

TAAAC ACTION REPORT

Your Professional Organization

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

January 2006

A Teachers Lament

A poem by Stacey Buck

Dear Councilmen, Delegate, Senator or President,

I am writing to inform you of the Maryland State Teacher's lament.

We work with great devotion, with long hours and no resent,
Only to live in poverty when we reach retirement.

Our state is very wealthy, the third-richest in the nation;
We know to value our career, and we give our dedication.
And then we see the list of our states' pension-share donation,
We find that we rank 53rd; the second last state association!

The second lowest pension in the nation is a shame.
Benefits from other states are what future teachers look to claim.
Why not go to Pennsylvania? Higher salaries and pension gains,
With a 70% retirement share at the end of their teacher's game.

And then there is Virginia, New York and Jersey, Delaware,
Who all pay for retirement with amounts that are more fair.
In fact a young teacher who looks to settle anywhere
Can find a better package, that gives a much more equal share.

And so I'd like to ask for help in our poor-pension plight;
Please pass the pension reform bill that will come within our sight.

It really is imperative, and in fact it is most right,
To raise our retirement pensions to a more equitable height.

Thanks for your consideration of this most important need,
70,000 voting teachers will appreciate your deed.
We know that we have not been shorted because of stinginess
or greed,
And we hope that you vote yes and help the pension bill succeed!

TAAAC President Nears End of Term



Sheila M. Finlayson, your TAAAC President, is near the halfway point in her fourth and final year of a highly successful term as prominent leader of that organization, and it is an appropriate time to recognize her hard work and dedication. Sheila entered her tenure as local association president in the same year as the recently departed superintendent of schools; which served to strengthen her resolve, publicly voicing the concerns of educators at every opportunity. Remaining steadfast in her commitment through those contentious times, she eloquently, yet forcefully, continued speaking up and out for the needs of educators in the county. Membership is up, local educator compensation is on the increase, and benefits have been protected by both job action and court decision.

Sheila has demonstrated her tireless and undying support for educators and has used her substantial expertise in negotiating, organizing, and public speaking to defend the rights of educators. She has been the omnipresent voice of Anne Arundel County educators for 3 ½ years and now must move on. TAAAC by-laws limit the terms of elected officers to two consecutive two-year terms.



Sheila M. Finlayson

Happy New Year!

As the New Year begins, so does the 2006 Legislative Session. This is probably one of the most important sessions for educators in the State of Maryland since the passing of the collective bargaining law in 2002.

For months we have been educating you and our elected officials on the urgency of improving our pension. We have been emailing, calling and meeting with the legislators to assure that they will be supportive when the legislation is presented. But, our work has not ended.

There are still obstacles that are being placed in the way of our being able to retire with dignity. First of all, the Department of Legislative Services, whose responsibility it is to provide information to the legislators, presented to the GOP information that is counter to our position. They coupled our pension with Social Security, into which we pay, and determined that our actual pension is about 82%. They seemed to have ignored the fact that Social Security does not begin until age

COMMENTARY

62, at the earliest, and that's with a penalty. That means you may have ten or more years of living in poverty before you could afford to be retired. It is true that teachers in several states do not pay into Social Security but none of the states with whom we compete.

Why is it that all other state employees have a better retirement that we do? We love and respect our local police and firefighters and they have been given the respect they deserve. They retire after only twenty years of service with 50% of their salaries. The reality is that not only do we have the absolute

“In the fifth wealthiest state in the country, you deserve to retire with dignity.”

worst pension of all state employees; we have the worst pension in the nation. We deserve to have a 60% pension after 30 years of service. **(8920)**

The other obstacle that will be placed in the way is the cost of our pension enhancement. Yes, there could be a hefty price tag but it doesn't have to be. There are options that must be considered but the bottom line must be that educators deserve to retire with a pension on which they can live.

We do expect the Governor to propose a pension enhancement that will call for a defined contribution. We are asking for a defined benefit. The difference is clear. *A defined contribution* is based on contributions made by employees, and sometime by the employer, without providing death and disability benefits and there is no guarantee. *A defined benefit*, such as with the Teachers Retirement and Pension Systems, provides a benefit that is guaranteed and determined by a formula and it usually includes death benefits and disability benefits. We deserve to have a benefit upon which we can count, not one that will fluctuate with the stock market. **(6633)**

We must correct these misguided attempts to destroy our efforts. We must move ahead and keep our focus on getting the sponsors and the votes to pass our bill into law. The emails, phone calls and visits to the delegates and senators must continue. ***A message once a week will remind them that you are still expecting their support on this pension legislation.***

Monday, January 23, 2006, is TAAAC Night in the Legislature. All are invited to join us for a briefing at the MSTA Office and then a trip up the hill to lobby our elected leaders. Then, we'll watch them at work. They must see us there!

