done before the Saturday article, and before this was amended. Having it done now is an affront to myself and to the people that I represent.

So, you did not do us any favors. You are here. I did want to voice my opinion. I think that you guys really should take seriously that we are not going to go away, just like your constituents probably say to you, "We are not looking to go away, Mr. Ewing."

Thank you very much.

SENATOR EWING: I apologize to you for the affront then. I am very sorry.

Kabili?

K A B I L I T A Y A R I: First of all, good evening, Senator. Second of all, let me apologize for being late. I was just released from work because of an emergency we had. I am very sorry that I was late, based on some of the things I heard.

First of all, let me set the record straight about any coalition that I am supposed to be a part of or pass on information to. I want to say for the record here and now that I have never, at any time, been contacted by anyone from

Trenton, New Jersey, from the Assembly, from the Senate, or from the Governor's Office to participate in any type of a coalition or to be involved in a coalition to develop a coalition. I wanted to say that for the record.

Second of all, for the record, let me start off by stating something that was reported in The Star-Ledger which was very inaccurate, and we need some information.

For those of you who do not know, my name is Kabili Tayari. I am the Education Committee Chairperson for the New Jersey NAACP.

The December 15, 1992 issue of The Star-Ledger newspaper stated: "The hearing today is being held to satisfy some members of the public who felt the Committee did not hold enough hearings in urban areas." Factually, this is what occurred:

Because of the analysis and research by the New Jersey NAACP, the organization concluded in the summer of 1992, and reaffirmed in November of 1992, that from 1990 to December 2, 1992 there had been no education hearings by the Assembly or Senate in the African-American or Latino communities of New Jersey. We did not, and do not, consider the required formal mandated legislative hearings held in the Houses of the Assembly and the Senate in Trenton as community hearings. Therefore, at the December 2 hearing we stated that at least three more hearings should be held in the southern, central, and northern parts of the State in African-American and Latino communities. The New Jersey Black Issues Convention spokesperson -- Mr. James Harris -- supported this position in his testimony on behalf of the New Jersey Black Issues Convention, and Senator Ewing agreed to one more hearing. This is why we are in the City of East Orange today.

East Orange is a city which is 95 percent African-American. Its school system is 98 percent African-American. The East Orange school system is one of the

30 poorest school districts in the State. Its Superintendent of Schools is a competent person who is African-American -- Dr. John Howard -- and East Orange is located in Essex County, which is comprised of a large number of African-American and Latino residents.

For the record, we are opposed to the old A-3, the old S-1370, and the new compromise that was struck last Friday. Here are some reminders:

1) The State of New Jersey is the fourth most segregated State in the nation for African-Americans.

2) The State of New Jersey is the third most segregated State in the nation for Latinos.

3) The 30 poorest school districts in the State of New Jersey are either majority black or Latino.

4) Approximately 80 percent of the 1.1 million public school students are black and Latino.

5) Out of 611 school districts, the majority of New Jersey's public school youth are in the 30 poorest school districts.

6) The highest property tax rates in the State of New Jersey are in the cities and towns where the majority of the residents are African-American and Latino.

7) Only 5 percent of the QEA moneys -- let me repeat that one for the record -- only 5 percent of the QEA moneys was allotted to the 30 poorest school districts in the State, while districts such as Princeton, Deal, Alpine, Cherry Hill, Saddle River, Rockleigh, etc. received 25 percent of the total QEA funding.

8) The wealthiest school districts have the lowest property tax rate in New Jersey ranging from 19 cents per \$100 to no higher than \$1.23 per \$100 of property value.

9) The wealthiest school districts have the lowest property tax rate, the highest expenditure per pupil ratio, the

best equipped facilities, sufficient education personnel per student ratio, and the most up-to-date learning tools.

10) There are numbers of effective and productive African-American and Latino educators, administrators, and finance persons in the State of New Jersey who are seldom consulted pre and during the development of any education legislation.

