

The President's

Solidarity Report



In this Issue: We will not forget, HB 7069, Health Insurance, Marzano Focused Model, Bargaining, Rep School of Instruction, NAACP Juneteenth Celebration

WE WILL NOT FORGET

The first major political parties in America were headed by two of our greatest Founding Fathers, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. These patriots were fierce political adversaries but these rivals unquestionably agreed on one thing; they both believed in the importance of funding public education as the cornerstone of our great democracy.

“The whole people must take upon themselves the education of the whole people and be willing to bear the expenses of it.” “There should not be a district of one mile square, without a school in it, not founded by a charitable individual, but maintained at the public expense of the people themselves.”

John Adams

“The tax which will be paid for this purpose [education] is not more than the thousandth part of what will be paid to kings, priests and nobles who will rise up among us if we leave the people in ignorance.”

Thomas Jefferson

This past legislative session both political parties had an opportunity to demonstrate that they shared the same beliefs in public education as did the men who founded our great country. Those of you that know me understand that I have no party affiliation, as I prefer to give my loyalty to my country and fellow citizens as opposed to a political party. This is not the sentiment in Tallahassee as Republicans in the House of Representatives launched an all-out vicious attack on Public Education. House speaker Richard Corcoran, champion of Charter Schools, who does not even try to hide his disdain for a child's civil right to a free public school education, orchestrated the attack and the House Republicans blindly followed.

While a great many of the anti-public school bills died quietly in the Senate, where more rational and moderate Republicans serve, it did not prevent them from reanimating like Zombies from the *Walking Dead* and being attached to a bill (HB 7069) that started out sensibly reducing testing but ended up being as large an atom bomb to public education and teachers as was Senate Bill 736 nearly eight years earlier.

The House Speaker spoke strongly about transparency yet somehow 50 different bills were stitched together into a mutated version of HB 7069 and sprung on lawmakers in the final days of the legislative session. It was no surprise that Governor Scott signed the bill into law since supporting public education has never been a priority to his administration. The whole "good ole boys behind closed doors" process that resulted in this terrible law is a slap in the face of every employee who serves in public education, every citizen, and a direct contradiction to the vision of the great men who founded our country.

Many people feel I should tread lightly. The mantra that is often repeated to me is "there are no such thing as permanent enemies or permanent friends." They feel that by communicating with lawmakers, we can get them on our side on future issues. That did not work with SB 736 and it won't help with this latest law. In my view, you are either for public education or against it and those lawmakers who are against it have reneged on their duty to provide the children of Florida with a well-funded free public education. We should all fight against the state sponsored hostile takeover of public education by private businesses that can never serve all the diverse needs of all our students. The way to fight is to remain informed and to do what we do best, educate. We must educate our colleagues, neighbors, friends and the parents of our students. When the effects of HB 7069 start to affect you, remember to remind people that those people who represented us in Tallahassee voted for this horrid bill. Just one NO vote from Jeff Brandes of St. Pete or Jack Latvala of Clearwater would have killed the bill in the Senate. In the House, local representatives Chris Latvala, Larry Ahern, and Chris Sprowls eagerly followed their party line against the advice of teachers, School Boards and Superintendents, including our own Dr. Grego. Eleven House Representatives missed the vote altogether including Kathleen Peters, who should have been representing Southern Pinellas but stepped out for bite to eat. (Special Thank you to Senator Darryl Rouson for voting against HB 7069)

So I refuse to tread lightly. There is nothing left to say to the people that are trying to destroy public education. Trying to communicate with these folks is like getting mugged and trying to use good manners to get away. What is there to say to lawmakers that have chosen to take our tax dollars and give it to private charter schools while starving public education? There is only one thing to say to lawmakers that handicap public schools with ridiculous mandates while giving charters a free pass. WE WILL NOT FORGET and we will not let other voters forget.

When PCTA members went to Tallahassee to Lobby, they reported that legislators take an interest in my Solidarity Report to our members. Well that is OK by me because I do not write anything that I would not like to see in print in the newspaper. So, if any legislators ask to see a copy of my Solidarity Report, tell them to contact me and I will put them on the mailing list.

In Solidarity,

Mike

HB 7069

HB 7069 is just the latest chapter in the plot to dismantle public education. We will continue to be the defenders of public education while attempting to cope with the impact of this devastating bill designed to set public schools up for failure. For every positive aspect to this bill, there are a dozen harmful ones. Here is what we are up against. The Good is highlighted in green, the bad in yellow.

- Originally titles the testing bill, **it eliminates one test: Algebra II EOC.**
- **Allows for paper and pencil testing for most state assessments.**
- **Makes VAM optional** but **does not dismiss the requirement for a student growth score.**
- **Gives highly effective teachers a \$1,200 bonus and up to an \$800 bonus for effective.** So how is this a bad thing? PCTA is always happy to see money go into the pockets of teachers but we believe in equity and fairness. For one, they are using the same unfair evaluation system that has plagued us and we know that a good many quality educators will be unable to make a highly effective rating through no fault of their own. Secondly, the words “up to” \$800 caused FEA to believe that those words mean the money that is left over will be divided by all effective classroom teachers which means the bonus for an effective teacher could be as little as \$80. Also these bonuses are for classroom teachers only so no media specialists, counselors, social workers, school psychologists, coaches or

others in our bargaining unit that are not in the classroom are ineligible. Sound fair to you?