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TAAAC Action Report

Teachers Association of Anne Arundel County	Officers	Board of Directors	Editors	
2521 Riva Road, Suite L 7 Annapolis, Maryland 21401 (410) 224-3330 (301) 261-8309	Sheila M. Finlayson, President Timothy Mennuti, Vice President Ron Russell, Secretary-Treasurer	Donzella Parker Bert Alice Liptak Yolie Marshall Carol Petrosky	Enid Collison-Lee Susie C. Jablinske Richard Benfer Edith M. McDougald Kathy Naeseth Ken Baughman Shirley Little	Bill Jones, Executive Director and Managing Editor Roxanne L. Beach, Editor

From Contentia this month . . . *New Year's Gratitude*

Although the *Contentia* column normally illustrates misinterpretations or misapplications of the Negotiated Agreement or Board policy, this month, in the spirit of the season of giving, we'd like to recognize some of the contributions made to the school system by Unit I members.

The unsung efforts and accomplishments of the guidance counselors in this county are too numerous to list here, nonetheless, their perseverance to ensure the academic and emotional well-being of students must be stated. Aided in their efforts by school psychologists, speech therapists and PPWs, the contributions made by this highly-skilled group of professionals cannot be overstated. Though TAAAC is not the employer of these dedicated individuals, we would like to send a collective thank-you to all pupil personnel persons for their tireless commitment to the students, school system and community.

Resource teachers and specialists continue to provide additional services to further benefit students' instructional successes. Their devotion to the students' educational, technical and supplemental needs is integral to the overall success of the county's school programs, and their excellent service should be acknowledged. Thanks to all.

Classroom teachers are far and away the largest group represented by TAAAC, and as such, often gain the most notoriety in media and public opinion. The public may be unaware of the significant hours and energy donated by our frontline workers in the trenches, but TAAAC has espoused their plight for decades. Here's to teachers that make connections with hard-to-reach students; teachers who give endlessly of themselves to provide a well balanced education and safe environment; teachers who demand little, yet contribute directly to the welfare of the business and social community. Words cannot express our gratitude for the contributions teachers make to raise the collective conscience and stir the imagination of the community's children. **(6452)**

Finally, TAAAC would like to express our heartfelt thanks to all Unit I members that, through their volunteer efforts, make our organization strong and viable. The incalculable hours donated to committee work, task force participation, Association Representative responsibilities, political lobbying, negotiating, and organizing Association activities are the mainstay of our existence. This is truly the essence of any union; collective action as one for the common good of all.

From the TAAAC family to yours,

Have a healthy and prosperous New Year!

(continued from page 2)

Join our Legislative Committee every Monday night from January 11 through April 10, 2006. We must be vigilant with our expectations. **(6175)**

2006 is an election year. Many of our current elected leaders, and those who hope to replace them,

will be looking to seek the coveted "teacher's endorsement." Well, this year, we will have clear records on which to base our endorsements. We will be looking to see who has openly and definitively provided the support and leadership for our pension legislation. They will not be able to simply give lip service as being education candidates; they will be required to walk the walk, along

with talking the talk.

After many years of working for this pension enhancement, the time is now. In the fifth wealthiest state in the country, you deserve to retire with dignity. You deserve a respectable pension benefit for your years of hard work and dedication to the students and communities. With all of us working together, we can make this happen.

A Teacher's Pay Response

It was with great amusement that I read the recent letter by Colleen Hyslop regarding "Teacher's Pay."

While it is fair to ask taxpayers and voters to assess the way in which they spend their tax dollars, perhaps it would also be fair to give them correct information rather than misinformation on which to base their opinions.

Here is the real truth:

* Teachers work 190+ days a year over 10 months. They are paid for 10 months work over a 10 month period, unless they choose an option to save their earned wages so as to spread their money evenly over 12 months. There is NO vacation pay!

* Snow days are days borrowed, not days off. When the school system closes for students, schools are also closed for teachers so that both teachers and students can plan on making up that day at the end of the year. (There are generally 4 extra days built in to the school calendar for snow and weather related closings)

* Considering the time that teachers arrive prior to contracted hours and other additional time spent after school, grading papers at home and activities and meetings at night and on weekends...8 hours per day on average is often easily exceeded.

* Yes, the current starting salary is about \$36,339 per year. Is that out of line for professionals with a 4 year degree and certification and who are required to continue at least to the Master's level to maintain their professional status and keep their job? Our new employees can't even afford to rent property in this county, let alone purchase it. Anne Arundel County is the 3rd richest county in the 5th richest state in the country. Despite this, our current pension for teachers is so pathetic that teachers can never expect to retire with a living wage regardless of how many years of service they accumulate. They will have to work until they die. Because of these factors, many are leaving for "greener pastures."

* Teacher failure rate? When society looks at itself in the mirror, we see hard working teacher professionals doing what often seems like missionary work, with raw materials that are all too often flawed due to the rapid moral, social and cultural decline of our society.

* How many others can get this deal, you ask? Just those who you wish to treat unfairly.

Walk a mile in our shoes.
Bill Selway
Glen Burnie

IMPORTANT **NOTICE**

Sick Leave Bank Rules Temporary Waiver

Effective on December 14, 2005, the standing Sick Leave Bank Rules are temporarily waived only to the extent necessary to extend the open enrollment period to allow TAAAC members to enroll in the Sick Leave Bank up to March 1, 2006. The temporary extension of the open enrollment period will apply to all TAAAC members who may apply for enrollment up to March 1, 2006, and all those who may have application for enrollment pending.

