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REPORT

MTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

FRIDAY/SATURDAY JANUARY 30, 31, 2000

The MTA Board met recently in Framingham, Friday evening and all day Saturday. The following is a report from your Region 44H directors.

Noah Berger, Executive Director, Massachusetts Policy and Budget Center, presented on the **current economic condition** in the Commonwealth. MCCC members who attended the MCCC fall conference in Worcester saw Noah present some of this. Noah again noted that we are not “Taxachusetts” anymore. In fact, 10 ½ % of our income goes to the state, whereas the national average is 11 ¼ %. That ¾ % translates into \$2B per year, about the size of the current deficit. Massachusetts cut taxes drastically when the economy was strong in the 1990’s. The problem is, this leaves the state without resources now, when we need them most. And economic forecasts indicate that FY 10 will be much worse. (It was later noted that a budget deficit of up to \$4 billion is anticipated in Massachusetts.)

Noah also showed that over the last 10 years, state spending is not up at all, even allowing for the new “universal” health care initiative! No, the problem is the state threw away necessary tax support by implementing permanent cuts when Massachusetts was doing very well and some reduction in taxes was fair. Now, the fair thing would be to restore at least some of that tax revenue—but the legislature doesn’t have the stomach for it. (You may recall that the House wouldn’t consider casinos for Gov. Patrick, or cutting corporate loopholes that both Patrick and Mitt Romney wanted.)

Noah also showed that tax cuts do not grow the economy. The state made an enormous investment in the last decade on keeping manufacturing jobs, with tax credits. But instead of increasing, those good, \$60,000 a year jobs for high school graduates continued to melt away.

The board discussed, for the second successive meeting, **organizing charter schools**. These are public schools, paid for with tax dollars. But they siphon off much needed money from our traditional schools*. The discussion about charter schools, or more to the point, the well-being of the teachers in them, continues to be an important topic for the Board.

Across the state, it was reported that K -12 **contract offers** were traditionally 2 ½ % - 4% for a long time. Currently they are zeros, and include take-backs. One town has proposed a 7.9% pay cut for their teachers.

Vice President Paul Toner sits on the Group Insurance Commission (GIC) Board, which manages our **health insurance**, and the insurance for more and more K-12 teachers. He is asking more questions than have been asked for some time. He does feel the GIC’s Executive Director is well-intentioned, but is working with a

* Our existing K-12 schools, and our colleagues in them, do a great job, by the way. One can find things like the following in Globe articles: “In 2005, Massachusetts became the only state to place first in every category on the NAEP test, known as the nation’s report card. The next time the test was administered, the Commonwealth’s students did it again.” They have done equally well since. But these things are not reported on page 1.



\$39M cut in funding, as we have previously reported. Hence the Governor's current 3-tiered health insurance contribution proposal which would cost most of our members from \$700 to \$1,400 per year.

Donnie reiterated to the Board the problem in the community colleges of our ever-increasing reliance on **exploited part-time teachers** to provide our services. This is a nationally recognized problem in all of higher ed, but especially in community colleges. Unfortunately the Commonwealth is slow to get the message. The MCCC position is that, while these teachers provide quality instruction, we also need more full-time positions to get all of the professional work done that needs doing to provide world-class programs and to increase retention. Another (K-12) board member noted that it is also a working condition issue for these adjunct teachers. Donnie mentioned the study "**Reversing Course**" by the American Federation of Teachers. Want a copy? Go to the MCCC web site at mccc-union.org; the link to download a free copy is on the home page.

Cathy Boudreau expanded on the **NEA Directors' report** at the board, noting that the **NEA** has revamped its **web site** completely. The site, www.nea.org, is getting mixed reviews as it presents mostly categories from which to choose on the home page. At least initially, users may find it harder to find what they want.

Because higher education was not part of the NEA Web page for many years, NEA developed a separate platform for higher education. As a result, the higher education Web page will migrate into the NEA's sometime in the summer. Cathy, NCHE President Jim Rice, and the NEA higher education staff, along with the IT staff, will be working on this at the February NEA Board meeting.

She also reported on **several lawsuits** around the country that could have a significant impact on NCLB (MCAS in Massachusetts) funding and NEA/MTA's ability to have political action committees. A case related to NLCB was heard before the U.S. Supreme Court in December, and this case deals with whether states can be forced to pay for the unfunded mandates from laws passed in Congress.

One of these anti-labor lawsuits could make it harder for the union to raise money for political purposes. For the MCCC and MTA, that goes way beyond particular candidates—the MTA has endorsed members of both parties—it depends on the issues, not the party. These issues include higher ed concerns like fighting for reasonable health care contributions, health insurance for our adjuncts, a real retirement system for these same adjuncts, state support for healthy colleges and lower student tuition and fees.

Cathy noted that 20% of our K-12 students are now Hispanic, while 5% of our teachers are. Some school facts: **1/3 of all students drop out of school, 50% of minority students drop out**, and ½ of our schools are "unfit for learning."

On a positive note she reminded us that President Obama is from Illinois, a state affected by the **GPO/WEP social security benefit issue**, and that he is on record as opposing this restriction of benefits. Also see our last MTA Board Report; all are online at the Governance link on the MCCC web site at mccc-union.org.

Respectfully Submitted

Phil Mahler
Donnie McGee

MTA Directors for the MCCC