

TAAAC ACTION REPORT

Your Professional Organization

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Teachers Association of Anne Arundel County, An MST/NEA Affiliate

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Funding Rally a Big Success

It was like something out of the 60's. The marching, rallying, singing and chanting, the camaraderie and friendships brought back memories of when this was the only way to be heard and recognized. I guess it is still the only way to bring attention to the seriousness of the issue. Some things never change.

On Monday, February 9, 2004, over 10,000 citizens converged on Annapolis to show their support for education funding. The coalition of state organizations sponsoring the rally included Maryland PTA, Association of Boards of Education, Superintendents.

The coalition drew educators, students and concerned citizens from every corner of the state to send the message to the Governor to fully fund Thornton. (5313)

The rally drew speakers who were able to touch everyone in attendance. They ranged from Nancy Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools, to our own State President of the PTA, Esther Parker, to representatives of the Maryland Association of Student Councils, the Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals, the League of Women Voters BEN/ACORN, and our own NEA President Reg Weaver and a long list of community activists and parents. Too bad the Governor's reaction was to criticize the systems which brought students or offered community service credit.

Education is Priceless!

12,000 attend Rally to Support Public Schools!

It was the largest rally Annapolis had seen in many years. Thousands of educators, children's activists, parents and pro-public education families and friends marched down Rowe Blvd. to Lawyer's Mall to ask lawmakers to stand behind their election year promises to fully fund Thornton.

From Pat Foerster's speech:

Talk is cheap. Ignorance is expensive. Education is priceless. ... The Constitution of the State of Maryland mandates a thorough and efficient public education through a system of taxation. ... [To legislators] We know you'll make the right choice. We have faith in you, and most importantly, we will support those who turn rhetoric into reality, who make the tough decisions, who demonstrate their support for our children and their public education with their vote.

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Sheila M. Finlayson

COMMENTARY

or will they turn their backs on education and educators?

We must continue to improve our relationship with the Superintendent and Board Members. Our regular meetings with the Superintendent have increased. Our communication with most of the Board members is open and ongoing.

“I am asking you to commit to the rule of seven.”

We are involved in all of these political efforts all the time. Sometimes it takes a louder voice to be heard. Sometimes it takes more than a few carrying the message. Actually, the more frequently one hears the message, the more committed to memory it becomes. In my campaign managing days, I learned the rule of seven. Seven contacts, pieces of mail, phone calls, face-to-face conversations, e-mails and faxes before the message gets across. Well, that’s the approach we must take.

In my February 18th e-mail, I thanked those of you who came out to the County Council Hearing. I also said shame on those of you

who did not. There is a group of 30 to 40 folks who we can count on to attend and do everything we ask of them. That means there are over 4,000 who do very little or nothing at all to help. Imagine the impact if the County Executive, County Council, the Legislators and the Governor received 4,000 e-mails or faxes. We could tie up their systems for days. Would that get their attention? Would that send a message? I think so.

I know we are all working long and hard. The new programs and schedules are keeping everybody hopping. But, at some point, you must take the time to do something for yourself. Take the time to lend your voice to demand what you need.

I am asking you to commit to the rule of seven. We have about four months left, that’s less than two activities each month. Attend one County Council meeting, send them all e-mails, contact the County Executive, send a fax, call and leave a message or pay them a visit. Speak to your community group, civic organization or church group and help them to understand the needs of the school system. Join us on Monday nights at the Legislature.

Just imagine if everyone makes seven contacts. There is strength in numbers. Let’s prove it!

Many times I have mentioned fighting the battle on many fronts. Many times I have asked your assistance in the fight. With a staff of four, it takes every minute of everyday to keep up with what the Governor is trying to do to us, with the County Council and County Executive, the Superintendent, the Board of Education and even the President of the U.S. The way that they all influence education impacts what is going on in your classroom everyday. (4566)

We must be ever so vigilant with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and its requirements of highly qualified teachers and meeting average yearly progress (AYP).

We must keep a close eye on the Governor as he says he will fund Thornton yet he cuts millions from disruptive youth programs, special education and transportation.

