

From the President's Desk...

This month's news from the President is an open source of information to keep all members fully apprised of the ongoing financial crises, and its impact on the budget process and PGCEA.

As much as it is our sincerest desire to soothe all your economic fears and allay all your unsettling concerns, this fiscal crisis, is as monumental as we have ever experienced. As such, it will be extremely difficult for us to maintain our past course to full academic excellence and educational recovery without some major changes in the way we do business. However, rest assured that your union has your (our teachers/Unit 1 members) best interest to the fore. Our position remains, "take care of our most valuable resources, keep teachers, cut everything else."

Nationally, PGCEA applauds President Barack Obama's efforts to offer financial relief in the form of the Economic Stimulus package. We believe, in essence, offers much needed assistance in our statewide endeavors to "stay the course" and continue the national gains in academic achievement made within the past 2-3 years. The recent recognition by Education Week, in naming Maryland as number one in the nation in quality of education, did not just come by happenstance. The dedication and commitment of Maryland's professional educators to the education of all Maryland's children is solely responsible for this outstanding coveted title.

I challenge you to remain steadfast, you must continue to work on year-long goals and objectives for the success for every student you teach, with the confident assurance that PGCEA is working unconditionally on your behalf to retain our professional educators and ensure job security for all. Your tenacity is imperative. In Prince George's County Public Schools, children do come first! We also recognize that teachers' working conditions are students' learning conditions.

Governor Martin O'Malley has postponed proposed cuts in his FY2010 budget in anticipation of the \$3.5 billion windfall stimulus package Maryland is due to receive. O'Malley presented to the General Assembly earlier this year a spending plan that assumed only \$350 million in expected federal funds related to the stimulus package. His budget also included cuts to local schools, community colleges and layoffs of hundreds of state workers to close a projected \$2 billion revenue gap. Fortunately the state will be able to avoid many of those cuts for now.

Also in Maryland, the unemployment rate spiked to 5.8 percent in December 2008. U.S. Department of Labor released that for the first time since 2001, Maryland lost jobs in a calendar year from the previous year. In three counties including Prince George's, there was a more than 3,000 job loss in the

month's reporting time period. So, as we clearly have outlined for us, Maryland's financial outlook appears dismal.

Locally, the effects of President's Obama's Economic Stimulus infusion of funds and Gov. O'Malley's insightfulness, have paved the way to prevent the FY2010 proposed teacher furloughs. Kudos to both President O'Bama and Gov. O'Malley... job well done!

Now is the time to heed the call to action. We encourage you to attend school board meetings or join PGCEA in Annapolis as we lobby for increased funding and measures to protect teacher pensions. Some elected officials have proposed teacher furloughs as a quick fix to budget problems. Our position on furloughs for teachers is uncategorically NOT! This recommendation by Board members and legislators speaks to their insensitivity to adequately respond to the needs and sacrifices of the professional work force. Teachers cannot afford to be furloughed. And neither can the students in our county's public schools!!! We believe that teachers have already made the many ultimate sacrifices - with all the duty-related concerns involving full implementation of AYP, the multiplicity of demands involving SchoolMax. It is obvious that teachers are overwhelmed by fulfillment of academic responsibilities, additional state-mandated testing undertakings, and county curriculum and attendance obligations. We believe that it is because of these cumbersome duties, that we make class size maximum a non-negotiable item.