

School Board Adopts "Kids First" Budget

Members and leaders of our union joined with parents and community members to urge the School Board to vote in support of an MPS budget for 2008-09 that makes children the priority. At the Board's October 21 public hearing, dozens of speakers stood up for a budget which was the best that could be achieved under the state's current funding laws.

Key Budget Features

The budget adopted at the Board's October 23 meeting:

- ◆ Prevents more program cuts and layoffs this school year.
- ◆ Reflects the expenditures initially proposed by Supt. Andrekopoulos last spring.
- ◆ Provides additional funding to schools for the 1,689 new students above the projected enrollment.
- ◆ Adds nearly \$1.3 million toward early childhood education, to be allocated at the administration's discretion for measures such as providing paraprofessionals for non-SAGE kindergarten classes.

The Final Votes

The five "yes" votes for the final budget were: Peter Blewett, Michael Bonds, Terry Falk, Jennifer Morales, and Tim Petersons. In a separate vote to certify the property tax levy required to fund the adopted budget, Charlene Hardin joined these five members.

An Opportunity to Work for the Change We Need

For the first time in years, pro-public school political leaders will hold:

- ◆ The governorship in Wisconsin.
- ◆ The U.S. presidency.
- ◆ A majority in the state Senate and Assembly.
- ◆ A majority in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

The political work is done. The legislative work is about to begin.

The change we need will not come easily. For example, there is now an opportunity to reform how Wisconsin funds its public schools. But the state economy is profoundly impacted by the global financial crisis. Despite the economic challenges, the election results present the best chance ever to change the state's school funding laws. Sign up to join our efforts at mtea.org.

Thanks for the Energy

◆ Thanks to every member who helped with the not-so-glamorous tasks which are always key to voter turnout – phone calls, postcards, literature drops at doors, etc.

◆ Thanks to each member who voted in the historic election of America's first African-American president. Republican, Democrat, Independent - we all should be extremely proud!

American Education Week: November 16-22

The National Education Association's Annual American Education Week spotlights the importance of providing every child in America with a quality public education. The NEA slogan, Great Public Schools: A Basic Right and Our Responsibility, calls upon everyone to contribute to making public schools great so that students can grow, prosper, and achieve in the 21st century.

The NEA has designated a focus for each weekday during the 87th Annual American Education Week:

Monday, November 17: Open House Day. From national commemorations to local community events such as AEW house parties, millions of Americans will celebrate public education nationwide.

Tuesday, November 18: Parents Day. Schools are encouraged to invite parents into the classroom for a hands-on experience of what their child's day is like.

Wednesday, November 19: Education Support Professionals Day. Individuals who provide invaluable services to schools are recognized for their outstanding work.

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Are You at Risk of Losing \$200?

We recently learned that only 50% of MPS employees have completed the annual Personal Health Assessment (PHA). If you and your spouse do not complete the PHA by December 15, 2008, MPS will deduct a \$100 premium contribution from two of your paychecks this winter - February 20 and March 20 - a **\$200 total**.

Please take the time now, before the holidays, to complete the PHA online. Go to mtea.org and click on the "GoodHealth" link. **Be sure to hit "Send"** and print out the confirmation number - for your records.

Why an Annual PHA?

The purpose of the annual PHA is to learn about your health status, including risks - so that you may participate in a voluntary program(s) that contribute to healthy living. The PHA is like an annual "State of Your Health" address. It keeps you attuned to your "issues," and offers a roadmap to a variety of options for your GoodHealth.

Thirsty Third Thursday

Our union's SpeakOut! Committee invites you to a social networking opportunity at O'Brien's, 4928 West Vliet Street - a casual pub two blocks east of the MTEA Building. Come join us for Thirsty Third Thursday on **November 20**, starting at 4:30 p.m.

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Thursday, November 20: Educator for a Day. Schools are urged to invite community leaders to serve as educators to get a glimpse at a day in the life of a school employee.

Friday, November 21: Substitute Educators Day. This day honors the educators called upon to replace absent teachers.

MTEA Message in the Media

Watch and listen for a special message from the MTEA on the radio airwaves and in our community newspapers. Print ads will be in Milwaukee community newspapers this week and next. Radio spots will run on WUWM, Milwaukee Public Radio, 89.7 FM and on WMCS, 1290 AM.

Recognizing Substitute Teachers

Our union's leaders and staff would like to salute all of the dedicated substitute teachers of MPS. The great work you do - every school day - deserves to be celebrated.

The nature of your role creates a unique challenge. We deeply appreciate the tremendous service you provide to the students of MPS.

Joint MTEA/NAACP Efforts Help Protect Voter Rights

One reason voting in Milwaukee went well on November 4: Our union joined with the Milwaukee branch of the NAACP to help stop a politically-motivated maneuver that would have disenfranchised thousands of new-registered voters, primarily African-American and low-income city residents.

The court accepted the joint NAACP/MTEA petition to intervene in a case prompted by Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen. He had filed a lawsuit to require a massive matching procedure for hundreds of thousands of newly registered voters.

Joint News Conference and Release

NAACP President Jerry Ann Hamilton and MTEA President Dennis Oulahan held a news conference within a few hours after a judge rejected Van Hollen's lawsuit on October 23.

The following are excerpts from the MTEA/NAACP news release. (You can read the entire release at mtea.org.)

"Today Judge Maryann Sumi of the Dane County Circuit Court issued an eloquent decision that dismissed partisan attempts to disenfranchise scores of thousands of Wisconsin voters. Her decision continues Wisconsin's progressive history of protecting the right to vote.

"Judge Sumi's ruling upholds the Voting Rights Act of 1965 which protects the rights of African-American citizens to vote without respect to technical errors in their registration.

"The Milwaukee Branch NAACP and the Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association (MTEA) applaud Judge Sumi for recognizing that the exercise of the right to vote is the cornerstone of democracy. Here in Wisconsin we don't let technical errors, like typos or computer mismatches, serve as a basis for disenfranchising voters."