Any member who has attempted enroll late this year, now has an opportunity to reapply and be appropriately enrolled prior to March 1. Keep in mind that while the Sick Leave Bank itself provides extremely valuable disability income protection at the cost of only one sick day, in order to be eligible for one of our longer term products provided by The Hartford members must be in the Sick Leave Bank.

Need financial security or are you low on sick leave?

Aflac and The Hartford can protect your biggest asset - your salary.

If you are out of work, you could be paid for illness, accident, surgery or pregnancy. (Aflac even pays you benefits in addition to your sick leave and during the summer.) Call us to meet with a rep 301-585-4990 or 1-877-884-3784.

TAAAC Joins CRASC in Cell Phone and Ink Cartridge Collection

CRASC, the Chesapeake Regional Association of Student Councils, is a county-wide representative organization of secondary school student government associations which serves as a forum where students can speak out and help shape the direction that the educational system will take. The organization is involved in everything from school discipline procedures to course design and development of curricular programs in your school. As a sounding board for students' feelings and ideas, CRASC is structured to take these thoughts and present them to the proper policy-making body, whether it be the Board of Education, County Government or the State Legislature. (7131)

AACPS is unique because we have the only student member of the Board of Education with full voting rights. Most school districts do not have students on their boards and if they do, they do not have voting privileges. CRASC is known throughout the country because they select the student member on our Board of Education.

TAAAC has joined CRASC in their newest fund raising effort, collecting used cell phones and empty ink cartridges. We will be helping by asking you to bring your used cell phones, with the batteries but without the charges, and your ink cartridges to the monthly TAAAC meeting or drop them off at the office.

Recent Actions of TAAAC Leadership:

TAAAC Board of Directors:

*Approved a temporary waiver of the deadline for Sick Leave Bank enrollment, December 14, 2005. [see article]

*Approved TAAAC's entering into a memorandum of understanding along with other education employee coalition members intended to safeguard retiree healthcare, December 14, 2005.

*Unanimously endorsed Sheila Finlayson's candidacy for MSTA President, November 9, 2005.

TAAAC Association Representative Council:

*Following a lively debate, supported leaving the proposed 06-07 holiday break to remain as proposed in the pending school calendar, December 7, 2005.

*Unanimously endorsed Sheila Finlayson's candidacy for MSTA President, November 2, 2005.

*Approved a vote of "No Confidence" in Dr. Smith, November 2, 2005.

You Might be a Public School Teacher If...

1. You want to slug the next person who says, "Must be nice to work 8 to 3:20 and have summers free."
2. You believe "unbelievably annoying" should have its own box on the report card.
3. You believe that unspeakable evils will befall you if anyone says "Boy, the kids sure are mellow today."
4. When out in public you feel the urge to snap your fingers at children you do not know and correct their behavior.
5. You reflect that marking all A's on report cards would make life SO much easier.
6. You think people should be required to spend two years teaching middle school before being able to reproduce.
7. You encourage an obnoxious parent to check into home schooling.
8. You think caffeine should be available in intravenous form.

TAX PREPARATION

R. J. Pellicoro & Associates is accepting appointments for tax preparation on the following dates at the TAAAC office:

Monday, February 20
8 AM – 2 PM

Thursday, February 23
2 PM – 7 PM

Wednesday, March 1
2 PM – 7 PM

Tuesday, March 7
2 PM – 7 PM

Monday, March 13
2 PM – 7 PM

To schedule an appointment, please call the TAAAC office.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Ann M. Anderson
Patricia C. Anderson
Yolanda Blackwell
Barbara Geier
Melvin C. Gillmeister
Steven S. Levy
Teresa M. Love
Harmony J. Quinn
Barbara J. Smith
Kathryn M. Whitman

NOMINATIONS OPEN

The TAAAC Nominating Committee is accepting nominations for **President, Vice President, Board of Directors, NEA Delegates, and MSTA “Fund for Children and Public Education” Representative.**

Nomination forms are due in the TAAAC office by 5:30 p.m. on January 17, 2006.

NOMINATION FORM

Name _____

Address _____

School _____

Phone (H) _____ (W) _____

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

- President
- Vice President
- Board of Director
- NEA Delegate
- MSTA “Fund for Children and Public Education” Rep.

Steps to a Healthier You In the New Year

USDA Approved

While there isn't one simple rule that works for all people, the USDA recommends that working these basic steps into your daily life can help you maintain your optimum health.

Eat 6 ounces of grains every day. Make half of your grains whole grains.

Eat 2 ½ cups of vegetables every day, and be sure to vary the type.

Eat 2 cups of fruit each day, but don't overdo the fruit juices.

Drink 3 cups of low-fat or fat-free dairy products each day.

Eat 5 ½ ounces of lean meats or poultry every day, preferably not fried.

Strike a balance between your food intake and physical activity. Try to do at least 30 minutes of exercise per day.