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Report to MCCC Chapter Leaders

From Phil Mahler, Tom Parsons, MCCC Representatives on the
MTA Board of Directors

MTA Board Meeting – February 4, 5, 2005

The MTA Board of Directors met on Friday evening February 4, and Saturday February 5, in Natick. What follows are items of most interest to MCCC members. First, let's note two items that may be on the mind of full-time members.

The Points: It was stated at this meeting, as it has been by MCCC leadership, that the legislature is slowly getting up to speed. The departure of Speaker Finneran means lots of changes on committees. This means staffing has to be shifted, offices, etc. and this delays the actual processing of legislation. However, the house and senate leadership solemnly maintain this will be among the early business.

Health Care Contributions: Romney wants us all paying 25% on health care – see later in the report. This is the opposite of a raise, of course.

Part-time members and DCE should note that health insurance for all continues to be a priority.

FRIDAY EVENING

- Voted pay raises (3%) for certain part-time employees.
- Created a task force on retired membership; benefits, costs, dues, etc.
- Created a task force on education issues: look at current and coming threats to K-12 education and educators.
- Adopted a calendar for MTA Board of Director meetings.

SATURDAY

- Discussion about recruiting delegates for the MTA Delegate Assembly, and encouraging them to stay for the full meeting.
- Tom Parsons chairs the MTA Retirement Plan Committee, and its Investment Subcommittee. He presented the annual report for the Plan Committee. The Plan had a 13.8% gain for the last fiscal year July 1, 2003 – June 30, 2004. (I asked Tom if he'd take my savings and invest it for me.)
- The Board adopted Legislative Positions. These are positions that the MTA will take on any legislation related to these issues.
 - **Conflicts of Interest on the Board of Higher Education**
Prohibit faculty members, administrators, or members of board of trustees at private colleges and universities from serving as members of the board of Higher Education, in order to avoid any conflict of interest.
 - **Changes to the Right to Tenure**
Oppose any attempts to dilute or eliminate faculty tenure at our higher education institutions.
 - **Higher Education Funding**
Provide stable, sufficient state funding for public higher education institutions, through proposals such as formula funding
 - **Funding of Continuing and Graduate Education**
 - Allow state funding of continuing and graduate education programs in public higher education.

- **Health and Welfare Trust Funds**
Fully fund state employee health and welfare trust funds and ensure that funding for such trust funds increases with inflation.
- **Libraries, Library Media Centers and Higher Education Library Funding**
Ensure that all school, college and university libraries and all school library media centers, Instructional Media Centers (IMC) or Instructional Resource Centers (IRC), are adequately funded and that they are appropriately staffed and supervised by professionally qualified and certified librarians and library media specialists.
- **Tuition Retention**
Oppose the expansion of tuition retention in the system of higher education with in the Commonwealth.
- **Tax Revenues**
Oppose attempts to decrease state tax revenues unless public education is funded at an adequate level.
- **Health Care Benefits**
Support efforts to protect and improve health care benefits for MTA members.
- **Collective Bargaining in Higher Education**
Ensure that the Board of Higher Education and the UMass Board of Trustees continues to act as the statutorily designated "employer" for the purpose of collective bargaining with higher education employees.
- **Faculty Representation on Boards of Trustees**
Create a voting position on each Community College's Board of Trustees and on the UMass Board of Trustees, for a faculty union member from that college (the local President or designee).
- **Extending Workers' Compensation Coverage**
Allow school employees to recover damages for personal injuries sustained in cases where the employer has not provided workers' compensation coverage.
- **Single Payer Health Insurance**
Support passage of a single payer health insurance system that offers quality care for all, choice of doctor, health decisions made by doctor and patient, consumer voice in publicly funded management, and costs controlled by cutting profit, paperwork and advertising expenses.
- **Tuition Waivers**
Support state funding for the establishment of tuition waivers and fees for public school teachers, their spouses and children at Massachusetts' public institutions of higher education.
- **Pension Plan Beneficiaries**
Allow public employees to select any beneficiary for their public pension plan.
- **Support for Part-time/Contingent Worker Equity**
Require equal pay for part-time and other contingent workers doing the same work as permanent employees regardless of employment status; prevent discrimination in benefits against workers in part-time and other contingent jobs, including insurance and pensions, by requiring comparable benefits or compensation for all workers in part-time and other contingent jobs; including allowing part-time municipal employees to bargain for health insurance coverage.
- **Retirement Benefits**
Support efforts to protect and improve retirement benefits for MTA members.
- **State Employees: Creditable Service for "03" Service**
Provide for the purchase of up to 10 years of creditable service for state employees with 03 service exceeding two years. Limits on Collective Bargaining

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Joanne Blum, Director, Division of Governmental Services

New funding for higher education increases only \$5 million over last year. The proposed budget for higher education is \$299 million, or 25 percent lower than that of FY01, after adjusting for inflation.

