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Up the Street: MSEA Legislative Updates

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THE WEEK THAT WAS IN ANNAPOLIS

- **MSEA Holds Tele-Town Hall to Promote Testing Reduction Bills, Week of Action**
On Wednesday, MSEA president Betty Weller held a tele-town hall with more than 1,400 members to discuss **MSEA's legislative agenda to reduce standardized testing** and promote the March 7-11 Week of Action, when educators will have several opportunities to engage legislators and tell their stories. **You can listen to the town hall here.**

Want more information? Here's a schedule for **MSEA's Week of Action:**

- **Monday, March 7:** Join the Facebook rally for less testing by posting MSEA shareables to your page. Visit facebook.com/marylandeducators for ideas.
- **Tuesday, March 8:** Wear red and post your photo to social media with the #lesstesting, and then call your legislators to ask for their support by using the MSEA Legislative Hotline, 888-520-MSEA (6732).
- **Wednesday, March 9:** Send an email to your legislators at bit.ly/weekofaction16 and share your perspective.
- **Thursday, March 10:** Dial in to the Less Testing Tele-Town Hall at 7:30 p.m. for an update on our progress.
- **Friday, March 11:** Join our Twitter Storm by tweeting about the importance of reducing testing at lesstestingmorelearning.com/tweet.

But you don't have to wait until March 7 to get involved. Next Wednesday, our legislative package to reduce testing will be heard in front of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee—where educators and parents will be testifying for reasonable ways to scale back mandated assessments. Please **send an email to your Senator today by clicking here** and writing your own message about the importance of reducing time on testing. You can also contact your legislators by phone. Use MSEA's Legislative Hotline to get connected to the legislative switchboard in order to reach your senator and delegates.

- **MSEA Works to Earmark an Additional \$25 Million for Educator Pension**
When the state shifted part of the burden for pension costs to the counties, it had a four-year phase-in to help local governments ease into paying for their share. While the cost they were projected to pay has increased by \$25 million since that time, local maintenance of effort is not required to rise to cover this increase—which means now

that the phase-in is ending, counties could shortchange classroom funding to cover this new pension expense. That's why educators are working with **Sen. Doug J.J. Peters** (D-Prince George's-District 23) and **Del. Ben Barnes** (D-Anne Arundel and Prince George's-District 21) to pass legislation (**HB 934/ SB 674**) to earmark \$25 million in the budget to cover this cost. Yesterday, MSEA testified in support of this bill in the Senate, and we will do the same in the House next Tuesday.

- **MSEA Testifies in Support of Legislation to Create Mentoring Program for New Teachers**

One of our public education champions in the General Assembly—**Sen. Paul Pinsky** (D-Prince George's-District 22)—has introduced the Teacher Induction, Retention, and Advancement Act of 2016 (**HB 1410/ SB 493**), legislation that would create a program for new teachers to receive more time for mentoring and assistance with planning. The bill would also raise the maximum state matching stipend award for National Board Certified Teachers from \$2,000 to \$5,000 in order to encourage more educators to pursue the advanced certification. MSEA supports this legislation because it will invest in a proven strategy for reducing the high levels of teacher turnover that hold back many of our schools. On Wednesday, we testified on behalf of the bill and will continue to push for its passage.

- **News and Notes**

- *Delmarva Now Endorses MSEA Testing Reduction Bills*

According to new Goucher Poll results released this week, the Democratic primary to replace retiring **Sen. Barbara Mikulski** (**Click here to watch a funny tribute video to her floor speeches!**) is neck and neck between **Congressman Chris Van Hollen** and **Congresswoman Donna Edwards**. The Goucher Poll showed **Edwards with a slight 39-37 lead over Van Hollen**, well within the margin of error of 5.6 points—though Van Hollen still holds a 10-to-1 fundraising advantage.

- *Bad Bills, Bad Bills, Whatcha Gonna Do?*

While we spend most of the time in Up the Street on ways educators are working with legislators to improve public schools, there are also bills that are perennially introduced and fail to pass that would take us backwards. Such bills introduced again this year include legislation to make Maryland a Right to Work state (**HB 1038**), mandate a post-Labor Day Start Date (**HB 1349/ SB 767**), and convert educator and other public employee pensions from a defined-benefit plan to a privatized 401(k) plan (**SB 633**). MSEA is working hard to defeat these ideas once again and protect you and your students.

- *Hearing Held to Remove Justice Taney Statue*

Legislation to remove the statue of Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger Taney—who wrote the opinion in the Dred Scott case—from the Maryland State House grounds received a hearing on Wednesday in the latest efforts to rid symbols of racism and discrimination from government property. In accordance with **New Business Item 15-12** from the 2015 Representative Assembly, MSEA is working in support of this bill.

- *Constitutional Convention?*

Did you know that the Maryland General Assembly made four calls for a constitutional convention—for things like a Balanced Budget Amendment and abolishing the federal income tax—between 1939 and 1975? While it has never happened in our nation's history, a movement in state legislatures to pass more resolutions means **we're just seven states away from having the 38 needed to start a constitutional convention**. That's why MSEA joined Maryland Common Cause and other coalition partners to testify in support of a bill to rescind and withdraw those calls for a constitutional convention and prevent a potentially dangerous free-for-all over our constitutional rights.

CAMPAIGN 2016

- **Hillary Wins Nevada and Momentum Going into Super Tuesday**

Hillary Clinton defied expectations of a close race in Nevada and came away with a clear victory last Saturday, giving her momentum heading into South Carolina's primary this weekend and then Super Tuesday's 11 contests. Meanwhile, **a new poll was released this week showing Hillary with a strong 58-28 lead over Sen. Bernie Sanders in Maryland**. Maryland doesn't vote until April, but you can still make a difference in neighboring states, including Virginia's Tuesday primary. Sign up to **canvass this weekend** or make phone calls to members in Virginia using the virtual phone bank at **www.strongpublicschools.org**. Your help will put a champion for public education in the White House.

- **Van Hollen, Edwards in Dead Heat**

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