- Requires 20 minutes of daily recess for elementary students. Good for students, more stress on teachers. (pacing guide, etc.)
- Prohibits annual contract contingency award language. They do not want teachers to have any job security whatsoever.
- Requires Title I funding changes to advantage charter schools.
- Gives \$140,000,000 to charter schools.
- Expands Best and Brightest. Again, we are happy when members get this money but it is truly the most stupid way of determining classroom effectiveness to date.
- Requires implementation of turnaround plans without a planning year. Teachers could return from summer to find out their school hours are longer, retention and recruitment money has disappeared, or other working conditions have changed.
- Forces Districts to accept a standard charter school contract free of District requirements.
- Exempts charters from controlled open enrollment requirements so they can pick and choose their students.
- Requires districts to share capital outlay funds without regard to plan priorities.
- For Charters that open “near” schools with three or more F’s :
 - 5 year contract
 - Loans for building schools
 - Additional funding for students
 - No staff credentialing requirements
 - Right to occupy underutilized public school space.
 - Revolving loan program for capital needs.

It is also important to remember that the same people who gave us HB 7069 also passed a budget that will make getting even the most minimal raise for educators, a herculean feat for the PCTA bargaining team. Start thinking about attending bargaining sessions when they are announced. The team could use the support and I would love to see a hundred teachers sitting as observers to see how the process works.

HEALTH INSURANCE

The Employee Wellbeing and Satisfaction Committee (EWBS) has met twice so far this summer. The District is reporting a 9% increase in premiums and would like to pass a large part of the increase to the employees. The Unions (PCTA, PESPA, SEIU, PBA) are working with

the District to find some cost savings through a variety of strategies. You may recall that we were able to keep our premiums from increasing last year by convincing the District to pick up the six million dollar increase but this year's budget from the state puts us all in a tight place. The EWBS committee is determined to resolve this issue in a fair manner that does not unduly impact the employees. EWBS is scheduled to meet on Wednesday, June 28th.

MARZANO FOCUSED MODEL

The Appraisal Advisory Committee met with District officials to discuss a possible change to the evaluation system. Dr. Beverly Carbaugh, who works closely with Robert Marzano, spoke to us on a focused and streamlined version of the current Marzano Teacher Evaluation System. The committee was very excited as the new plan had some attractive features that made the system sound appealing. Instead of the sixty plus elements of the current system, the Focused Model concentrates measurable teacher actions and capabilities into twenty three essential behaviors to measure teacher effectiveness within four areas of expertise.

Although PCTA was very much in favor of this model at first glance, it became clear that we could be trading the devil we know for the devil we don't know. There were a lot of good features to the new model but some features caused us to pause on the side of caution. For example, all twenty three elements must be scored and those elements that are not seen are scored as a zero. We all know how a zero can affect a grade and we were not willing to take a chance at having lower teacher evaluations and increasing the number of teachers who are ineligible for raises. There were other aspects that made this model worrisome, including having less observations, two of them formal observations with pre and post meetings. We felt this could be a hardship on evaluators and make it unlikely that all twenty three elements could be observed.

The one thing that would have swayed us to gamble on an untested new model was if the District was willing to bargain over cut scores for evaluations. Their interpretation of the state law differs from ours as they believe that evaluation of teachers is solely the prerogative of the Superintendent, and as such, they do not need to bargain cut scores. In our view, cut scores are directly related to money which is a mandatory subject of bargaining. In any event, we will continue bargaining to make the current system as fair as it can be and we will plan for any changes toward a focused model to occur in the 18-19 school year.

For anyone who was upset to hear that this model was not accepted for this year, please remember that it is the job of PCTA to act in the best interest of our educators. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

BARGAINING

PCTA and PESPA are working year round negotiating such things as placement for our displaced Support Professionals to Transfer timelines for instructional staff. Many people seem to think that wages, benefits and protecting member rights occupy all our time but PCTA and PESPA work for members all year long. We are currently working with the District to provide support for our turn-around schools that could become casualties of HB 7069. We negotiated the formation of a supplement committee that is committed to increasing supplements and has already provided supplements for positions, including orchestra director that previously did not receive supplements.

There will not be a windfall of money coming from the state this year but the PCTA and PESPA bargaining teams are determined to see that the hard working educators of Pinellas continue to earn an increase that is not negated by an insurance premium increase. Other topics of discussion will be Virtual School, Student Discipline and Evaluations.

If you want your Union to be successful, show your support by attending a bargaining meeting as a bystander or coming to a School Board Meeting to let the District know that these are our schools, our students, and we are the professional educators who are the driving force behind public education.

REP SCHOOL OF INSTRUCTION

On Saturday, July 29th PCTA and PESPA will be holding our annual Rep School of Instruction. All faculty reps are encouraged to attend this event. We will have a special guest speaker, entertainment by America's funniest teacher Mike Rivera, and a great learning experience. The PCTA-PESPA staff have a great day of instruction planned that will turn a new rep into a good rep and a good rep into a great rep.

You will earn component points and if you add "leadership that helps the school" as an additional goal on your deliberate practice, you can list this training to prove you accomplished your goal. There is also an element in domain 4 of the Marzano Evaluation that refers to leadership that would give you a great case for an innovating on that element.

The day starts with breakfast at 7:30 am and ends at 3:30pm with lunch also being provided. You will walk away with some helpful information, a better understanding of your role as a rep, prizes and raffles, and meet some of our vendors who work hard to save you money.

Please do not miss this fun day with your brothers and sisters. This year will have a great many challenges for us so let's arm ourselves with the tools we need to be successful.

Event: Rep School **Location:** Banquet Masters - 13355 49th St N, Clearwater FL 33762

Date: Saturday, July 29th **Time:** 7:30am – 3:30pm **Please RSVP:** Robin.haines@floridaea.org

NAACP St Pete Freedom Fund Banquet: A Juneteenth Celebration