The governor does not include any of the retroactive money for the previously unfunded higher education contracts.

The governor has proposed increasing all employees' health insurance premiums to 25 percent from the current 15 percent or 20 percent.

Romney increases higher education spending by about \$5 million (less than 1 percent). Moreover, this small increase includes \$21 million for the nanotechnology center at UMass-Lowell. He also does NOT include the roughly \$31 million for retroactive payments for higher education contracts.

The budget for high education actually increases only \$5 million. By segment, the amounts are as follows:

- University of Massachusetts - \$11 million (2.6 percent)
- State Colleges - \$2.8 million (1.5 percent)
- Community Colleges - \$4.9 million (2.5 percent)

Health Insurance Costs

Romney proposes to increase active state employee health insurance premium shares to 25 percent from the current three-tiered plan of 15 percent, 20 percent or 25 percent depending on one's salary and date of hire. This represents an increase of between one third and two-thirds in active employees' insurance premium share.

Also, Romney's plan would preclude the restoration of the 85-15 employer/employee premium split that was suspended for two years because of the recession.

Under his proposal, retirees who are 65 and retired before 7/94 would remain at 90 percent. Retirees over 65 who retired after 7/94 would remain at 85 percent.

Note that the tiered system is supposed to end in 2006, reverting to 85-15, and the MTA is leading a coalition of unions to ensure the tiered system is not renewed.

UMass-Amherst - Tuition Retention

Romney's budget reinstates the requirement that UMass-Amherst be allowed to retain tuition from out of state residents. (Previously, this program was only a pilot program)

Retiree COLA

The budget authorizes the granting of a COLA in FY06 for retired teachers and state employees of 3 percent on the first \$12,000 of a person's retirement allowance. Nonteacher local employees would need local approval to implement the COLA.

Retired State Employees' Health Insurance

There are two levels of contribution for retirees over 65, depending on their date of retirement. Those who retired before 7/1/94 get 90 percent while those who retired after that get 85 percent. (This means 85 percent or 90 percent of a Medicare supplement for those retirees who are covered by Medicare and 85 percent or 90 percent of the insurance cost for those retirees who are not.)

There are three levels of contribution for retirees under 65. For retirees under 65 who are eligible for Medicare coverage (through a spouse or previous private-sector employment), the state makes a contribution of 90 percent toward the Medicare supplement for those retired before 7/1/94 and 85 percent for those retired after 7/1/94. For retirees under 65 who are not covered by Medicare, the state would contribute 75 percent.

Legislative

- On December 1, members of the House and the Senate filed over 6,200 bills. These bills will be considered by the Legislature in the next two years. The new session began January 5, 2005. Once the bills are printed, MTA will go through the bills and include them in our legislative tracking chart. Those bills then will be tracked during the session.

- The Senate President and the Speaker of the House have not yet announced the chairs and members of the committees. It is expected that not only will the new Speaker make changes in the leadership team of the House but also that the Speaker and Senate President will reorganize the committee structure of the Legislature.

Higher Education

- The Senate Task Force on Public Higher Education held hearings on public higher education and its role as an economic engine for the state's economy.
- At the hearing held on December 13, MTA members MSCA President Pat Markunas, Dan Clawson and MCCC President Rick Doud testified.
- **The Speaker of the House and the Senate President have indicated that one of the first items that the Legislature will consider will be the higher education retroactive contract payments that the Governor vetoed this fall.**

Legislation Filed

The following are legislation submitted by the MTA that are for, or related to, higher ed.

- Creditable Service for Sabbatical Leaves
- Higher Education Optional Retirement Plan Modifications: Permit professional employees to be eligible for the faculty Optional Retirement Plan (ORP)
- Retiree Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA)
Increase the base retirement allowance on which COLAs are calculated from \$12,000 to \$25,000 and for those retired more than five years, on the full retirement allowance.
- Creditable Service For Peace Corp, VISTA, Teacher Corp and Americorp Service
- Part-time Faculty Pension Improvements
Requires that part-time faculty who teach at least two, three or more credit courses per semester or four, three or more credit courses per calendar year at one or more state higher education institutions, including a division of continuing education, earn a year of creditable service for this time, and have earnings for this time counted in determining one's pension. Also, those who have accrued at least five years of creditable service through ten years of part-time work shall be deemed vested in the retirement system.
- Health Insurance Benefits for Part-Time Higher Education Faculty
Requires that faculty who teach at least two, three or more credit courses per semester or four, three or more credit courses per calendar year at one or more state higher education institutions, including a division of continuing education, be eligible for state employee health insurance coverage.