

For Immediate Release
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LEGISLATURE APPROVES MAJOR REFORMS FOR SCHOOL BUILDING ASSISTANCE

State Representative Bill Straus (D-Mattapoisett) today announced passage by the Legislature of a bill which restores secure and reliable funding to the vital School Building Assistance Program for many years. The legislation is now before the Governor for his approval. Straus urged the Governor to approve the new financing program.

The restructuring of the program allows for complete funding of the 420 school projects currently on the waiting list throughout the state within 3 ½ years. The Legislature has voted to maintain its commitment to fund wait list projects at existing reimbursement rates and will provide funding for new projects not yet on the waiting list beginning in Fiscal Year 2008 and continuously thereafter.

“I am pleased that the Legislature has reaffirmed its strong commitment to funding pending school construction projects at existing reimbursement rates, alleviating some of the financial concerns of cities and towns,” state Representative Straus.

Funding of the new school construction program will be accomplished through a gradually phased in funding plan which dedicates a penny of the existing state sales tax to the Massachusetts School Modernization and Reconstruction Trust. The newly created independent Massachusetts School Building Authority will be charged with approving future projects and is required to conduct yearly reviews to determine the current conditions of schools in Massachusetts, estimate the total needs in coming years, and conduct a study of the effectiveness of current cost and size standards for the program.

Many local projects will benefit from the changes in the School Building Assistance Program. The chart below indicates when each project will be financed.

Town	School Name	Year Financed Legislature's Plan	Year Financed Governor's Plan	Year Financed Current Plan
Fairhaven	Hastings Middle School	FY07	FY08	FY 15
Fairhaven	E. Fairhaven Elementary	FY08	FY09	FY18
Gr. New Bedford	Gr. NB Voc/Tech	FY05	FY05	FY05
Marion	Elementary School	FY05	FY06	FY06
Old Rochester	Old Rochester HS/JHS	FY05	FY07	FY09
Mattapoisett	Old Hammondtown Elem	FY06	FY08	FY12
Mattapoisett	Center Elementary	FY06	FY08	FY13

Middleboro	Memorial Kindergarten	FY06	FY08	FY14
Bristol-Plymouth	Bristol-Plymouth Voc/Tech	FY05	FY05	FY05

“I am proud to have worked with my colleagues in the House and Senate, and with the Treasurer, to craft this reform package, which guarantees timely funding for the schools in my district. This legislation will also ensure that this vital program will continue for many years,” concluded Representative Straus.