

TAAAC ACTION REPORT

Your Professional Organization

Volume 39, Number 2



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

October 2006

The Political Scene – Part Two

POST PRIMARY ENDORSEMENTS

The primaries are over. We won some and we lost some. Now is the time to move on. As I mentioned last month, endorsements are an on going situation. Some of our members would prefer that we have a blanket policy of not endorsing candidates in primaries. Some would prefer that we not be involved in politics at all. Both are worthwhile positions that I would agree to if we lived in a perfect society. Unfortunately, we live in an imperfect society, one in which there are never enough resources to satisfy all of society's wants and needs. In this society we constantly have to compete for scarce resources. That means we have to be "players."

In my last column, I mentioned guiding facts which I will summarize here:

- We are an organization of individuals.
- We work hard to represent all of our members.
- We don't use dues money for political activities.
- Our endorsement process is transparent.

As we move on to the General Election we have regrouped. Look at the list of endorsed candidates and you will see some changes. Several of our earlier endorsements did not survive their primary battles. That means we re-examined our choices and selected new partners. This is a continuously evolving process. The members of the various committees strive to protect us by endorsing candidates who have what we believe is the best possible voting record on education issues.

***Education is the power to think clearly,
the power to act well in the world's
work, and the power to appreciate life.***

- Brigham Young

County Council:

District 1	Daryl Jones (D)
District 2	Ed Middlebrooks (R)
District 3	Ron Dillon (R)
District 4	Jamie Benoit (D)
District 5	Cathy Vitale (R)
District 6	Josh Cohen (D)
District 7	Ed Reilly (R)

House of Delegates:

District 21	Ben Barnes (D) Barbara Frush (D) Joseline Pena-Melnyk (D)
District 30	Michael E. Busch (D) Virginia Clagett (D) Barbara Samorajczyk (D)
District 31	Joan Cadden (D) Thomas Fleckenstein (D) Craig Reynolds (D)
District 32	Mary Ann E. Love (D) Ted Sophocleus (D) Pamela Beidle (D)
District 33A	Patricia Weathersbee (D) Paul G. Rudolph (D)
District 33B	Bob Costa (R)

Senate:

District 21	Jim Rosapepe (D)
District 30	John C. Astle (D)
District 31	Walter Shandrowsky (D)
District 32	James E. DeGrange (D)
District 33	Scott Hymes (D)



Bill Jones

**On Membership Surge and ...
“Is free-riding a character flaw?”**

At the time of this writing, TAAAC is in the midst of working hard to educate local educators regarding how hard it has worked and how much progress it has made to advance their economic and professional interests. And for those of you not completely aware, let’s quickly summarize what TAAAC has accomplished since the fall of 2004 - *and these are only the highlights:*

- Negotiated two collective bargaining agreements that will provide 22.7% to 23.8% in cumulative across-the-board salary increases by July 1, 2008, in addition to step and longevity increases.
- Negotiated a restructured salary scale that increases projected 30-year career earnings by a half-million dollars, a 35% increase. *[Enough to change the standard of living of educators.]*
- Negotiated employee indemnification in the event of a change in healthcare carrier.
- Negotiated a 34% increase in paid individual and group planning time.

COMMENTARY

- Successfully lobbied the Maryland General Assembly to increase educators’ pensions benefit by up to 29%.

With these striking results, along with other valuable benefits TAAAC provides, local educators have realized that their Association is more aggressive, has done more, and can provide more than they may have previously thought. As a result, they are signing up in large numbers to help support and fund further good service. Over the six months prior to this writing, seven hundred and eighty-eight [that’s correct, 788!] have chosen to join TAAAC and help support what it

of their projected income before and after retirement, who stubbornly refuse to contribute their dues. Some present ostensible reasons such as *the dues are too high*, or *they don’t agree with the political positions of the NEA*, or *the candidate endorsements of TAAAC*. But, the facts are that nearly 600 teachers new to the county this year, many of whom earn much less than our current free-riders, have seen the value in membership and the *rightness* in contributing their share; and TAAAC has publicly and repeatedly indicated that dues are not and cannot be used for political purpose.

“...there is one general truism. It is that they would rather someone else pay their bill.”

does for them. By the time this article is read, the number will have risen beyond the eight hundred mark. TAAAC is very pleased to welcome them aboard, and will be even more pleased to accept them as active and involved advocates for their craft and for their colleagues.