We must stay in close contact with the County Executive and the County Council so they will understand our needs. Now that times are tough, will they step up to the plate and raise the necessary revenue needed for a quality school system

TAAAC Action Report

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From Contentia this month . . .

Adding student hours or illegally extending the teacher workweek?

For the first time here in Contention, we are writing about an event that has not yet occurred, but it is an issue that is best addressed in advance.

There are alternatives being considered in the Parham Building, intended to provide more instructional time to students prior to the testing dates later in the year. One of those alternatives would bring the historical end-of-quarter early student dismissals days to an end, along with eliminating larger chunks of non-student time at semester's end. Granted, the actions would provide more instructional hours, but what about teacher time.

End-of-quarter and end-of-semester work time for teachers, in which they are not responsible for the supervision of students, allows the teachers to grade exams, prepare report cards, close one semester and prepare for the next. If that time is pulled away, when will that work get done? Testimony before the Board of Education during its February 18 meeting explicitly reflected an expectation that teachers would simply get that work done in the evenings and on weekends. To every Kindergarten teacher and every regular Contentia reader, this should sound familiar, and what's coming next is likely being anticipated.

Article 11(A) of the Negotiated Agreement provides teachers with a 35 1/2 hour workweek excluding additional time at home for individual planning for the delivery of instruction. Grading final exams and completing report cards for instruction that has been given over the prior 9 to 18 weeks does not – by any reasonable stretch of logic – constitute *...individual planning for the delivery of instruction*. The simple unspun fact is that such an action will cause an illegal extension of the teacher workweek. Recent Arbitration decisions on quite similar issues have already cost the Board real dollars in payment to prevailing grievants. The most recent was regarding the Kindergarten teachers' arbitration award in their sustained assertion that having to spend time beyond the workweek assessing new students' readiness for school constituted the same illegal extension of the workweek.

The Board has been made aware of the conflict between the contract language and the referenced scheduling alternative. If it is pursued anyway, we can expect it to become quite expensive. In the meantime, impacted teachers should feel free to express their opinions, and may do so by sending them to TAAAC, to be forwarded on to the decision makers.

Let's fix it now. We have had to arbitrate issues too similar too many times. (4145)

Friends in the House Vote to Support Education

HB345, an early step in full Thornton funding, passed its third reading on the floor of the House on February 13, 2004. Nearly one-third of education funds to Anne Arundel County comes from the state and full Thornton funding is critical to all who work or learn in local public schools.

Voting on the side of public school educators and students were; Speaker Mike Busch (D), Mary Ann Love (D), Joan Cadden (D), Virginia Claggett (D), Barbara Frush (D), Pauline Menes (D); Brian Moe (D), Ted Sophocleus (D), and John Leopold (R).

When time permits, a quick call or e-mail to their offices to thank them for their support would be appropriate.

Notable was the vote of Delegate Leopold, who was one of only two republicans across the state to break ranks and cast a favorable vote.

A Message from Speaker of the House Mike Busch

Maryland, like the vast majority of other states in the country, is facing a record budget deficit. It is a situation that is forcing state governments across the country to make tough decisions about prioritizing the services they provide to their citizens. As Marylanders, we are fortunate to live in one of the wealthiest states in the country. In fact, Maryland boasts the highest median income of any state in the country and is fifth in the nation in overall wealth.

This relative wealth has allowed Maryland to invest in the services that its citizens value most - and by far the most essential government service that the State provides is education. The Governor and the Legislature are mandated by the Maryland Constitution to provide every child in the State with an adequate and equitable public education.

Because of an historic commitment from elected officials, educators, and the community as a whole, Maryland is known for its quality K-12 and worldclass university systems. It is a primary reason why families and businesses move to Maryland and why they stay in Maryland. Last year, for the 4th year in a row, the nation's leading education newspaper gave Maryland an 'A' for our system of academic standards and accountability.

