

The Golden Rhea

Educating Our Children, Engaging Our Parents, Empowering Our Schools

November 2007

www.myrdea.org

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TEA Accomplishments for '07

*The Tennessee Education Association ~ Always fighting for Education and School Employees.
A Strong Membership Ensures a Strong Voice on Capitol Hill!*

Education was the front and center issue during the 2007 legislative session, and the Tennessee Education Association was right in the middle of the action! Thanks to Governor Phil Bredesen and a majority of the legislature, major revisions in the Basic Education Program (BEP) coupled with a 42-cent increase in the cigarette tax, pumped over \$290 million new dollars into public education. Over the next three years, public schools will receive nearly \$524 million new dollars based on this year's action.

The 60, 80, 90 campaign has three long-range goals:

- Increasing from the current 48% to **60%** the average final compensation under the TCRS formula.
- Increasing from the current 45% to **80%** the amount paid by the state for teacher health insurance.

- Increasing teacher salaries to **90%** of the national teacher salary average through the BEP formula.

TEA made significant progress in 2007 in advancing the compensation issue. The budget for '07-'08 contains a 3% salary increase. The 3% will significantly impact retirement benefits since the retirement formula is based on average salary and years of service. On the insurance issue, TEA was successful in inserting into the appropriations bill the following: the BEP formula for 2008-09 shall include 50% funding for medical insurance for instructional positions.

Your Association is committed to achieving the goals of the 60, 80, 90 campaign and will continue to build on this years success...TEA members deserve no less!



Member Opinions Wanted by TEA

Recommendations for TEA's 2009-2010 Legislative Program Requested.

Since the founding of the Tennessee Education Association, promoting legislation to advance public education -- and to benefit students and educators -- has been a major objective of the Association. As a matter of fact, the purpose for the creation of the Tennessee Education Association back in 1864, right after the Civil War, was to lobby the state legislature.

In keeping with that objective, TEA is asking for your recommendations of items to be included in the next TEA Legislative Program. All suggestions will be considered by the TEA Legislative Editing Committee appointed by President Earl Wiman. The Editing Committee will develop a proposed program which will be presented to the TEA Representative Assembly next spring. The Legislative Program gives guidelines to leaders and

staff as they work to promote TEA's legislative concerns in the General Assembly.

You have two ways to get your information to TEA. Building Reps have been given forms that can be filled out and mailed to TEA. The completed forms should be returned to TEA no later than November 15, 2007. The other way, which will be easier and the quickest, is to fill out the information requested online. Go to www.teateachers.org and click on the link "Members Opinions Wanted".

Grass Roots Education Action Team

G - R - E - A - T

GREAT NEWS! To highlight the need for "grass-roots" political action, TEA has changed the name of TEA's "Cyberlobby" Team. To sign up for this important legislative / political action communications network, **TEA members** need only to provide their

home e-mail address to TEA's Government Relations Division.

Why Join? As a **G-R-E-A-T** member you can:

- ◆ Stay informed on legislative issues concerning education.
- ◆ Receive timely legislative updates, including the TEA Legislative Report.
- ◆ Help TEA quickly communicate TEA's position to lawmakers.

How Do I Join? It's as simple as sending an e-mail from your *home* e-mail address to GreatTeam@tea.nea.org. Be sure to include the following: first name, last name, local association. For a number of reasons, it is essential that you send your home -- *not work* -- e-mail address.

If you are already a member of the "cyberlobby" team, you do not need to sign up again for the **GREAT** network. You will automatically be added!





from the President

Now that the second six weeks of school are almost behind us, I hope this newsletter finds both you and your students on the path for a very successful year.

Sometimes though, what can help (or hurt) us from having a successful year does not even take place in our schools, or even our county. You have to look 152 miles to the west...to Nashville...to see what happens in the halls of our legislature.

I know that some teachers say "the Association shouldn't be involved in Politics", but I truly believe we not only should be, but we have to be. Not only for us, but also for the children we teach.

The lead article on page one of this newsletter focused on some of TEA's accomplishments for this past year. Let me now focus your attention on what TEA "stopped" this past year...and thank goodness they did!

