

TAAAC ACTION REPORT

Your Professional Organization

VOL. 50, NUMBER 7

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

March 2018



On March 19, we're marching to Fix the Fund. We want the General Assembly to pass the Fix the Fund Act to make sure that gaming revenues go where they were intended—to increase school funding. During the last four years, Gov. Hogan has used \$1.4 billion of this revenue to plug holes in other parts of his budgets. The Fix the Fund Act will stop this budget gimmick, providing a **\$500 million annual increase in school funding**—a significant first step in closing the \$2.9 billion annual underfunding of Maryland public schools.

Here are three great reasons to join the March to Fix the Fund:

1. It Makes a Difference

When educators and public education supporters show up, policymakers listen. Last year, hundreds of educators joined the March to Protect Our Schools. Legislators responded by unanimously voting for the More Learning, Less Testing bill in the Senate just days later, sending it on its way to final passage. The Protect Our Schools Act passed only two weeks after the march.

We have power in numbers. And when we demonstrate our power, it makes an impact on elected officials.

2. It's Awesome to Join a Crowd of Educators from across Maryland

"It's so comforting to know that you're not alone," 7th grade language arts teacher Claire Barnaby said at MSEA's 2011 Rally to Keep the Promise. "I sit in my classroom with 30 kids and I don't know that I'm supported by others in the nation. It's so great to come here and have all these people be on my side."

Educators across the state whom you've never met are facing many of the same challenges in their schools that you are—and coming together to speak with one voice to make changes that will help you and your students can be empowering, exciting...and fun!

(Continued on page 3)



Bill Jones

Public Education, Anne Arundel County's Diminishing Priority

Yes, a recent review of county financial documents tells the sad tale of our public schools trending downward in the hierarchy of county budget priorities. In an apples-to-apples comparison, the fiscal year 2018 budget reveals the Board of Education's proportion of general fund expenditures has shrunk by 3.6% since fiscal year 2013, and by 1.75% since Mr. Schuh's first budget in fiscal year 2016.

In every budget year, county executives boast about the portion of the county budget that is allocated to "education." The portion has been in excess of 50% for several years now. Those numbers are not fabrications, but they are misleading. They include the portion of the police department that provides the school resource officers and health department money that pays for the school health program. The number also includes "pay-go," which is the allocation of one-time money capital projects when budget times are good. Use of pay-go in government is akin to what a homeowner would

COMMENTARY

do when making an extra-payment against the mortgage principal in a month when the checking account is extra flush. The use of pay-go is absolutely discretionary and the amounts vary significantly. To create a fair and objective comparison, there is a necessity to control expenditures that go to other budgets, other than the Board of Education's and to pay-go.

So, drilling down to a simple comparison of the portion of general fund expenditures that go to the Board of Education to the portion that goes to non-Board of Education reveals a disturbing trend.

	FY13 actual	FY14 actual	FY15 actual	FY16 actual	FY17 prelim	FY18 approved
BOE	47.6%	46.2%	45.7%	45.7%	44.7%	44.0%
Non-BOE	52.4%	53.8%	54.3%	54.3%	55.3%	56.0%

If the County did no more than maintain its fiscal year 2013 effort, the Board of Education would have been allocated an additional \$54 million in fiscal year 2018. That would have funded a step increase and COLA, prevented the healthcare fund crisis, and addressed some of our class size and workload issues.

The trend shows in salary comparisons. The average non-BOE county employees received pay increases of 26.95% since 2013, with police officers and sheriff sergeants over 30%. Anne Arundel County Public School employees compares very poorly at 12.63% over the same six years and absorbed higher student loads and significant healthcare concessions.

The trend is showing in school system ratings as well. Of the 24 Maryland districts, *Schooldigger* ranks Anne Arundel County #10, and *Niche* has us down to #12. In 2015, *Niche* ranked Anne Arundel #6. Our local school system fell six rungs down the ladder over the past three budget years.

The sources for the above were audited financial statements, budget documents, and an exhibit prepared for the county council members, a copy of which was provided to this writer.