Increasing academic standards and raising accountability in public education are themes that resonate at both the State and federal level. On the federal level, the No Child Left Behind Act places significant demands on local school systems to hire highly qualified teachers and to demonstrate annual academic progress among discrete groups of children, including the disabled and those with limited English proficiency. On the State level, the recently enacted 'Thornton legislation' requires comprehensive performance plans from each local school system and establishes new funding formulas to ensure that students and schools have the resources necessary to meet the State's rigorous and nationally recognized performance standards. That legislation was based on a two-year study by a 27-member commission made up of prominent Marylanders and national education experts to determine what was necessary to meet the Constitutional mandate of an adequate and equitable public education. With passage of the Thornton legislation in 2002, Maryland became the first state in the country to endorse a comprehensive reform of its school finance system based on the principles of adequacy and equity, without being forced to do so by a court order.

While these are economically challenging times, we cannot lose sight of the importance of public education to our State. Quality education systems translate into an enhanced quality of life for our communities and create future opportunities for our children in a workplace that is dynamic and ever-changing. Education is not a drain on our budget, rather it is key to our State's economy. (4642)

To that end, leadership in the House of Delegates has introduced legislation this session which will provide enhanced funding to assist local governments in addressing the significant backlog of public school construction projects - a backlog that has resulted in large numbers of schools around the State that lack adequate classrooms. In addition, the legislation contains provisions to provide extra assistance for jurisdictions designated as economically distressed. These projects will be funded through transfer tax revenues received as a result of closing a loophole in State law that allows certain companies to avoid paying the transfer tax that every other corporation and every Maryland homeowner is required to pay.

By adequately and equitably funding our public schools, we help ensure that Maryland retains its distinction as having the most highly educated workforce in the nation. There is no clearer obligation of state government than the responsibility to educate our children, nor one that provides higher dividends in return.

Michael E. Busch, Speaker
Maryland House of Delegates

ARC Supports One-Cent Increase in Sales Tax for Education

Following in the steps of MSTA, TAAAC Representatives took an official position to support a one-cent increase of the sales tax.

With a constitutional requirement, Maryland must have a balanced budget. There is an imbalance between projected revenues and future spending. Much of the shortfall comes from K-12 education and Medicaid, both of which presently or will in the future impact us greatly. We need a reliable revenue source. A penny on the sales tax will provide us with that reliable source. No one likes taxes. At the same time everyone demands a good school system. As employees, we also demand better salaries and benefits, all of which must be paid for through tax dollars. It is time to decide whether we want to provide a great education system or not and if the answer is yes, we must pay for it.

Looking at Maryland's statistics, we should be ashamed to not be willing to pay for education.

Maryland does not have high sales taxes compared to other states. Maryland ranks 43rd lowest among states in the amount of sales tax revenue it collects when calculated as a percentage of total state tax revenues. Maryland ranks 41st lowest in the amount of sales tax revenue collected on a per capita basis. Maryland ranks 45th lowest in the sales tax revenue it collects when calculated as a percent of personal income (2.7% of personal income). PA, NJ and WV have a 6% rate, VA has a 4.5% but taxes food, and they have current legislation to increase it, the District of Columbia has a 5.75% and Delaware has a gross receipts tax instead of a sales tax.

A one penny increase in the sales tax, effective July 1, 2004, brings an extra \$558 million for FY 2005 and an extra \$586 million for FY 2006 for a total two-year increase in revenues of \$1.144 billion. The Thornton formula requires an increase of \$362 million for FY 05 and \$691 million for FY 06 for a two-year total increase in funding of \$1.053 billion.

An increase in the sales tax rate would have a minimal impact per household on an annual basis. For a household with an income of \$30,000 - \$39,000, the increase would be \$7.66 per month or \$92 per year. In a household earning over \$70,000, the increase would be \$17.58 a month or \$211 per year. These numbers seem like a relatively small price to pay for a quality education system. (9135)

Our sales tax has not been increased since 1977. The demands on our education system have increased many times over. An increase in the sales tax is a fair, equitable and reliable source of revenue to fund education.

Why Endorse?