11) The New Jersey Supreme Court ruled in 1975 -- Robinson v. Cahill -- and in 1990 -- Abbott v. Burke -- that because of the persistent leadership of black and Latino parents, the funding for New Jersey's poorest public school youth -- the majority of whom are black and Latino -- is inequitable.

12) Minimum aid was defined by the New Jersey Supreme Court as unconstitutional and illegal. Transition Aid is only minimum aid.

These reminders, which are facts, are cited by me to illustrate what is not in A-3, S-1370, or the compromise bill to be introduced for a vote Thursday, December 17.

Let me say for the record that I want to applaud Dr. John Howard, and the other superintendents who are in the Essex County area, for at least getting the notices out and letting people know that for the first time there was going to be a hearing somewhere that was accessible to African-American and Latino people. I also want to applaud the parents, particularly those of East Orange, who again mobilized their people.

It was stated in the December 15 issue of The Star-Ledger: "The compromise is all but written in stone, and it is unlikely any changes will result from the East Orange meeting."

I hope The Star-Ledger is inaccurate. However, if The Star-Ledger is accurate, this means that the 12 facts I have reminded you of have little to no significance upon your

decisions as legislators. Also, it means that the statements from persons at previous hearings and today's requesting equity and parity for all of New Jersey's public school youth -- especially the poorest, and the majority are black and Latinos -- were, and are, in vain, and that the Legislature is racist.

This is the first hearing that has been held in a city or school district that is easily accessible to such a large population of African-American and Latino citizens. And, if this hearing is a mere ploy or an attempt at appeasement or a fait accompli, then what The Star-Ledger stated is not only accurate, but proves this Legislature is truly racist.

Also, if The Star-Ledger report is truthful, it illustrates that as in Plessy v. Ferguson the citizens of color and our children in the State of New Jersey have no rights which white lawmakers are bound to respect.

Lastly, if this statement reported by The Star-Ledger is true, it also means that this Legislature has decided to enact racist, inequitable, unjust laws against the needs of the citizens of color of New Jersey and New Jersey's Latino and African-American youth.

However, if this Legislature is against racism, inequitable funding, and lack of parity, and if this Legislature is in support of justice, due process, democracy, and quality education, then this legislation should not be voted on Thursday without dialogue with the NAACP, the New Jersey Black Issues Convention, the New Jersey Puerto Rican Congress, the New Jersey Association of Black Educators, African-American and Latino superintendents and business administrators, Aspira, the New Jersey Chapter of the National Alliance of Black School Educators, and Board of Education members of the 30 poorest school districts.

Assemblyman John Rocco of Camden said: "The most critical issue was fairness. This compromise holds all districts harmless. None of them will get less money than they

got this year. But it is not a perfect bill, and I am not happy with all aspects of it." This is a quote from the December 15, 1992 issue of The Star-Ledger.

We are not looking for a perfect bill, and we are not happy at all with the old A-3, the S-1370, nor the compromise versions. Question: A compromise for who, and benefiting whose children -- the poor or the rich? This compromise is not harmless or fair.

Let me share with you the analysis of an African-American superintendent of one of the 30 poorest school districts: "It is my opinion that the New Jersey Association for Public Schools' proposal does not reflect the concerns of the special needs districts. The basic problem is that the New Jersey Association for Public Schools is trying to adjust an already flawed system of school funding, instead of developing an innovative proposal. Hence, it addresses rearranging and modifying aid categories which are a patchwork approach to equitable school funding, and which do not collectively meet the mandates of the Abbott v. Burke decision." These are not my words; these are the words of a professional, a skilled, competent African-American superintendent of schools.

Although the compromise bill increases the funding to the 30 poorest school districts in the amount of \$115 million, collectively the wealthiest districts continue to receive 25 percent of all QEA funds in Transition Aid, which is illegal, unconstitutional, and racist.

Secondly, to freeze special education and bilingual education at current levels is detrimental to the 30 poorest school districts. The freezing of at-risk aid would cause severe staff reductions in the 30 poorest school districts.

