

Major Education Groups Say Budget Cuts Go Too Deep

Five of the state's major education organizations joined together today to call on the General Assembly to avoid making what they termed "disastrous cuts" to North Carolina's public schools. Currently, the General Assembly is considering cutting more than \$1 billion dollars from schools across the state, a move the coalition of organizations contends would wipe out nearly 20 years of educational progress.

"Our 1.4 million students deserve nothing less than a continuing commitment that our state will provide the necessary resources to prepare them for the global economy," said Bill McNeal, Executive Director of the N.C. Association of School Administrators (NCASA).

"Class sizes are going to increase; more than 15,000 students are going to lose after-school services; programs aimed at reducing our dropout rate -- one of the nation's highest -- are on the chopping block, and policy-makers are considering shortening the school year for our 1.4 million young people -- a year that is already the shortest in the industrial world," said Debra Horton, the president of the North Carolina Parent Teacher Association (PTA).

The cuts have long-term consequences said McNeal. Educators are handicapped as they provide the best education opportunities for future leaders. "We cannot recapture that moment in time to teach a student," said McNeal.

The coalition said that the situation facing schools is similar to what North Carolina faced during the Great Depression when schools around the state were closing their doors. Not only will the cuts impact school children across North Carolina, but they would add nearly 15,000 educators to the ranks of the state's unemployed. The coalition called on the General Assembly to strike a balance between cuts and increased revenue as a solution to North Carolina budget's shortfall.

"We are asking the House to show courage not cuts," said Sherry Strickland, President of N.C. Association of Educators (NCAE).

Groups involved in this coalition include the North Carolina Parent Teacher Association (PTA); the North Carolina Association of School Administrators (NCASA), that represents superintendents, principals and other school administrators; the North Carolina School Boards Association (NCSBA), representing all of North Carolina's elected and appointed school board members; the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE), the state's largest education association representing 60,000 active, retired and student members; and the Public School Forum, an educational policy center.