

PTA Budget Actual Numbers

“Actual Numbers” as of March 3, 2010

As expected, the Senate and House version of education cuts go beyond Governor Kaine’s proposed reductions. The **Senate** bill would cut state/ARRA revenue by \$2.7 million and reduce pension expenditures by \$960,000 for a net cut of **\$1.7 million (9%)**. The **House** bill would cut state/ARRA revenue by \$3.3 million and reduce pension expenditures by over \$1 million for a net reduction of **\$2.3 million (11%)**. The final adopted budget bill will be some combination of the two bills, which differ in several funding categories.

Next Tuesday, a proposed budget based our best analysis of the 2 budget versions will be presented to the School Board in preparation for budget adoption on March 23. Latest information and next steps will be a significant portion of my opening session remarks on the Saturday, March 20, Professional Development Day. Although the Saturday Professional Development Day is a make-up for involved staff, all employees are welcome to attend if available and/or interested.

Once the General Assembly completes its work, the two budget bills are reconciled, and signed by the Governor, we will receive another “calc tool” to determine final budget numbers. In terms of budget preparation, the rest of March and much of April will be invested in preparing necessary budget adjustments in response to the state’s reductions. Pay scale recommendations will be presented to the Board in May.

Permanent House Reductions vs. Temporary Senate Reductions

In addition to the differences in the magnitude of the reduction outlined above, the Senate Budget recommends *temporary* (two year) reductions and the House Budget bill recommends *permanent* reductions to K-12 education in Virginia.

The Salem School Board’s Legislative Positions adopted in November 2009 state, “The Salem City School Board opposes any change in re-benchmarking methodology or any change in SOQ Standards as a means of balancing the budget in times of revenue shortfalls.” The Board’s position is based on the assumption that the state economy will improve and when it does the Commonwealth should not expect children to bear the burden indefinitely.

Being realistic, we all understand that in the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression that there will be reductions. Like our School Board, however, I disagree that permanent changes to the funding formula should be used to meet a short-term need. The minimum standards of a quality education in Virginia (the SOQs) should not be defined by available revenues in a recession.

Budget Categories Especially Hard Hit by House Budget

A significant portion of the difference between the Senate and House budgets are reductions to Special Education (\$250,000 +/-); At-Risk Interventions (\$70,000 +/-); Early Reading Interventions (\$40,000 +/-); and Career and

Technical Ed (still called "Vocational" by the General Assembly - \$55,000 +/-). Each of these program areas have a direct and significant impact on children in Salem and are additional reasons why advocating for the Senate Budget is *good* for Salem's students.

A Narrow Window of Opportunity

It is important to note that the actual state budget will be the result of a compromise achieved through a Conference Committee presented to the Governor. The current legislative calendar indicates that the Conference Committee's recommendations will be presented to each chamber during the week of March 8th for consideration and final adoption. Final budget action by each chamber will occur before adjournment of the 2010 Session, which is scheduled for March 13, 2010.

For many months, I have urged patience regarding the budget process and sustained focus on the children we serve. For those of you inclined to reach out to elected officials on behalf of the children we serve and our heroic profession, the next few days represent an opportunity to participate in our democracy and to advocate in a manner best suited to each individual.

For those who are interested and willing, a list of contact information for the Delegates and Senators serving on the Conference Committee is provided below.

The Salem School Board position is that reductions should be temporary. In addition, our Board adopted a resolution in February urging our elected representatives to, "**make education a first priority by considering bold and creative means to avoid or substantially offset the currently proposed significant cuts to the school divisions so that our educators may continue to provide a quality K-12 public education for all students, present and future**"

Taken together, the Board's Legislative Position opposing permanent reductions and Board Resolution #186 urging an offset proposed reductions can be communicated to representatives by asking that they please: 1) use the Senate methodology that avoids permanent reductions; 2) use the Senate reductions that are less destructive to K-12 education; and 3) reconsider ways to increase revenue to fulfill the state's obligation to provide a quality public education.

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