

# TAAAC ACTION REPORT

Your Professional Organization

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

March 2006

## TAAAC Begins Endorsement Process

The 2006 elections are rapidly approaching and the TAAAC endorsement is highly sought. In order to make endorsements, TAAAC will follow procedures which include the creation of screening committees to handle the interviews and make recommendations to the full endorsement counsel. Committees will be set up for the following positions: County Executive, County Council seats in all seven Districts, state senators and delegates in Districts 30, 31, 32, 33 and 21, which we share with Prince George's County.

If you are interested in serving on a screening committee for an office in the district in which you live, please call the TAAAC Office and indicate your interest. You will be notified of your appointment.

Delegates to the MST/NEA Spring RA, on Saturday May 20, 2006, will be making endorsements in the gubernatorial race as well as in the U.S. Senate and Representative races. Your input is valued at every level of our process.

## Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

Mark Your Calendars for the  
MSTA Spring RA

**Saturday, May 20, 2006**  
Columbia Sheraton

**What:** To endorse candidates  
for statewide elections  
and  
To adopt the new two-year  
budget

**Who:** All Delegates to the Fall  
RA are also Delegates to the  
Spring RA

## SPRING MEMBERSHIP BLITZ

In order to increase membership, the Membership Committee is organizing a Spring Membership Blitz. The Blitz is scheduled for Monday, April 24 and Tuesday, April 25, 2006. Schools without building representatives and with low membership are targeted for visits. Visits will be made by TAAAC staff and members. If you are available either of these days and are interested in helping with recruiting efforts, please contact Membership Committee Chairperson, Allison Crews at [aljocrew@aol.com](mailto:aljocrew@aol.com).

## School System Committee on High School Schedules

In response to recommendations made by last year's Teacher Workload Task Force and concerns raised by principals, AACPS has formed a committee to look into the current A/B day High School Schedule. A Steering Committee met earlier this year and a full committee including two TAAAC appointees, content coordinators, administrators, representatives from the Citizens' Advisory Committee, and the Anne Arundel County Council of PTA's has begun to meet this month. The charge of this committee is to investigate a number of different scheduling models in use to determine the most effective model for AACPS. Once the committee has researched the models, they will present their findings to the Superintendent of Schools.

Arlen Liverman, Director of High Schools, was quoted in a January 6, 2006 News Release, saying, "We recognize the strains of the current high school schedule and have decided to re-examine its effectiveness. It is very important to design a schedule that is both efficient for students and effective for the needs of teachers." As the committee continues to meet, further updates will be provided.

# COMMENTARY



Sheila M. Finlayson

Dear Colleagues,

March 1, 2006 marks seven weeks into the 2006 General Assembly. For educators around the state, this is probably one of the most important sessions of our legislature in a long time. And, it's more than half over.

Hopefully, by the time this is in your hands, we will have at least one pension bill. The sponsors from last year are working on a new bill and we still expect the Joint Committee on Pensions to bring forth a bill. (2077)

As we consider the merits of the legislation, we must also think about the value of improving the retiree benefits, from worst in the country, to a level that is commensurate with the third wealthiest state in the country.

We know that this could be a big ticket item if we receive all of the benefits we are seeking, a 2% multiplier and total retroactivity. We are also prepared to pay our fair share of the additional cost. While we all know this is the right thing to do for educators and education in Maryland, there is still some reluc-

tance on the part of some of our elected officials.

On the issue of pensions, I categorize our elected officials into three categories. There are the staunch supporters who recognize the value of what you do everyday and the value of keeping good teachers in Maryland. They will support our legislation no matter what.

*“...this is the right thing to do for educators and education in Maryland...”*

Then there is the staunch opposition. They will find every excuse as to why they should not even have to discuss the topic with us. They will enter our meetings and talk about what a nice day it is or what a nice session they are having without ever acknowledging our purpose.

We have elected officials who respond to us by giving us a list of perceived fallacies in our arguments for the pension enhancement. They make their own comparison with Pennsylvania with little regard for all of the facts. They talk about an 82% benefit, which includes Social Security, which we pay, and future costs of living increases, which are not predetermined. Never mind that one would have to live in poverty for the first

ten years or so after retirement before future benefits kick in. They talk about the contribution rates of other states and ignore the fact that it was our legislature who *denied* educators the right to contribute to their pension system.

Then there are those in the middle who seem to talk the talk but who don't walk the walk. They lack the overt action to demonstrate their support. It is this group we want to open the door and give them the opportunity to champion this fight with us and for us. We cannot afford to have legislators simply sit in meetings and allow things to happen. We must be able to rely, on those we elect to represent us, to actually stand up and go to bat for us.

You should be very proud of the advocacy that has occurred in Anne Arundel County during the first seven weeks of the session. Large groups of you have been down to the legislature every Monday night and we have met with most, if not all, of our legislators. You have sent hundred and maybe thousands of emails and letters. New faces have joined us to lobby and that is all remarkable. But, not enough!

I ask you to step up your efforts, use your creativity and activate even more members – new and different ones.