Many have questioned why TAAAC gets involved in the political process, why we endorse candidates. It's all about the resources. We rely on the State for about 30% of our school system funding. We rely on the County for over 60%. The federal government contributes less than 5%, even with the mandates of No Child Left Behind. Without genuine supporters of education in the elected positions, our funding will be drastically reduced.

Your class size, the amount of money available for per pupil expenditures and programs, the age and maintenance of our buildings are all determined by the level of funding we receive. On a more personal note, any future increases in salaries, whether your healthcare cost increases, whether your retirement benefits remain intact, are all determined by elected officials. Shouldn't you have a say in who these decision makers are since they have a say in your livelihood? I think so.

When citizens were asked which groups' endorsements they were most likely to follow, overwhelmingly the response is the Teachers Association.

March is when we begin our annual campaign to raise funds for the Children and Public Education Fund. More information will come your way on this important opportunity to have input into our political future.

Governor Cuts Education Programs

While the Governor says he is supportive of education, he continues to make cuts to education. Most teachers know nothing of the additional funding but all will feel the impact of these additional cuts. Two million is being cut from the Disruptive Student program. Could that mean we no longer have disruptive students?

Six and a half million will be cut from the Special Education placement program. Public schools have the responsibility of educating every child. Students with special needs, whose needs cannot be met by the school system, must be placed in facilities that can meet their needs. Sometimes the facility maybe located in the local jurisdiction and sometimes in facilities as far away as Massachusetts.

Three million is being cut from student transportation. While student enrollment is leveling off, transportation costs are not.

These programs are only part of the list of programs the Governor has targeted to cut in his budget. These cuts will put additional pressure on local counties for funding and will impact the classroom teacher in a number of ways.

Contact the Governor and let him know how these cuts will impact you and your students.

Certification Fees to Increase

Today educators who are due for recertification must send a check in the amount of \$10 to MSDE. If Superintendent Nancy Grasmick has her way, that check will soon be made out for \$75, a 750% increase. Dr. Grasmick is determined to raise fees, while the Governor cuts MSDE's Department of Certification.

Six years ago there was a similar effort to raise certification fees that failed, thanks to the hard work of MSTA. This year when the Superintendent testified to a House Committee to the need to raise the fees, members of the Legislature asked her if she had spoken with MSTA about the change. Of course, she had not.

While there is very likely to be an increase in the certification fees, it surely will not be the \$75 requested.

In the Spotlight...



Rick V. King

Rick has been a teacher of 29 years in Anne Arundel County, all of those years at Annapolis Senior High. He teaches US History and Government. Not only is Rick a teacher, he coached wrestling and girls soccer for 17 years, and has coached tennis for the last 11 years. He taught Drivers Ed for his first 17 years of teaching, until the program was eliminated. Rick has also been the building Representative and a TAAAC activist for many years.

Maryland Shortchanges Education

Maryland ranks 47th in the Country in total state and local spending as a percent of state personal income. Maryland ranks 44th in the Country on education spending as a percent of personal income. Fully funding Thornton would raise Maryland to 27th in the Country. With the mandates of No Child Left Behind, Maryland cannot continue to shortchange its students and its teachers.

Markowitz Represents National Health Administration Dealing with the NEA MemberCare Programs

We are pleased to announce the appointment of former TAAAC member, Michael Markowitz, as a representative of National Health Administration dealing with the NEA MemberCare Programs.

Mike will be available to meet with members individually or in a group seminar to review in detail the unique benefits of the NEA MemberCare Long-Term Care Insurance Program.

Mike will be contacting building representatives to make them aware of the availability of his services and to establish open lines of communication.

