

Let the wealthy do their part

Who is being asked to sacrifice more in New York's steep budget cuts: public school students or millionaires? Distressingly enough, unless Governor David Paterson and the state legislature protect schoolchildren instead of Park Avenue, the answer is that the state budget is going to be balanced on the backs of students.

Paterson, who presents his budget today, has proposed drastic measures to close a \$15 billion deficit in New York. These include some very smart steps to draw revenue, among them—a tax on soft drinks, reviving a clothing sales tax and consolidating agencies.

But one of the governor's most alarming proposals is a three percent cut to education. While details are unfolding, school districts are bracing for painful cutbacks.

In New York City, there have been too many gains around education to roll back now. It took more than a decade to win a

legal fight for equitable state funding of city schools.

This was overdue but good news in especially black and Latino communities, where schools have been historically under-funded.

The governor is certainly facing a budgetary crisis and all agencies will have to do more with less. But instead of cutting back on education it is time to consider a tax on the wealthiest New Yorkers.

Paterson is reportedly fearful that a tax on high-income households will send these New Yorkers packing for low tax havens. Yet the Fiscal Policy Institute reports that after 9-11, when a temporary surcharge was placed on upper end households, the number of high income filers increased in the following years.

The idea that our state would rather put the burden on schoolchildren than on the wealthy is backwards. Instead, Paterson and our state legislators must deliver a budget that puts our children first.