Budgets are not just numbers. They reveal priorities in a way that rhetoric serves to obscure. It is clear that our school system is no longer the priority that it once was. The question yet unanswered is how much farther down the hierarchy it might fall if no changes are made on Calvert Street.

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From Contentia this month . . . Are All Drugs Created Equal?

Please answer the following hypothetical question:

Which would get you in more trouble; drinking a shot of alcohol off of your desk at school or vaping/using an electronic cigarette one time in your classroom?

Believe it or not, they are both the same. Even though vaping involves exhaling water vapor with no known side effects, the danger to your career and penalty would be equivalent.

Both are violations of the *BOE Drug, Alcohol, and Tobacco-Free Work Environments Policy*. Both are listed along with alcohol and many other types of drugs under the same umbrella.

For a first offense, you could expect a 10-day suspension without pay.

Here is another question:

What should I do if I get a DUI on my own time and nobody is hurt?

Report it to the Office of Investigations (within 24 hours at 410-222-5286 or after hours: 410-222-5998 or email: employeeselfreporting@aacps.org) at the BOE.

Failure to self-report puts your job at risk.

Self-reporting a DUI protects your job although you may be penalized by the court system and/or police.

In addition to self-reporting the incident, you must also self-report the disposition of the case to the Office of Investigations.

Foundation to Help Local Students

One of TAAAC's functions is to assist local students in continuing their education. TAAAC does so through its Foundation for Educational Excellence which gives competitive scholarships to college bound young people.

The Foundation provides seven scholarships to local public high school students each year which are funded by members, outside donors, and occasional fundraising events. In addition, there are two memorial scholarships funded through direct donations: the Robin Coleman Award for Computer Science and/or Technology, and the Samuel and Bessie Chao Memorial Book Award. Applications are distributed through all public high school counselors. The forms were sent out on February 7 for the 2018 scholarship awards. For more information, contact your school counseling department or call the TAAAC office.



Link up with TAAAC on Social



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Bombs and Weapons

Recent events in Florida have caused us to pause, yet again, to discuss weapons and violence in our schools. How are teachers expected to address incidents where guns or other weapons are found in school? What should a teacher do if a student threatens to bring a weapon to school in the future? Does AACPS have a policy to guide us? Is there language in our Negotiated Agreement? What is expected of the classroom teacher when a student reports that another student is in possession of a deadly weapon at school?

You may never hear about them, but there are incidents where students at both the elementary and secondary levels bring guns and other weapons into our schools. AACPS does have a policy – *Possession and/or Use of Dangerous or Deadly Weapons by Students, JCC-RAD*. This policy defines deadly and dangerous weapons, provides procedures for dealing with a student suspected of possessing or using a weapon, and outlines the disciplinary action to be taken. The *AACPS Student Code of Conduct* is also a useful resource to teachers in that it defines offenses and consequences. In addition to *Policy JCC-RAD* and the *Student Code of Conduct*, the *Negotiated Agreement* states the following under Article 18 E:

Unit I members will not be asked to search for bombs or handle any objects suspected of being bombs, explosives or similar devices.

If you become aware of a situation involving a student and a weapon on school property, keep the following in mind:

1. If necessary, take prompt action to keep you, your colleagues, and the students safe.
2. The principal should be notified immediately.
3. Unit I members cannot be directed to search for weapons.
4. Be familiar with the emergency procedure system developed for the school system in order to respond appropriately.
5. Be familiar with the School Crisis and Emergency Management Plan developed specifically for your school and review it regularly.
6. Follow the instructions of your school's Administration and the first responders that may be operating within and around your school.
7. Finally, consult TAAAC if you have any questions or you feel as though your Administration failed to handle the situation appropriately.

(Continued from front page)

3. It's Not Every Year We Can Add \$500 Million to School Funding

We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to revamp and improve the state's school funding formula with the Kirwan Commission. We must use it to make a new Maryland Promise that all kids have a great public school—and an equal opportunity for success—no matter their neighborhood. Our first step in funding that promise is fixing the fund and adding \$500 million annually to school funding.

