



# MRTA

## Missouri Retired Teachers' Association & Public School Personnel

To: MRTA Executive Director and Staff  
MRTA Board of Directors MRTA Unit Presidents  
MRTA Local Membership at Large

From: MRTA State President Walt Cochran

Subject: 2010 Legislative Session

Date: May 17, 2010

I hope that all is well and you are ready to enjoy the summer. I am writing because there are a few things I would like to say about the State Legislative Session that has just ended. We called on MRTA membership at large for double duty during the past session. More than once you were asked to contact your state senator, representative, or both, concerning a certain piece of legislation. Do you remember any of these numbers? (HB 2113—HB 2357—SB 714—SB 896—SB 1050—SS SB 714—and SS HB 2357). There may have been others. Each time you responded in overwhelming numbers. THANK YOU SO MUCH! I want to give a special THANK YOU to Warren Solomon. Warren is Legislative Chair for the Cole County Unit of MRTA. He testified on behalf of MRTA in opposition to HB 2113 on April 13. His testimony was given before the House Retirement Committee.

Meanwhile, in the Senate, SB 1050 (State Investment Board) was attached to SB 714 on April 12. It was perfected by voice vote. On April 20, by motion of Senator Jason Crowell, S SB 714 (1050) was read for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time and passed the Senate with 27 Yeas and 5 Nays.

On April 29, Executive Director Kreider learned that the House Retirement Committee had scheduled a public hearing on SS SB 714 (1050) for Tuesday, May 4. Jim and I discussed at length the need for and the pros and cons of issuing a "Call To Action". MRTA would be in uncharted waters as this had never been done before. We had no idea of how it would turn out, but felt the issues were too important not to issue the "Call". We both agreed this was the action to take.

The hearing room was full. All seats were filled and people were standing around the walls. There were about 200 people in the room, counting committee members and press. Of that number, 175 plus were MRTA members from all parts of the state. AS MRTA PRESIDENT, I DO NOT HAVE THE WORDS TO EXPRESS OUR GRATITUDE TO THOSE MRTA MEMBERS PRESENT THAT DAY. THANK YOU SO MUCH FROM THE VERY BOTTOM OF MY HEART. I am so proud to be a member of this Association called MRTA. I do not know if we will ever realize the full impact we made that day. I can tell you this. We got the attention of the Office of Governor. Contact was made from that office to Director Kreider more than once in the days following the hearing. We all know the words spoken by Senator Jason Crowell about our MRTA Executive Director in the hearing. His remarks were personal, below the belt, totally uncalled for, and completely out of order. I remain convinced that the Senator did his cause much more harm than good that day. One last comment

about the hearing. A special THANK YOU to Virginia Robbins, Robie Mathews, Ron Clemons, and any others that helped arrange for a bus from the Independence area.

Finally, the state investment board legislation ended up in HB 2357. We owe a debt of gratitude to Representative Jason Smith (150). Representative Smith stood firm and no action was taken before the House adjourned at 6 PM. on May 14.

There has been much spoken and written the past several weeks about why MRTA was taking a particular stand in support or opposition to certain bills in the legislature. The information has been there for all. I know there are some out there that still do not understand why MRTA was taking certain positions, especially since PSRS/PEERS was not included in some legislation. The possibility was always there that PSRS/PEERS would be included. If not this year, what about next year and next year and on and on?? It was right for MRTA to do what we did. This legislation was bad public policy and would set a dangerous precedent for the use of public pension dollars. The proposed legislation was not in the best interest of PSRS/PEERS. It was certainly not in the best interest of active teachers in our state. We can rest briefly and then analyze and be vigilant for the future. THE IDEAS AND CONCEPTS PRESENTED IN LEGISLATION THIS YEAR WILL NOT GO AWAY.

Finally, a personal note to Jim Kreider. Thank you so very much for your vigilance on legislation and your hard work for MRTA. Your experience in the legislature and the legislative process is so valuable to MRTA. By the end of the session, those on Capitol Hill in Jefferson City were beginning to understand where we were coming from. MRTA made a difference and they knew we were there. THANK YOU JIM KREIDER.

HAPPY 50<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY MRTA. MRTA IS HERE TO STAY.

Sincerely,



Walt Cochran  
MRTA President

VOICE OF THE DAY

# Lawmakers might raid teachers' pensions

By Veronica J. Hambacker

Sixty years ago, educators met in Columbia's Tiger Hotel and developed a retirement plan; thus began PSRS. Initially, 3 percent of salary, matched by districts' boards, went into the fund, but living cost increases required contribution increases and permitting statutes were adopted. The money placed in the fund comes from the salary fund, so it no longer belongs to taxpayers, but to teachers.

PSRS/PEERS is well managed and is today among the top 50 retirement systems in the nation. Those not teaching do not know the difficulty of the work, the further education, the accountability, and the long hours of fulfilling though stressful work of a good teacher. Never being paid anything near what we deserve, our PSRS/PEERS is an attractive "drawing card" to our ranks. Why anyone believes teachers do not deserve the retirement or do not work hard to earn it is beyond me.

Many times we have fought off attempts to "raid" or compromise our system. We are opposing this attempt because it is the proverbial "camel's nose under the tent." Once law and coffers continue to dwindle, we fear we could be the next sacrifice to an investment board not composed of members elected from our ranks.

I testified in opposition to this measure last Tuesday in Jefferson City because we, long responsible for ourselves, wish to remain so. Senator Crowell calls Jim Kreider a "liar" who doesn't know what he is talking about. Let me assure everyone: MRTA director Jim Kreider is not a liar and is obligated to inform us of any situation that may threaten our fund - either now or in the future. Senator Crowell's bill does that, and we oppose its passage.

Veronica J. Hambacker was MRTA vice president and a member of the PSRS/PEERS board of trustees from 1994 to 2002. She lives in Salem.

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