*(Continued on page 4)*

## TAAAC Action Report

Teachers Association of Anne Arundel County	Officers	Board of Directors	Editors
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## From Contentia this month . . . *Assault Leave*

What constitutes an assault? When am I eligible for assault leave?

Although we hope you are never the victim of an attack or assault while performing your duties, we must acknowledge that assaults on Unit I members do occur. Obviously, if a person, including students, purposely makes an attempt to harm you physically it qualifies as an assault. The key word here is *attempt*. Attempting to inflict physical harm is considered an assault. Verbal threats of violence against teachers constitute an assault under the provisions of Article 26-101 of the Education Code of Maryland, which prohibits “*disturbing, molesting, or threatening teachers...*” If you are threatened with or are the victim of violence during the course of your employment, the appropriate action is to call 911 and report an assault. (3076)

If you are injured as a result of an assault, you may be entitled to assault leave. Assault leave is provided for in COMAR and Article 8.J. of the Negotiated Agreement, which requires:

### **Article 8 J. Assault Leave**

*“A Unit I member who is absent due to physical disability/injury that results from an assault while in the scope of Board employment shall be kept on full pay status instead of sick leave during such period of absence. In this section, an assault is defined as an attempt by a person to cause or purposely, knowingly or recklessly cause bodily injury to a Unit I member.”*

If, through a student’s negligent and disruptive behavior, you suffer a physical injury, you may be entitled to assault leave under these provisions. In cases where an injury is sustained accidentally, workers’ compensation claims should be filed, but assault provisions will not be applicable. Cases of possible assault will have to be examined and a determination made on an individual basis; hence, the importance of contacting your TAAAC representative when an injury occurs.

## **MSTA ELECTION BALLOTS DUE March 3**

**DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF BALLOTS** is **FRIDAY, MARCH 3, 2006, by 5:00 p.m.** - send to “MSTA Elections, PMB #181, 3 Church Circle, Annapolis, MD 21401.”

Remember that snow and other weather conditions could delay ballots from being received in time.

**Please note that MST A has an Annapolis location for receipt of ballots. Since this is not a PO Box, but a private mail box (PMB), ballots can be returned by certified mail, overnight express, UPS, or hand delivered for those wishing to bring them to Annapolis during regular working hours.** The private mail box is located in Annapolis, at 3 Church Circle, which is across the side street from the Post Office on the circle. For those who may wish to hand deliver ballots, the PMB is located in a company called “Annapolis Post Box” and is open from 8:30 AM to 5:30 PM Monday through Friday and 8:30AM to 12:00 noon on Saturdays.

**PLEASE ENCOURAGE OUR MEMBERS TO VOTE AND RETURN THE BALLOTS EARLY ENOUGH TO BE SURE THE BALLOTS ARE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN MARCH 3<sup>rd</sup>!**

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## **TAAAC ELECTION BALLOTS DUE March 21**

It is time to elect TAAAC President, Vice President and five Board of Directors. Ballots were distributed to Representatives at the February ARC. They are **due in the TAAAC office on Tuesday, March 21 by 5:30 p.m. and /or postmarked no later than Friday, March 10, 2006.** Ballots not received by the deadline will be declared invalid. Please do not use basket mail delivery. Use the postage-paid envelope enclosed or drop them off at the office.

## **ALTERNATIVE—MSA**

“Inappropriate” and “inconsistent” are two words that are continually linked to the Alternative Maryland State Assessment (Alt-MSA). TAAAC has heard from many members about the numerous and extensive problems with the Alt-MSA program. These problems include workload issues, subjective responses, website troubles, lack of guidance, and unsuitable assessments for the population served, just to name a few.

While solutions and answers to all these problems will not happen overnight, actions to improve the assessment must occur. Last year several members, along with MSTA President Pat Foerster, met with the Maryland State Department of Education’s Assistant Superintendent of Special Education along with other MSDE staff members. Despite these meetings and the constructive proposals suggested, the difficulties with Alt-MSA continue to exist. **(0380)**

For this reason, TAAAC is organizing a group of teachers, parents, and community members to present the many problems and issues surrounding Alt-MSA to the Maryland State Board of Education. We hope these efforts will motivate the Board members, those who make the decisions at the State level, to make changes to improve this inappropriate and inconsistent assessment. If you have information to share or want to be a part of this effort, please contact the TAAAC office.

*(Continued from page 2)*

Activate the ones who have yet to send those emails and letters or make the calls. The contacts need to go to the legislators in the districts where you vote. Invite the new folks to MSTA to lobby in Annapolis on Monday nights.

Let’s redouble our efforts with more letters, more calls, more emails and more visits on Monday nights. The clock is ticking towards the end of the session, April 10 Sine Die, so now is not the time to slow down but rather to step up the pressure! **(2797)**

## **Read Across America**

On March 2, 2006, TAAAC will be commemorating the 9<sup>th</sup> annual Read Across America celebration to promote literacy and the love of reading. Many illustrious guest readers have graciously responded to invitations to read in schools across the county. Your RAA contact person has bookmarks for students who participate in the school activities and certificates for guest readers. This year, individual schools were encouraged to celebrate reading activities using their own creativity to best suit their needs. If your school has stories and/or photos that capture the activities at your school, please share them with the TAAAC office so we can highlight your celebration. TAAAC President, Sheila Finlayson, and staff will also be delivering books to newborns at the local hospital who share Dr. Seuss’ birthday.

