The Trickle Down

As this article is being written, most of the MSEA professional staff are patrolling the halls of the Senate Office building looking for legislators to oppose the portions of the Governor’s Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2010 (BURFA) which sprung out of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee on March 19. The troublesome provisions make a reduction in local aid (with Anne Arundel County losing nearly $25 million in FY11) and phases in a sharing of the costs of teachers’ retirement and pension systems beginning in FY12. So, in addition to the lost revenue, the BURFA will pile on significant unanticipated expenses.

Admittedly, the BURFA might have been amended in the time between this writing and the date of publication, but for the time being cash-strapped, revenue-capped Anne Arundel County is looking at having to absorb $5.36 million in pension costs in FY12, $16.6 million in FY13, $28 million in FY14, and $29.1 million in FY15.

The sad fact is that our citizenry has become so tax averse that legislators will not consider raising any new revenue. While it is absolutely true that no one likes or wants to be charged taxes and fees, it must be recognized that governments cannot operate without money. And much of that money must come out of the pockets of people to whom the government provides education, police protection, firefighting and other emergency services, libraries, and a host of quality of life programs. Every single service generates a cost that must be paid by someone.

Legislation like the BURFA might do what is necessary to balance Maryland’s budget while taking the political onus of raising revenue off the back of the Governor and the legislators, but the costs are still real and the burden will be borne somewhere. So, now the county executive may be the one where the buck stops, or maybe the county council. But they face the same tax aversion even though Anne Arundel County has the lowest tax burden of any of its urban neighbors.

It appears that the stage is being set for a couple levels of government to reach into the pockets of public employees yet again. At some point in the recent past it became appropriate, fair, and even trendy to make public employees pitch in a lot, rather than have everyone else pitch in a little.

Well it is TAAAC’s job, or at least part of it, to make the wallets and purses of its members a little less out of reach. TAAAC will very likely be organizing a few concerted actions this year. Remember, it is not just the size of our membership that gives TAAAC influence. It is also the willingness of our membership to act when asked. This year, once again, TAAAC’s membership will be asked.
There are a lot of questions but few answers. The only constant seems to be that the politicians want more from us each and every day for programs that don’t have a track record. Our cry is “Where is the Research?”

The ever increasing intrusion of politics into our classroom has reached record levels. The question for us is “What Now?” What can we do to help protect our children and ourselves from this continuous onslaught?

“...we need volunteers to work on a one-time basis to evaluate the candidates. You can become part of a panel which will interview up to five candidates for a particular office.”

More and more demands are coming each and every year from the President, Congress, the Governor, and the Maryland General Assembly and we need to get proactive both as individuals and as an organization.

This year on the federal level, we will elect a Senator and all of the members of the House of Representatives (Anne Arundel has four Congressional Districts). On the state level, we will elect the entire General Assembly. That means all members of the House of Delegates and the Senate. At the County level, we will elect the County Executive and all seven members of the County Council.

As we watch the General Assembly wind down to Sine Die (close of business) on Monday, April 12th, there are a number of troublesome education issues which are not going our way.

Because the last weeks of the session are traditionally the busiest and changes to legislation occur regularly, I will not predict the outcome of these bills. What I will do, however, is to alert you to the fact that this year, more than many, we all need to be politically active. We will need to evaluate each and every bill that impacts us and decide whether a particular legislator helped or hindered the cause of public education in Maryland. TAAAC is an issue-driven organization – we want to do what is right for public education and public educators.

There is a lot that you can do to help this effort and it will not cost you much in either time or money. The first thing we need to know is - Are you registered to vote? The next thing we need to know is – Do you know the names of those who represent you? Keep in mind that you have two US Senators who represent all of us and you have a US Congressman who represents your district. (Continued on page 3)
From Contentia this month . .  

THE END IS COMING...

As the end of the school year quickly approaches, there are some contractual issues for you to keep in mind. The first is your final rating for the school year. If this is your rating year, your final rating must be based on a minimum of two observations. These observations shall have occurred during this school year and be at least thirty days apart. For a final rating to be unsatisfactory, it is mandatory that there were at least two observers. A written evaluation should follow each formal observation within five school days of the observation. The final rating must be presented to you prior to the last day for students. If you receive a rating after that date, or one that is not based on the minimal two observations, and you are not satisfied with the rating, you should contact your UniServ Director to discuss filing a grievance.

