GENERAL ASSEMBLY
STATE OF ILLINOIS

JOINT LEGISLATIVE STATEMENT ON EDUCATION FUNDING REFORM
May 17, 2007

We recall the excitement of Inauguration Day on January 10th when we commenced the 95th General Assembly with a super-majority of Democratic Senators, fueled by voters from Cairo to Chicago who demanded an historic investment in education. President Emil Jones, Jr. laid out an agenda centered on education funding reform. With eager anticipation, we looked forward to crafting a budget to fund our top priority item: education.

We applaud and admire President Jones' lifelong commitment to education funding reform and believe that 2007 is the year to finally fulfill the vision of adequate state funding to bring quality education to every child in Illinois. We rise in strong support of President Jones' original vision of education funding reform, with targeted tax relief and finally moving away from our shameful status as the second-to-last state in the nation in state education funding.

However, four months and one week later, the specter of a no-growth budget has emerged. We stand united in firm opposition to any no-growth or status quo budget and we find it unconscionable to enter into any discussion of a budget that does not include a priority state investment in education for all children to reduce our inequitable reliance on local property taxes.

We will not be a party to a betrayal of the people who elected us on a promise to bring education funding reform by voting for a no-growth budget. How can we Democrats work to gain a super-majority in the Senate, control of the House of Representatives and control of the Governor's mansion and not use this trust bestowed upon us by the people to bring education funding reform?

The time is short and a no-growth budget is off the table.