Opportunities like this don't come around often. It's been 15 years since the last revision to Maryland's school funding formula and a significant new investment in schools.

TAAAC's turnout goal is 420 members. The rally is right in our backyard. Let's double that goal and get 800 members to the March. You can register at bit.ly/fixthefund. **See you on March 19.**

New Tax Law- H.R. 1

Major Changes

- Permanent reduction of the corporate tax rate from 35% to 21%.
- Modifies the 7 tax brackets and reduces the top rate to 37%.
- The Standard Deduction is increased to \$12,000 for individual filers and \$24,000 for joint filers.
- The deduction for personal exemptions, \$4,150 per, is repealed.
- Suspends Home Equity loan interest deduction.
- Limits the deduction for Mortgage Interest based on a cap of \$750,000 of debt.
- Limits to \$10,000 the State and Local taxes on Income and Property.
- Suspends all Miscellaneous Itemized Deductions.
- The Child Tax Credit is increased from \$1,000 to \$2,000.
- All of these items apply to the years 2018 – 2025.

Raising the Standard Deduction and limiting or suspending some Itemized Deductions should significantly increase the number of filers claiming the Standard Deduction, beginning with tax year 2018 and ending in tax year 2025.

Maryland filers who claim the Federal Standard Deduction for 2018 will, under current Maryland law, have to claim the Maryland Standard Deduction, which is a meager \$1,500 for individual filers and \$4,000 for joint filers, on their 2018 Maryland return.

Some Maryland filers, whose Federal Itemized Deductions, while less than the Federal Standard Deduction, might be within a few thousand dollars, could benefit more by claiming Itemized Deductions on the Federal Return, which under current Maryland law would allow itemizing deductions on the Maryland Return.

Obviously, there is no one rule that fits all cases. Each Maryland filer will need to compare the options to claim deductions on the Federal Return in a manner that will provide the lowest total Federal and State tax for 2018.

The State of Maryland will be reviewing the impact of H.R.1 on Maryland's finances and taxpayers during the current Legislative Session, and could make changes to the current Maryland law.

Each Maryland taxpayer should review the adequacy of their 2018 Federal and State tax withholding, and adjust accordingly, to avoid a surprise year-end tax liability.

Federal tax withholding amounts, before H.R.1, were based on employees' W-4 statements, which in turn, were based on filing status and number of exemptions claimed. Since the deduction for exemptions has been repealed by the new Federal Tax Law, new tables are to be available in February to be used by payroll offices for Federal Tax withholding. While your late February paycheck may increase, it may come with some unwanted baggage in the form of a year-end tax liability.

It is recommended that every taxpayer discuss the new tax law with their tax preparer as to the impact on their 2018-2025 returns.

NOMINATIONS OPEN

The TAAAC Nominating Committee is accepting nominations for the **Credentials Committee** and the **Nominating Committee**.

Nominations will be accepted until the April 4, 2018 ARC meeting.

Name _____

Address _____

School _____

Phone (C) _____ (W) _____

Personal Email _____

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

Credentials Committee

Nominating Committee

NOMINATIONS OPEN

The TAAAC 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 2, 2018 ARC meeting.

Name _____

Address _____

School _____

Phone (C) _____ (W) _____

Personal Email _____

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

Sick Leave Bank Approval Committee

AACPS Calendar Committee (Elementary)

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Roxanne Aneerer
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Danielle Baird
Dan L. Burkarth
Kimberly Burnham
Francesca Calloway
Kimberly Chicca
Tiffany Crammer
Lindsay Fuller
Heidi Giard
Sabrina Grudzinski
Lisa Hess
Sarah Manning
Kimberly Miller
Allison Smith
Jean-Lue St. Pierre
Elizabeth Simmons A. Thompson
Jacob Wines
Jennifer Wood

ATTENTION:

Are You Paying Too Much??

If your employment status has changed and you have an annual salary under \$42,488, please contact the TAAAC office so that your membership dues can be adjusted accordingly.