Meanwhile, if you would like to meet with Mike or arrange for a seminar in your area in the very near future, please call:

Mike Markowitz (410) 455-0680

Robert Fise (410) 461-3675

NEA MemberCare 1-800-884-2675

FEBRUARY ARC ATTENDANCE

The following schools, departments, and affiliates were represented at the February 4, 2004 Association Representative Council meeting:

Elementary - Annapolis, Belle Grove, Bodkin, Broadneck, Brock Bridge, Brooklyn Park, Crofton, Crofton Woods, Folger McKinsey, Fort Smallwood, Four Seasons, Freetown, George Cromwell, Germantown, Glen Burnie Park, Glendale, Harman, Hillsmere, Linthicum, Mayo, Meade Heights, Oakwood, Odenton, Park, Pasadena, Quarterfield, Ridgeway, Rolling Knolls, Severn, Shady Side, Solley, South Shore, Southgate, Sunset, Tyler Heights, West Annapolis, West Meade, Windsor Farm – **Secondary** – Annapolis Senior, Arundel Middle, Broadneck Senior, Brooklyn Park Middle, Central Middle, Chesapeake Senior, Crofton Middle, George Fox Middle, Glen Burnie Senior, Lindale Middle, MacArthur Middle, Magothy River Middle, Northeast Senior, Old Mill Middle North, Old Mill Middle South, Old Mill Senior, Severn River Middle, Severna Park Middle, South River Senior, Southern Senior – **Special** – Center of Applied Tech. North, Center of Applied Tech. South, Central Special, Mary E. Moss Academy, Ruth P. Eason - **Affiliate** – Counselors, EBOTA, EMAAAC, PPW's, Psychologists, Reading Teachers

Welcome New Members

Patricia A. Clark
Charity Dolan
Angela T. Goetz
Alexander L. Groff
Angela P. Iannacci
Charles R. Lehr
Pamela J. Luxhoj
Anne M. Mackenzie
Heather L. Seagraves

The NEA Host Committee Needs You

Maryland is responsible for the Information Booth, the Fund for Children and Public Education, and RA phones. We will need many volunteers to help. Volunteers will be paid \$25.00 and provided with lunch and dinner (if the RA goes beyond 6:00 p.m.). Please contact Nancy Gordon at geolakaye@aol.com for more information.

TAAAC-FEE Scholarship Awards

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We are pleased to announce that the TAAAC Foundation for Educational Excellence will, for the eleventh year, award scholarships to help students attending Anne Arundel County Public Schools with the costs of higher education.

More information and applications will soon be distributed to high schools.

Employment Opportunities:

DRD Pool Service, Inc. is accepting resumes for summer job openings as swimming pool field supervisors, swimming pool managers and lifeguard instructors. No Experience Necessary, will train. For more information, call Noelle Navarro @ 1-800-466-7665.

Capitol KOA Campground in Millersville, MD is now hiring for the 2004 season. Positions available include: **Desk Clerks, Grounds, After Hours Customer Service, Lifeguards, Tour Drivers (CDL required)**

Full-time Summer and/or part-time Spring and Fall

Flexible schedule

Send resume and position desired to:

Capitol KOA Campground
768 Cecil Avenue N.
Millersville, MD 21108

Tutorrific! Tutors needed for all subjects and grade levels, especially math! Much better pay than the large companies; a great way to make extra money! Tutor in homes throughout Howard County (mostly Laurel and Columbia). If you are interested in an interview, please e-mail Deborah Markowitz at tutorrific@comcast.net.

TAAAC's TASTY TEMPTATIONS

TAAAC is looking for recipes from teachers to add to our TASTY TEMPTATIONS Cookbook. If you have a wonderful recipe that you would like to add to the book and share with others, please contact the TAAAC office for more information.



Tax Preparation

Robert Pellicoro will be available for appointments for tax preparations at the TAAAC office on the following dates. Call the TAAAC office to arrange an appointment. **This service is for TAAAC members only.**

Mon., Mar. 8, 2004
2:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Thurs., Mar. 18, 2004
2:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

NOMINATIONS OPEN

The TAAAC Nominating Committee is accepting nominations for the **Credentials Committee** and the **Nominating Committee**. Nominations will be accepted until the April 7, 2004 ARC meeting.

NOMINATION FORM

Name _____

Home Address _____

School _____

Phone (H) _____ (W) _____

Ethnic group _____

I would like to place my name in nomination for the following position(s):

Credentials Committee

Nominating Committee