



**Kingsway Regional School District**

213 Kings Highway  
Woolwich Twp., NJ 08085  
Phone 856.464.4600  
[www.krsd.org](http://www.krsd.org)



**Borough of Swedesboro**

1500 Kings Highway  
Swedesboro., NJ 08085  
Phone 856.467.0202  
[www.historicswedesboro.com](http://www.historicswedesboro.com)

## **Kingsway Regional and Borough of Swedesboro Join School Funding Lawsuit**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Dr. James J. Lavender, Superintendent  
Kingsway Regional School District  
(O): 856-467-4600 ext. 4205  
(F): 856-467-5382

Thomas Fromm, Mayor  
Borough of Swedesboro  
(O): 856-467-0202  
(F): 856-467-5382

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**Swedesboro, NJ.** – The Kingsway Regional Board of Education and Swedesboro’s Borough Council have agreed to pass resolutions committing to filing a school funding equity lawsuit against the State of New Jersey. Specifically, local officials charge that the State treats taxpayers who make up the Kingsway Regional School District differently than those in other municipalities and school districts in violation of the State Constitution which reads in part, *“The fund for the support of free public schools ... shall be ... for the equal benefit of all the people of the State ...”*

The Kingsway Regional School District is among a group of 96 school districts throughout the State that are both overtaxed and severely underfunded – defined as (a) receiving less than 70% of their state aid; and (b) taxing above 100% of their local fair share. This group of 96 districts is being shorted some \$739 million in state aid in FY18, and trying to make that up in part by taxing their residents more than \$475 million above the State-calculated local fair share. These districts and their municipalities are being invited to form a coalition to file the litigation within the coming weeks. Kingsway Regional and the Borough of Swedesboro join the Newton Public School District and Town of Newton in Sussex County, in this suit. It is estimated that another dozen or two School Districts and Municipalities will join in the coming weeks.

Kingsway Regional will pass the resolution on Thursday, December 21<sup>st</sup>, during their regularly scheduled Board of Education Meeting. President James Mueller stated, *“We’ve said it before that we refuse to sit back and wait for Trenton to allocate equitable state aid. Our students, faculty and our taxpayers deserve better and we intend to leave no stone unturned in our pursuit for fair and equitable school funding. This Board of Education, our administrators and our school community have worked tirelessly to fight for equity in school funding and 46 percent is simply not fair. While we were able to secure some relief in the last budget, this is not the time to sit back on our heels and wait for Trenton to do what is right by our stakeholders. Simply put, we are not going to stop fighting until there is an equitable resolution.”*

The Borough of Swedesboro will pass the resolution during their reorganization meeting scheduled for Tuesday, January 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6:45 p.m. Mayor Fromm commented, *“For more than a decade the small town of Swedesboro has played a big role in the school funding fight by continuously advocating that our tax dollars be filtered back to our residents and schools. I am proud that the residents of Swedesboro are represented by a Council who understands how dire this situation is for our schools and have the fortitude to stand up for our residents. This State has failed us, all of us, by refusing to adequately and reasonably fund education in the Borough of Swedesboro, and our surrounding towns for that matter. Over that time, we have been funded at less than 46% at the Regional and shortchanged by more than \$30 million. The situation has and continues to be burdensome and unacceptable for our students, educational professionals, residents, and taxpayers. Borough Council is happy to join Kingsway’s Board of Education and is committed to recovering and restoring the full funding to which we are entitled.”*

Some legislative success was achieved in this year’s state budget compromise, which unfortunately shut down state services for several days in July. Superintendent James Lavender commented, *“Kingsway received (August) additional state aid in the amount of \$732,243, which simply is not enough. Our recent personnel needs assessment shows that we are still understaffed by more than thirty teachers today and another dozen support positions. How does this make any sense knowing that we stand in the shadows of a number of overfunded school districts,”* Lavender rhetorically asked. *“Class size tips 30 in many of our classrooms, we’ve cut middle school sports, and were forced to terminate our contract with our local police department to provide a school resource officer. It’s not fair by any measure to shortchange our students and overburden our faculty, staff and taxpayers.”*

Legislative advocacy efforts will continue along with the proposed litigation to forge a sustainable path to equitable distribution of state aid to all school districts moving forward. The Board and Town are being represented in this litigation by attorneys Schwartz, Simon, Edelstein & Celso LLC, and Laddey, Clark & Ryan LLP, respectively.

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To read more about Kingsway’s Fair Funding Campaign go to the District’s website at [www.krsd.org](http://www.krsd.org) and click [Fair Funding Campaign](#).