Despite all of the above, there is a sizable portion of Unit 1 employees who willingly accept the salary increases, the guardianship of their healthcare plans, and the swelling

I have worked for or held office in a union since I began my adult career in 1978, nearly three decades ago. I’ve recruited members face-to-face, worked representation elections and challenges in large and small groups, organized bargaining units, bargained contracts, and served as advocate in grievance arbitrations, administrative appeals, and in disputes over bargaining unit composition. That significant experience, which spanned blue collar, white collar, “pink” collar, law enforcement, and education employees, has revealed to me that despite the excuses given by most free-riders in any industry, there is one general truism. It is that they would rather someone else pay their bill. A character flaw? You be the judge.

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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 (410) 841-6022 (301) 261-8309 FAX (410) 841-5117 www.mstanea.org/taaac	Timothy Mennuti, President Richard Benfer, Vice President Ron Russell, Secretary-Treasurer	Enid Collison-Lee Susie C. Jablinske Yolie Marshall Shirley Little Sarah Weller-Bentivegna	Tamara Johnson Ken Baughman Grace Matthews Carol Petrosky Vacancy Bill Jones, Executive Director and Managing Editor Roxanne L. Beach, Editor

From Contentia this month . . . *Restructuring of the Salary Scale*

Under the Negotiated Agreement, there has been a significant restructuring of the Salary Scale. The scale has now been compacted to 28 salary steps (down from 33). The purpose is to enable teachers to move more quickly to the top salary and thereby increase their overall life time earnings.

However, the restructuring has led to confusion for some of our members in determining if they are being paid on the correct step. Therefore, the following explanation should help to clear up any misunderstandings.

First, teachers in their first, second and third year, have all moved to step three of the salary scale which is now the first step of the new scale.

Second, Steps 18, 22, 24, and 28 of the new scale are essentially longevity steps. Therefore, you remain on Step 18 for 4 years, Step 22 for 2 years, Step 24 for 4 years, and Step 28 for the remainder of your career. For example, a teacher with 18-21 years of experience credit (actual time in the classroom) earns Salary Step 18 this year.

Next year, the Salary Scale will be further compacted to 25 steps. That will make the new longevity steps 17, 20, 22, and 25.

As you look at the progression, you realize that TAAAC has also worked to reduce the number of years that a person stays on any longevity step on the scale; again, increasing your overall earnings.

So, as you review your Personnel Action Notice, sent from payroll this year; you will need to check your total experience credit (actual time in the classroom) and your Salary Step (where that total experience credit places you on the salary scale).

As always, any questions that arise should be addressed to payroll or TAAAC for clarification. It is important that you review this information every year to make sure you are being paid correctly.

Lowering Dues by Trigger Tripping

Two factors have been putting upward pressure on membership dues and TAAAC is working to ameliorate both.

The first, and the easiest to resolve, is that dues were deducted over only 20 pay periods for all 10-month employees, even though they were being paid 26 times per year. As you may already realize, TAAAC went to the AACPS payroll office and with their cooperation spread the payments out over the entire year. The result was a 23% reduction in the bi-weekly payment.

The second, and much more difficult to resolve, is the number of free-riding Unit 1 employees who make no contribution. While their number has shrunk by more than 200 over the past six months, their ranks are still sufficient to slow progress, obstruct services, and make those who do pay, pay more. TAAAC is within a few dozen membership enrollments of triggering a *modified agency shop*. Once triggered, employees hired on or after the effective date will either have to join TAAAC or pay their fairshare for the services provided them.

To help trip that trigger, TAAAC will be offering a very temporary incentive over a 20-day period beginning later in October, during which non-members may have a good portion of their FY07 dues rebated to them at the time of signing. The rebate, in the amount of \$100, is offered as a way to welcome some of those non-members who may be uncertain of the value of membership and the "rightness" of supporting their bargaining agent and professional association. The benefit that this will provide to current members is that many

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What a Difference a Year Makes!

A New Superintendent – Now what?

Dr. Kevin Maxwell became Superintendent on July 1 and I became TAAAC President August 1. In early August we met for lunch and I invited him to the Celebrate Teachers Picnic. He confirmed that he would be there and instructed his staff to move several important appointments in order to attend. Many of you had an opportunity to meet with Dr. Maxwell and several Board of Education members at the picnic.

In the week before the picnic I realized that our 12-month members could not attend because of the Friday date. A call to Dr. Maxwell resulted in his sending an e-mail to senior staff asking them to release 12-month Unit 1 employees in time to participate in the picnic.

Earlier that week he called to invite me to participate in his first week's school visits. I agreed, and the first week of school we visited 37 schools in five days.

That set of visits allowed me to compare resources available throughout the system. We visited schools in all parts of the county, including special facilities such as Ruth Parker Eason. Even though I thought that I knew something about our system, I continued to be amazed by the scope of the operation.

One result of the visits was that I had an opportunity to get to under-

stand what his vision is for the system. We are fortunate in that for the first time in several years we have a multi-year contract. That stability (assuming the County Council continues to fund it) means that we can concentrate more closely on workload issues.