In regards to the budget cap part of the compromise bill, this will allow rich, affluent districts to spend at a higher level than less wealthy, affluent districts, again continuing an inequitable expenditure per pupil ratio.

Once more I ask: A compromise for whom, and benefiting whose children -- the rich or the poor?

Also, the compromised A-3 and S-1370 bills continue to perpetuate Assemblyman Rooney's disguised racist regionalization bill as outlined on page 20 of the old S-1370.

I want to sum up and close with this statement: The children and taxpayers of New Jersey need a nonracist bill that provides equity and parity to guarantee a thorough and efficient education, so that the youth of today may function skillfully with the highest degree of literacy in the 21st century as mandated by the New Jersey Constitution and the New Jersey Supreme Court. The issue of equity, parity, and quality education is a civil rights issue and a fight against racism just as the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education issue was.

I want to thank you. I am glad we came to East Orange. I hope we come to East Orange, Camden, Newark, and the rest of our cities where 80 percent of our youth are.

SENATOR EWING: Also, the other meetings, when we have them, are going to be held later. I was told that 4:00 is too early.

Ed Taylor. We will make Ed Taylor the last witness.

**E D T A Y L O R:** Senator Ewing, my name is Ed Taylor. I am a Board member, as well as a PTA President and Chairperson of the Unified Council for the PTOs of East Orange. But, most importantly, I am a parent of two children. I am a single parent of two children who attend East Orange schools. I have taught them that education is the avenue to travel to success. I have had numerous opportunities to visit other districts, both rich and poor, and I have come to the realization that we, the Urban 30, have been grossly abused by virtue of the way we fund our children's education.

Some say the QEA was the answer to the problem. I am not one of that group, for I believe it was only the first step

in the right direction, and that anything less is only a giant step backwards.

I disagree wholeheartedly with the compromise, because in accepting the compromise we are only compromising our children's right to a thorough and efficient education. We, as parents and as public officials, must protect the rights that our young people cannot protect for themselves. As elected officials, be it Republican or Democratic, it is your duty and responsibility to protect the rights of all of our children, regardless of how their parents voted or where they live.

I have also witnessed gross injustices as they relate to these hearings, as echoed by many here tonight. In conclusion, I urge you to remember that once elected, you become the advocate for all Americans, regardless of race, color, creed, financial status, or party preference. The power of the vote is a mighty one, and I urge all parents to remember proceedings such as this in the next election. As someone echoed already -- I believe it was Ms. Cooper -- although we cannot vote for you, and it is your constituency which does vote for you, I just want to say that we can turn the majority of the House from Republican to Democrat, or whatever party it is that is in the best interest of our children. That is what is most important for us tonight.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

I have to apologize to Rudolph Clarke and Adie Flippen-Smith, because really they have asked us to get off the stage at 6:30, and I've got-- (consultation with Dr. Howard) All right, we will quickly do the other two, Dr. Howard has very kindly said.

So, Adie Flippen-Smith-- Is she here? (affirmative response from audience)

A D I E F L I P P E N - S M I T H: Good evening. My name is Adie Flippen-Smith. I represent the New Jersey Association of Black Educators. I won't begin by thanking you for coming to

East Orange and having this hearing, because I believe you have a responsibility to do that. Hopefully, this will not be the last time we will be in each other's company, because I, like you, believe myself to represent the citizens of New Jersey.

Given what has happened with this bill and the comments I have heard during this hearing, I would have to say that being a part of the New Jersey Black Issues Convention and also being a member of the NAACP, I am in total agreement with James Harris and Kabili Tayari, so I have no need to repeat what they have said.

What I do have to say is, historically, in this country, education has always been something that has been withheld, to the degree that it could be, from the African-American community. That was how we began our tenure here. It would seem, based on what the New Jersey Legislature is about to do with this bill-- If, in fact, it is a fait accompli, we are again participating in a struggle for educating our children on the level that your children have been educated in our history since we have been on these shores.