The Negotiated Agreement states that you should be notified of your assignment by June 1. Keep in mind that the superintendent or his designee (principals) do have the right to assign teachers to meet the instructional needs of the school. Therefore, there is no guarantee that you will have the same assignment from year to year. However, if you are moved to an assignment outside of your area of certification, you should contact your UniServ Director to discuss the situation.

Most teachers have already been notified of positions being exceeded from schools. It is important to understand that exceeding is based on seniority in the county—not within a school. Additionally, it is important to stay in contact with the Human Resources staffing specialists to find the best possible match for you within the system. Excessed teachers are encouraged, but cannot be required, to participate in the voluntary transfer process. If excessed teachers have not received a new assignment by the last duty day for teachers, they will have priority over new applicants and teachers requesting voluntary transfers.

An opportunity for some. If your principal is required to exceed a staff member or members, and you want to leave the building, you may volunteer to be exceeded. That places you in the involuntary transfer process, and you will work in a different building next year. Note that you may still interview for a voluntary transfer.

Finally, if you are considering a voluntary transfer, you must have interviewed for open positions prior to July 1 in order to be considered for those positions. Keep your information up-to-date on BrassRing and check for new postings at least once a week.

(Continued from page 2)

You have a State Senator and a State Delegate who represent your interests in Annapolis, and you have a County Councilperson who represents your interests on the County Council.

How can you help? For starters, we need volunteers to work on a one-time basis to evaluate the candidates. You can become part of a panel which will interview up to five candidates for a particular office. You will then vote with your panel to make a recommendation as to which candidate TAAAC should support in the general election. This should not involve more than one or possibly two meetings - the number of meetings will depend on how many candidates you can interview at each meeting.

This is the year we evaluate ALL candidates on their education history. If you want to have an active part in the process, please call the TAAAC office at 410-224-3330 and leave your name and contact number. If you don’t know who represents you, check these web sites for further information:

www.mdelections.umd.edu Enter your address and look to the left to see the names of those who represent you at the federal level.

www.mdelect.net/officials/ Enter your information to see if you are registered. The site will also show your various representatives.

When you call, let the person who takes your information know which district panel you are willing to sit on.

If YOU don’t want to be a victim YOU need to participate.
A Well-attended Success

The Mills-King Award Ceremony was a spirited, well-attended success this year, honoring eight exemplary individuals for their contributions to Human Relations in the field of education. All eight nominees for this celebrated award received a brief biography presented to the audience by TAAAC Vice-President Richard Benfer. After much deliberation, the judges named TAAAC member Shavaun Hawkins as the 2010 recipient of the Mills-King Award for Excellence in Human Relations in Education. Ms. Hawkins is currently the Science lead teacher at Windsor Farm Elementary School. Her significant education, civic, and community contributions are various and extensive, and prove too numerous to list here.

Lively choral renditions of “Lift E’vry Voice” and “Shout!” were performed by the Mills-Parole Elementary School chorus and conducted by TAAAC member Lauren Spinnenweber.

This year’s keynote speaker was former AACPS teacher, administrator, and director, Dr. Leslie Mobray. His spirited speech truly inspired the hearts and minds of all in attendance.

Congratulations to Ms. Shavaun Hawkins and all the nominees for their tireless commitment to human relations through community service and education!

TAAAC Housing Program Milestone

The partnership between TAAAC and the Maryland Real Estate Team with its founder, Ed Robinson, is hitting some big numbers in terms of savings for TAAAC members by cracking the seven figure threshold this year. Since 2007, our program has saved TAAAC members a total of $1,124,550.70 including the closing cost assistance, interest rates, inspection savings, etc.

This should encourage more members to use the services TAAAC provides, and everyone who has an interest in buying or selling a home should make their first call to the Maryland Real Estate Team at 443-308-4766 or toll free 866-720-4418.

NOMINATIONS OPEN

The TAAAC Nominating Committee is accepting nominations for MSEA Delegates. Nomination forms will be accepted until the Wednesday, June 2, 2010 Association Representative Council meeting.

Name ____________________________________________________________
Address ____________________________________________________________
Email ____________________________________________________________
School ____________________________________________________________
Phone (H) ___________________________ (S) ____________________________

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

☐ MSEA Delegate
   (Have you been a delegate before? Yes or No)

NOMINATIONS OPEN

The TAAAC Nominating Committee is accepting nominations for the Sick Leave Bank Approval Committee and the AACPS Calendar Committee (Elementary). Nomination forms will be accepted until the Wednesday, May 5, 2010 Association Representative Council meeting.

Name ____________________________________________________________
Address ____________________________________________________________
Email ____________________________________________________________
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 (Elementary)