- **Vouchers** - TEA stopped a bill providing \$7,500 per student to attend private/parochial schools.
- **Charter Schools** - TEA stopped a bill which would have made all "at risk" students eligible to attend unproven charter schools.
- **Virtual Charter Schools** - TEA stopped legislation which could have drained millions from local public school budgets.
- **Student Medical Issues** - TEA stopped legislation which would have required teacher "volunteers" to be trained to provide medical services -- including administering insulin and suppositories!
- **Teacher Rights** - TEA stopped a bill which would have prevented educators from serving on county commissions.
- **Pre-K** - TEA stopped a bill which would have given funding priority to private pre-K programs over public school programs.
- **Scope of Bargaining** - TEA stopped a bill which would have limited discussions of certain compensation plans...such as differentiated pay.

Hopefully, this has helped to make it crystal clear why the Association should be involved in politics. We need our TEA lobbyist working the halls in Nashville every day on our behalf. A strong TEA is vital to the future of Public Education. Thanks for belonging!

Bryan Massengale

Bryan Massengale
RDEA President

Training at the TEA Bargaining Conference

The Tennessee Education Association's Bargaining Conference will be held on November 9, 10 & 11, 2007 at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Franklin, Tennessee.

One of the benefits of TEA membership is the many great and wonderful training sessions that are held across the state on many issues important to teachers.

Even though RDEA will not be at the bargaining table until the spring, four members... (Brandon Germany, Scott Heath, Chris Hoose, and Bryan Massengale) will attend the upcoming training session on bargaining. These four will be learning valuable information to help in negotiating future contracts with the board of education.

After registration on Friday, Saturday sessions will deal with the following topics:

- ♦ Differentiated Pay under the Accountability Act
- ♦ Accountability Act: Differential/Performance Pay Impact on Bargaining
- ♦ Evaluations: Changes in the law and Bargaining Protections

Sunday sessions will cover:

- ♦ BEP 2.0 Funding
- ♦ Bargaining Issues - Air Quality
- ♦ Organizing for Bargaining
- ♦ Using Research in Bargaining
- ♦ Using Bargaining as a Recruitment Tool for Membership

For local associations that bargain a contract, these training sessions are so very valuable. Look for more information in early spring about the bargaining process. The team will be asking what you see as needs when we return to the bargaining table.

American Education Week

NEA's 86th annual American Education Week spotlights the importance of providing every child in America with a quality public education.

American Education Week - November 11-17, 2007 -- presents all Americans with a wonderful opportunity to celebrate public education and honor individuals who are making a difference in ensuring that every child receives a quality education. The



AEW tag line "Great Public Schools: A Basic Right and Our Responsibility," reflects NEA's vision of calling upon all Americans to do their part in making public schools great for every child so that they can grow and achieve in the 21st century.

The week long celebration features a special observance each day of the week. They include:

- ♦ Nov 11 - Student Leaders Day
 - ♦ Nov 12 - Nationwide Kick-Off Celebration
 - ♦ Nov 13 - Invite Parents to School Day
 - ♦ Nov 14 - Education Support Professionals Day
 - ♦ Nov 15 - Educator for a Day
 - ♦ Nov 16 - Substitute Educators Day
- Visit www.nea.org for more information.

Plan Ahead for NEA's Read Across America!

Let's All Celebrate 11 Years of NEA's Read Across America program on March 3, 2008.

It's never too early to plan for next year's Read Across America Day celebration. Here are some tips to remember:

- ♦ Put Read Across American Day on your 2007-2008 school calendar.
- ♦ Send out "Save the Date" letters to your favorite guest readers.
- ♦ Send a reminder to your local newspaper.
- ♦ Organize a planning committee.



More details will be coming in a later issue of *The Golden Rhea*, but mark your calendars for the biggest Read Across America celebration ever. NEA will mark over a decade of reading on March 3, 2008. Check out www.nea.org/readacross more details.

Executive Committee

2007-2008

Bryan Massengale — President
Debra Phillips — President-Elect
Emmaly Fisher — Past-President
Beverly Revis — Secretary
Brandon Germany — Treasurer
Jeff Fisher — Member-at-Large
John McPherson — Member-at-Large

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