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**RELEASE**

**AQE Delivers over 6600 Handwritten Letters to Senators Calling for Wall Street Tax  
to Prevent \$1.4 Billion in School Aid Cuts**

**School Cuts Hurt Education and Cause Property Tax Hikes**

***Parents, Students & Taxpayers Read their Letters Before Delivering Three Wagons Full of  
Letters to Senators***

(Albany, NY)—Parents, students and taxpayers organized by the Alliance for Quality Education, delivered organized 6600 letters to senators demanding a temporary Wall Street banker's bonus tax to prevent massive cuts in school aid. The legislature is currently considering devastating cuts ranging from \$800 million to \$1.4 billion. A \$1.4 billion cut will force schools across the state would to eliminate 15,000 teaching positions, as well as eliminate needed educational programs such as after-school and English as a second language, and increase class sizes. Also, as a result of the massive cuts homeowners would see a significant hike in their local property taxes as districts struggle to cope with the state's blow to their budgets. The letters which were collected through a door-to-door canvass and by volunteers who reached out to their neighbors show that there is strong opposition to school aid cuts both because they will hurt the quality of education and because voters recognize that school aid cuts will produce property tax hikes. In the past two weeks AQE canvassers have knocked on over 22,000 doors and talked with 11,000 New Yorkers.

“Six out of ten people we have talked with feel strongly enough to sit down and write a letter,” said Billy Easton, Executive Director, Alliance for Quality Education, “That tells you that people simply do not want school cuts. The letters clearly show that New York voters get the fact that if the legislature cuts school aid our children will pay the price and taxpayers will be stuck with higher property taxes. Sure people want property tax relief, but they also want great schools and they will not be fooled by a bait and switch if the legislature causes their school taxes to go up by cutting school aid and then sends a check in the mail. The legislature needs to stop wasting time and get serious about asking Wall Street to help our school children and our taxpayers.”

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The groups cited Wall Street's recent record profits of more than \$61 billion in 2009 with bonuses for the same year exceeding \$20 billion, while the average New Yorker makes \$50,000 annually, and called for them to bear their share of the state's fiscal crisis. A temporary two-year banker's bonus tax on compensations totaling \$250,000 would raise nearly \$7 billion and could be used to alleviate the heavy burden placed on students and homeowners. AQE has also proposed \$1.5 billion in loophole closings.

Amparo Sadler, a Central Islip grand-parent read from her letter addressed to Senator Brian Foley, "We need you to do this for children like my grandchildren who will have a bleak future if you allow our district to suffer cuts of over \$6million. My newest granddaughter Kacey is only 13 months old and I worry about what will be left of our schools by the time she is in the district if these cuts happen."

"As a student in your district I think cutting the budget that will result in teachers getting laid off will be bad because less teachers will produce less students being taught. Wall Street is the same as you and I and they should pay their fair share to rebuild this economy," said Jacob Merrill a 9<sup>th</sup> grade student at Oswego High School.

"If we do not ask Wall Street to help stop the pending school budget cuts our children will be deprived of the necessary requirements needed to succeed and they will fall further behind. In order to keep our children competitive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century job market, we need Senator Valesky and his colleagues to prioritize their education," said Gerald R. Lotierzo, a constituent of Senator Valesky's 49<sup>th</sup> district.

"I am writing to voice my concerns about the proposal to cut funds to education. This is a huge mistake that is being made. Our teachers and children need the funds to give and get a better life. New York is not on the top list of having a better education because the government has not invested in the system," Constance Malcolm-Grant of Elmont, NY wrote her in her letter to Senator Craig Johnson.

"We need more legislators to join with Senator Neil Breslin and support the Wall Street Banker's Bonus tax to help protect our school children and home owners. Without this tax our children will suffer a devastating loss and our local homeowners will be forced to pay significantly higher property taxes," said Barbara Smith, Albany 4<sup>th</sup> ward common council member.

"The parents demanding that school children, particularly the neediest, be put at the head of the line for promised state resources follow in the footsteps of the parents who brought the successful Campaign for Fiscal Equity litigation 17 years ago and won the constitutional right to a sound basic education. That promised funding that was originally due this year and would have brought \$7 billion of additional state resources to the schools. Instead, these students face a \$1.4 billion cut that will create catastrophic layoffs and program and service cuts that will imperil the academic progress and the economic futures of these students. New York's schools should be on the protected list—our children's' education is too big to fail. It is Wall Street's turn to stand up and give back their fair share to ensure the economic futures of our children and our state," said Geri D. Palast, Executive Director, Campaign for Fiscal Equity.

The following legislators received letters Senators Darrel Aubertine, John Bonacic, Brian Foley, Kemp Hannon, Craig Johnson, Owen Johnson, Jeffrey Klein, Kenneth LaValle, Frank Padavan, William Stachowski, and David Valesky.

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