When community based issues spilled over into Annapolis High School, the Superintendent spent a full day in the school that Thursday working with staff and teachers.

On Friday, September 18, 2006, we were both scheduled to attend the Bates Dedication and then visit another group of schools. Because of the Thursday events, the Superintendent suggested that we do a short visit to Annapolis High School before visiting the other schools. We arrived during lunch, saw a well ordered, relatively quiet lunch, talked with faculty and staff, saw a few students (all with passes) in the halls, spoke with the principal and left. All in all a rather quiet, dull time. I mention that it was quiet and dull because that is not the impression you would have gotten from the media. As I spoke with several Annapolis teachers over the next few days, they were uniformly satisfied with how the administration handled the situation. They were especially impressed by the fact that student hearings were transferred to the board and not held in the school.

What do I expect for the future? Well for one thing, both Dr. Maxwell and I know that we will probably not agree on everything. We will probably have situations in which we have differing interpretations of the facts. What we do want to happen, however, is that we are able to disagree without being disagreeable.

We are once again in a time of change. We know from experience that not all change is progress. As educators we want what is good for our students. Does that mean we know all of the answers to the problems facing education today? No, not by a long shot. What we do know, however, is that all change will ultimately have to be implemented by us.

We are the "point people" in all education reform. In order to be able to help our students, there are several things we need:

1. We need to be part of the process.
2. We need good training programs offered well in advance of the date we are supposed to implement the new programs.
3. We need to know that discipline issues will be handled in such a way that the student is helped without blaming the teacher for either the behavior or the situation.
4. We need consistency.

Visit us on the Web at www.mstane.org/taaac

Odds and Ends

This column can best be titled “odds and ends.” When I started to write it, I had a laundry list of things that I wanted to mention. As the list got longer, I realized that even though there was no central idea to tie everything together, that individually each of these items needed to be addressed.

As I worked through these ideas over the course of a month, some evolved into columns of their own. One idea, “The Road Trip,” evolved into a piece on my trip with Dr Maxwell to 37 schools in five days. Another topic that evolved into a column was the question of “Why are we involved in Politics?”

The question “Who’s on First” is a line from an old Bud Abbott and Lou Costello routine. It certainly is a good introduction to this topic.

When I visit a building, I always try to make contact with the building representative. Sometimes this is easier said than done. At some schools I am met with blank stares or worse yet someone tells me “We don’t have a TAAAC Rep.” The problem then becomes “How do we provide service to the members in this building?” If you are in a school that doesn’t have a TAAAC Representative, I would recommend several possible ways to stay connected:

•**Team Approach** – Several people agree to share the duties so that everyone helps on a rotating basis. Example: Three people share going to the monthly ARC. The person who goes then hands off the mate-

rials to the others to place in teacher mailboxes.

•**Rotating Chair** – Several members agree to be the TAAAC Rep. for a month at a time. That person attends the ARC and then does the distribution.

Another interesting question is “Who is my Feeder System Director and what do they do?”

In an effort to tighten up our management of the school representatives system, we have set up a Feeder System Director. This is an individual who is already an elected member of the TAAAC Board of Directors. Their job is to meet with a Feeder group each month to pass on information and to listen to suggestions. We are using the feeder group system as a sounding board. This system will allow building representatives more leadership opportunities, and allows the Feeder System Director to function much as a regional coordinator does. As the system develops, it is our intention to fund substitute days so that the Coordinator can visit his/her schools on a rotating basis.

The “A” day “B” day story. The question of what, if anything, to do about the A/B Day issue is high on Dr. Maxwell’s “To Do” List. At present there is no guaranteed alternative. Assistant Principals who do the scheduling have been alerted to an October meeting to be updated on what may or may not happen. As a member you need to inform your principal and senior staff (through the Faculty Advisory

Council) as to how you feel about this issue.

School Safety is an issue we deal with on a regular basis. We are each responsible for the safety of others. Please become aware of the security situation in your school. Be aware of your rights and responsibilities with regards to student assaults on teachers. Your safety is one of our primary goals. We may not be able to prevent the assault, but we can certainly work to insure that you won’t be further victimized by the system that is supposed to protect you.

(Commentary continued from page 2)

That such a situation exists is an inequity, and TAAAC has been working toward resolving it.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will read about a brand new - and very temporary – membership incentive. If successful, it will result in a modified agency shop for Unit 1 employees. Eventually, and it will take some time, free-riding will become a virtual memory.

(Trigger Tripping continued from page 2)

current educators who have been contributing nothing will be providing operating revenue, prospective educators will contribute their fair share whether they join or not, the pool of activists and advocates for our craft will broaden, and we will begin the process of lowering dues for everyone. With more people contributing, those who contribute will contribute less.