## **Minority Affairs Committee NEA Grant**

Congratulations to the TAAAC Minority Affairs Committee for their efforts in securing a NEA Urban Initiatives Grant. The grant, in the amount of \$5,000, will help to fund efforts and projects that will support the committee’s goals of attracting minority teachers to Anne Arundel County. The grant will also be used to establish support systems and communications links for minority educators once they are employed by AACPS. Committee members will be assisting AACPS staff with their recruitment efforts at universities and colleges across the country. A commendable endeavor is now underway, thanks to the dedication and commitment of these committee members. Great job!

**Visit us on the Web at**  
**[www.mstanea.org/taaac](http://www.mstanea.org/taaac)**

February 7, 2006

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON INCREASING TEACHERS' PENSIONS

I am writing to set the record straight.

Let me begin by saying, I have always supported increases to the shamefully inadequate pension benefits Maryland teachers receive. And during the 2006 General Assembly, I will continue to support legislation to increase teachers' pensions.

Unfortunately, some MSTA members sent me a letter stating, that they "regret that I did not support last year's pension reform bill." This is entirely false.

In fact Patricia A. Foerster, MSTA President, sent me a letter of apology, dated February 1, stating that the letter contained inaccurate information. Mrs. Foerster added, "You and your committee did include language in the Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act, mandating that the Joint Committee on Pensions develop legislation for consideration by the 2006 General Assembly. Let me take this opportunity to thank you for your help last year, and to say we truly look forward to your help and support again this year."

Indeed, you will have it. Good teachers are *the* critical factor in education. We cannot hope to attract or retain good teachers when surrounding states and the District of Columbia offer far more attractive pension for teachers.

We are all singing from the same page. You have my support for what you as Maryland teachers deserve. It is no less than shameful that the third wealthiest state in the nation is at the bottom of ladder with teachers' pension benefits.

Sincerely,  
Senator James E. DeGrange

**Don't Forget to Deduct  
TAAAC Dues from Taxes**

**Just a reminder that your TAAAC dues are tax deductible. Check your W2 form and your pay stubs for the exact amount.**

**Mills-King Award**

The Mills-King Award Ceremony took place on Thursday, February 23, 2006 at Mills-Parole Elementary School. This annual event highlighted the accomplishments of nominees for their contribution to excellence in human relations in education. (5001)

The nominees for this year's Mills-King Award were: Doris Anderson-Page, Sharon Atkinson, Kim Baicar, Bonnie Booth, Jill Dame, Carole Ehemann, Kevin Gast, Jennifer Johnson, Katheryn Jonas, Meredith Kelly, Edith McDougald, and James R. Turner. The evening culminated with the announcement of the winner, Sharon Atkinson, a guidance counselor at Maryland City Elementary.

The keynote speaker for the event was Leslie Stanton, Specialist in Human Relations, AACPS, and musical selections were provided by Nicholas Barnett and the Mills-Parole Student Chorus.

**TAX PREPARATION**

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

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

Sheryl P. Barrow  
 Shanti L. Bennett  
 Lauren N. Brown  
 Ashley D. Clempner  
 Charles L. Dewling  
 Paul W. Gery  
 Megan M. Hall  
 Ann E. Hammer  
 Roseanne F. Harner  
 Lara R. Hoffman  
 Shirley Jackson-Avery  
 Alan W. Katz  
 Mahgol Kordmafi  
 Mary R. Landis  
 Michael J. Laskowski  
 Kelly K. Melzer  
 Anjan S. Nath  
 James S. Neff  
 Jessica L. Padgett  
 Marcie M. Parke  
 Henry G. Poole, III  
 Penelope J. Renoll  
 Cameron J. Russo  
 Lindsey E. Shives  
 Amanda J. Swanger  
 Annette M. Topping  
 Suzanne M. Young

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

DRD Pool Services, Inc. is accepting resumes for summer job openings as swimming pool field supervisors and swimming pool managers. No Experience Necessary. For more information, call Noelle Navarro @ 410-923-7665, 1-888-785-7665, or visit our website: [www.drdpools.com](http://www.drdpools.com)

### NOMINATIONS OPEN

The Nominating Committee is accepting nominations for the **Credentials and Nominating Committees**. Nominations will be accepted until the April 5, 2006 Association Representative Council Meeting.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (S) \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Credentials**

**Nominating**

### NOMINATIONS OPEN

The Nominating Committee is accepting nominations for the **Sick Leave Bank Approval Committee and the AACPS Calendar Committee (Elementary)**. Nominations will be accepted until the May 3, 2006 Association Representative Council Meeting.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (S) \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Sick Leave Bank Approval Committee**

**AACPS Calendar Committee (Elem.)**