Mission Statement

TAAAC supports, organizes, and empowers members to improve their professional lives in order to provide, protect, and promote quality public education for every student.

#raiseannearundel

TAAAC Events Calendar

March 2018

- 5 – GR Lobby Night #6 – 4:30 PM @ Harry Browne's
7 – Daytime Board of Education Meeting – 10:00 AM @ BOE
7 – ARC – 5:00 PM @ Severna Park Middle
7 – Middle School Concerns Committee – Following ARC
10 – MSEA IPD Workshop – Doubletree, Annapolis
12 – Sick Leave Bank @ TAAAC Office
12 – GR Lobby Night #7 – 4:30 PM @ Harry Browne's
13 – Elementary Concerns – 4:30 PM @ George Cromwell Elementary
14 – High School Concerns – 4:00 PM @ TAAAC Office
15 – TAAAC ASI @ TAAAC Office
15 – Membership Committee – 4:30 PM @ TAAAC Office
19 – MSEA "Fix the Fund" March – 6:00 PM @ Lawyer's Mall
21 – TAAAC Executive Team @ TAAAC Office
21 – Evening Board of Education Meeting – 7:00 PM @ BOE
22 – Mills/King Awards Banquet – 6:00 PM @ Firemark Building
26 – Sick Leave Bank @ TAAAC Office
26 – GR Lobby Night #8 – 4:30 PM @ Harry Browne's
27 – Special Events Committee – 4:30 PM @ TAAAC Office
28 – TAAAC BOD – 4:30 PM @ TAAAC Office
Visit www.taaaconline.org
Pay Days 14th & 28th

TAX PREPARATION

Bob Pellicoro, who has served TAAAC members for the past 29 years, is easing into retirement from tax preparation. In order to give member clients time to make other arrangements he will accommodate his long-time TAAAC clients for their 2017 Income Tax Returns preparation. Please call the TAAAC office to schedule an appointment for one of the following dates:

- March 12, 2017 – 10 AM – 6 PM
March 13, 2017 – 10 AM – 6 PM
March 15, 2017 – 10 AM – 6 PM



HERSHEYPARK 2018 TICKETS

Hersheypark Admission

Ages 3 and up

Gate Price \$67.80

TAAAC Price \$38.00

Order your undated (go any day you wish) tickets by Friday April 13, 2018 for opening day on April 27, 2018. Please email mmenchen@mseanea.org or call 410-224-3330 and ask for Mark Mench.

After April 13 you may call the TAAAC office at (410) 224-3330 for tickets. Delivery will take approximately two weeks.

Tickets are valid from April 27 – September 30, 2018

BJ's Discounts for Renewing or Applying

A New Way to Support our Organization!

Are you a BJ's member? Renew through our organization and you will get \$15 off the \$55 annual membership fee (or) \$30 off the \$110 Rewards membership fee PLUS 13 months = 1 month FREE.

To sign up, pay \$25 for the annual membership or \$50 for the Rewards membership. New members also receive a \$50 restaurant.com gift card. Each membership includes a FREE household card. IMPORTANT: If you renew ahead of time to support our organization, BJ's will add the 13 months onto the end of your current membership.

THE BEST NEWS - BJ's will donate \$5 of your membership fee back to our organization! Visit our web page (www.taaaconline.org) for the application and instructions or contact Joyce Turpin at jturpin@bj.com. Put TAAAC in the subject line.

*Please forward the information by email to your family and friends - even out-of-town.

**Please no social media.

(This is a special FR program and it is not available at the store or online. Offer subject to change)

LONG-TERM CARE INSURANCE

- ✓ Offering discounted **long-term care insurance** to TAAAC members and their spouses/partners.
- ✓ Helping members protect their hard-earned assets.
- ✓ Giving members a way to remain in control of their healthcare choices.
- ✓ Providing members with peace-of-mind.

For a no obligation consult and quote, contact:

Michael Markowitz - 410-455-0680

Mike.Markowitz@acsipartners.com



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