Teachers Association of Anne Arundel County
 2521 Riva Road, Suite L7 • Annapolis, MD 21401
 410/841-6022, 410/224-3330 or 301/261-8309 • Fax 410/841-5117
2006-2007 ENROLLMENT FORM



For Local office use only

NEA \$ _____
 MSTA \$ _____
 TAAAC \$ _____
 Total \$ _____

New! Fast! Easy! Sign up online! Pay by credit card! Visit www.mstanea.org **FREE!** Dues-TAB insurance! See attached registration.

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SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

FIRST NAME

M.I.

LAST NAME

			<input type="checkbox"/> Mr. <input type="checkbox"/> Miss <input type="checkbox"/> Dr. <input type="checkbox"/> Mrs. <input type="checkbox"/> Ms.
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TAAAC
LOCAL

ADDRESS	
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CITY		STATE	
			ZIP

SCHOOL NAME

HOME PHONE	
------------	--

POSITION

HOME EMAIL		WORK EMAIL	
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SUBJECT

DATE OF BIRTH	ETHNICITY (Optional)	<input type="checkbox"/> Black <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian/Alaska Native <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic <input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian (not of spanish origin) <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> Multi-Ethnic <input type="checkbox"/> Other
____/____/____		
MONTH / DAY / YEAR		

HIRE DATE

POLITICAL PARTY	REGISTERED VOTER
<input type="checkbox"/> Democratic <input type="checkbox"/> Republican <input type="checkbox"/> Independent <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

Check your salary level for dues computation:

Over \$32,854 \$16,427 - \$32,854 Below \$16,427

Check one:

Full-time Part-time 10ths

Method of payments:

Payroll deduction (See below, sign and date.) Cash / Check 10 Month 12 Month

Payroll Deduction Authorization I authorize the Board of Education to deduct from my salary bi-weekly payments for membership dues as indicated hereon. I understand that such deductions shall continue from year to year for the dues set annually unless I rescind such authorization in writing to TAAAC over my original signature in accordance with local by-laws between August 15 and September 1.

SIGNATURE _____	DATE _____	EMPLOYMENT DATE _____
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Dues payments are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. Dues payments (or a portion) may be deducted as a miscellaneous itemized deduction. Annual membership dues to the NEA includes \$4.65 for NEA Today, \$2.60 for NEA-Retired and/or \$19.00 for the Higher Education publications. The NEA publication(s) received by members are based on membership category. Annual membership dues to the MSTA includes \$8.10 for the MSTA Action Line.

Application for Membership in TAAAC Sick Leave Bank The purpose of the Sick Leave Bank is to provide continued pay benefits to participants in the Bank for qualifying, incapacitating, catastrophic personal illness during regularly scheduled duty days after regular sick leave has been exhausted. Membership is subject to approval by the Sick Leave Bank Committee.

Have you received treatment for any illness or condition in the past 90 days? Yes No If yes, explain: _____

Please enroll me in the TAAAC SLB.

SIGNATURE _____	DATE _____
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Voluntary Contribution Authorization for Fund for Children and Public Education I hereby authorize the following contribution:

PAYROLL DEDUCTION PER PAY PERIOD \$15, \$10, \$5, Other \$ _____.00 SIGNATURE _____

The NEA, MSTA and applicable LOCAL Fund for Children and Public Education collect voluntary contributions from Association members and use those contributions for political purposes, including but not limited to, making contributions to and expenditures on behalf of friends of public education who are candidates for federal, state and local offices. Contributions to the Fund for Children and Public Education are voluntary, making a contribution is neither a condition of employment nor membership in the Association, and members have the right to refuse to contribute without suffering any reprisal. Although the NEA, MSTA, and LOCAL Fund for Children and Public Education requests an annual contribution of \$1.00 per paycheck this is only a suggestion. Any member may contribute more or less than the suggested amount or may contribute nothing at all, without it affecting his or her membership status, right of benefits in NEA or any of its Associations.

I understand that I am making a joint contribution to the Fund for Children and Public Education and that one third of my contribution will go to the NEA FCPE, one third to MSTA FCPE, and, if applicable, one third to the local FCPE.

Contributions or gifts to the NEA, MSTA, and LOCAL Fund for Children and Public Education are not deductible for federal income tax purposes. Federal law requires us to use our best efforts to collect the name, mailing address, occupation, and the name of employer for each individual whose contributions aggregate in excess of \$200 in a calendar year. Federal law prohibits the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education from receiving donations from persons other than members of the NEA and its affiliates, and their immediate families. All donations from persons other than members of NEA and its affiliates and their immediate families will be returned forthwith.