

With regard to statements made in an article that appeared in the Sept. 28th Daily Gazette entitled: "Small city school districts demand more aid" I would like to add a rebuttal. The article describes the efforts of a group of small city school districts to piggyback upon New York City's Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit.

The principals and beneficiaries of the lawsuit continue to make some outrageous claims that will not stand up to scrutiny.

First, I would like to present one very important fact about New York City's CFE lawsuit in order to show how it differs from and cannot be applied to other cities. The new formula proposed by the CFE considers the cost of real estate in New York City as the primary reason they need more money. The schools themselves are more expensive, and teachers simply cannot afford to live in The Big Apple on the same salaries that upstate teachers enjoy. Therefore, it is claimed they need more money for school buildings and higher salaries to attract and sustain better teachers. I will not even concede that point but other major city school districts of New York State currently receive significantly more funding than rural and suburban school districts even though they do not suffer from New York City's endemic real estate scarcity and cost.

The CFE lawsuit was careful not to simply demand more money but a more "equitable" formula that a judge could more easily justify granting. Judges cannot simply order more money to be redistributed to these 16 small cities (Democratic strongholds) without risking impeachment.

The CFE lawsuit also claimed that the State (meaning upstate taxpayers) was denying NYC students their Constitutional right to a "sound, basic education" by not providing enough money but I will argue that it is the compulsory nature of public school attendance without a choice that actually violates our rights. Think about it. Is there any Constitutional right that citizens are forced to engage in? Must we pray, vote, speak or own a gun? Would religion and gun ownership be better if they were taxpayer funded and compulsory? Let's take this absurdity a step farther. If gun ownership were a right, in the same sense education in a public school is claimed to be, would you be happy to own the brand of gun that the government compelled you to own? Would you be content to own a BB gun that cost as much as a .357 Magnum at a private gun shop? It isn't prayer or speech per se that the Constitution guaranties. It is our right to choose our speech, prayer, gun ownership etc. No amount of money can do for education what can be done with one little word. If a basic education is a right, it must include CHOICE.

- DRC