I would like all of you to take a message back to the Legislature: If, in fact, you represent all of the people of the State of New Jersey, and, in fact, are not in the process of playing partisan politics, when it is our lives and our children's lives, again, that are at stake, you will not allow us one more year to be taxed and not represented by the New Jersey Legislature, and withhold adequate, equal educational funding from our children, because I believe that if the tables were reversed, you would not want to see these things happen to your own children.

You are, again, beginning a process that I believe -- and I have talked to the organizational members about this -- beginning a process of making education, again, only available to white, male WASPs. That is where education seems to be moving in this country. New Jersey is doing its part one more

time in making sure that we take the lead in whatever is going to first destroy this country. Whether or not you believe it, those things you do that will hurt the African-American community in this State and in this country, will also impact negatively on you.

That is all I need to say this evening.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

Rudolph Clarke, you will be the last individual. Then Dr. Howard wants to make his closing remarks.

R U D O L P H C L A R K E: Good evening. My name is Rudolph Clarke. I am from Plainfield, New Jersey.

Someone has said, "All that is needed for evil to exist, is for good men to do nothing." I sit here as a parent and as a human being, and I have an illusion about this trouble to educate our kids. I just want to draw your attention to two things: This is an issue about suburban and urban that we are talking about here. When the Japanese look at their kids, they see the Japanese competing against the world. I would like to see the people who have the power to look at every kid competing against Japanese, and then make your decision. If you think that urban districts are fairly funded, I will ask you to look at Princeton and Camden; to look at Westfield's Edison Junior High School science lab and look at Plainfield High School's science lab -- look at the comparison. It is like equating night and day.

You can take that scenario all over this country. A typical example is in The New York Times today. We are under the illusion that because of racism the Legislature is blinded to play off urban against suburban. But it is not urban that is the issue. It is America that is the issue. We are all in this boat. We are going to rise together, or we are going to sink together.

I am calling upon you to really do what is right. What is right is for every kid to have the opportunity to

really have a thorough and efficient education. I am not under the illusion that more money will necessarily give you better education. I am one black person who is under no such illusion. But the fact still remains that if you are to compete in science, in mathematics, you need an up-to-date lab. I have been to several suburban school districts, and I have looked at their science labs. I have yet to see a halfway decent science lab in any urban district. If you don't do that, then I think we are really wasting our time.

Dr. C. B. Howard: All I have to say in closing, is that this is a done deal. Let the African-American community have no illusion that the responsibility is to come to these hearings and plead on our knees. The responsibility is ours to educate our kids, because I do not believe that these people who make the decisions have it in them to really educate our kids, based upon past performance. We should not have to take the State to court to educate our kids. It is a God-given right. The history of this country has been that African-Americans and Latino parents must get up off their butts, organize, politicize, and take over. If you do not do that, then these politicians will never do what they are supposed to do.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

Dr. Howard?

DR. HOWARD: Very quickly I want to thank Senator Ewing for coming here this evening to meet the East Orange community and neighboring school districts and communities to talk about the compromise Senate and Assembly bills. The East Orange School District and community, on behalf of my office, the School Board, and the Mayor, Cardell Cooper, were very hopeful and delighted to present Senator Ewing here to you this evening. We would hope that the Senator would take some of these ideas back to the Senate and the Assembly tomorrow before

the vote, and reconsider some of the things that have come about.

In the future I would also ask that East Orange be considered again to host other legislative Committee hearings. We feel here that we are ready to participate in the political process. I think there are a lot of people here in the East Orange community who would like to be involved in some of the Committee functions and hearings and programs and activities that are taking place at the legislative level throughout the State.

So we stand here, not to criticize any person. I don't think you heard that this evening, but you heard some very profound statements that were somewhat critical of the issues and the ideas. I think we have come a long way, to the extent that we are no longer attacking the messenger, the person, but are attacking the issues and critiquing those issues to the best of our abilities.

Again I would ask that Senator Ewing take back some of these ideas to the Senate and the Assembly, and consider appointing and also looking at people within the East Orange community to participate in this very important funding issue throughout the State of New Jersey.

Thank you.

**(MEETING CONCLUDED)**

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