



The Newsmagazine of Long Beach Island and Southern Ocean County

## Next Step in Fixing School Funding Imbalance

Commentary

March 11, 2026

### To the Editor:

I am writing in response to Surf City Mayor Hodgson's thoughtful commentary in last week's SandPaper concerning Long Beach Island's membership in the Southern Regional School District (SRSD). Mayor Hodgson's leadership on this issue is both timely and important, and his willingness to raise difficult questions about fairness and governance deserves recognition.

As Mayor Hodgson correctly noted, the current funding and governance structure is fundamentally inequitable. Long Beach Island provides approximately 80% of the district's funding while sending 178 students to the school district, only 8% of the student body. Our representation on the school board is not commensurate with the financial support our communities provide.

Mayor Hodgson also raised legitimate concerns about the governing agreement itself – particularly the fact that no copies appear to exist – and he wisely cautioned against engaging in a costly and prolonged legal battle that may not guarantee a favorable outcome.

Mayor Hodgson also emphasized the importance of focusing on constructive dialogue and transparency rather than simply restudying a problem that has already been well documented. His call for practical, actionable remedies reflects the kind of thoughtful leadership our communities need on this issue.

LBI's Joint Council of Taxpayers Associations (JCTA) strongly agrees with Mayor Hodgson's concerns and his focus on finding real solutions. While we share his view that another study of the problem itself is unnecessary, we believe the next constructive step would be a feasibility study that examines potential solutions with full transparency and participation from all involved communities. LBI Mayor Joe Mancini has already stated his support for the feasibility study.

A feasibility study is the first step in a relatively new legislative process enacted by New Jersey to help communities address regional school district inequities without resorting to expensive litigation. Importantly, the process was recently upheld by the New Jersey Supreme Court, and the feasibility study itself is nonbinding. In addition, the state of New Jersey may provide funding for such a study if requested.

Mayor Hodgson is absolutely right that our focus should be on remedies. Moving forward with a transparent, participatory and nonbinding feasibility study of possible solutions would allow all communities to work collaboratively toward a fair and equitable outcome.

Mayor Hodgson's willingness to bring attention to this issue has helped advance an important conversation for Long Beach Island. We look forward to continuing the conversation with Mayor Hodgson, Mayor Mancini and other mayors and working together toward a constructive resolution that benefits all participants.

**Ronald Fiore, president**

**LBI Joint Council of Taxpayers Associations**