The annual MRSPA Legislative Workshop was held virtually on Wednesday January 26, 2022. Fifty-three MRSPA members from across the state attended. Members were treated to wonderful presentations from excellent speakers. George D. Denny, Jr., MRSPA President, welcomed members and guests.

Rebecca Ruff, Operating Budget Manager, Department of Legislative Services summarized what to expect in the 2022-2023 state budget with an emphasis on how the budget surplus might be spent or saved, and any specific impacts for increased pension funding.

Tammy Bresnahan, Associate State Director of Advocacy for AARP Maryland, shared AARP's legislative priorities for the 2022 session. She highlighted areas where AARP MD and MRSPA will work together on legislation.

Adam Goldberg, Senior Legislative Representative National Retired Teachers Association, shared what is happening in other states relative to pension attacks and work that other state associations are doing to ward off attacks or seek COLAs for their members. Adam also reviewed NRTA's federal legislative priorities and gave a brief update on the status of pending legislation.

New Maryland State Retirement and Pension System Executive Director, Martin Noven updated us on the status of the pension system. He referenced the recent excellent market returns and answered questions from members about our COLA and any expected legislative issues this session.

MRSPA's Legislative Committee continues to meet bi-weekly via Zoom during the General Assembly session to discuss proposed legislation related to our MRSPA Legislative Priorities and act as needed. Please check out the bi-weekly Legislative Update on our website at www.mrspa.org and click the Legislation menu option. Or click the link when received via Constant Contact in your email. We expect another very busy session!
Someone once noted: “Even though it is the shortest month of the year, February is jam-packed with events, including Groundhog Day, Valentine’s Day, and President’s Day! It is Black History month, as well as American Heart Month, Canned Food Month, Grapefruit Month, and Hot Breakfast Month!” --Anonymous. Those last three I looked up, and sure enough they exist!

One needs a good calendar to keep all those dates straight, much like the one in the MRSPA office. That is where state committee meetings, Board and Executive Committee meetings, the Leadership and Legislative workshops, the President’s meetings, the Annual Business Meeting, local meeting dates, and many other assemblages vital to the work of the state and local organizations are recorded. Each calendar entry reminds us of the great things our members are doing or will do. The MRSPA office staff maintain that calendar, and manage, somehow, to keep me headed in the right direction in the process!

The many volunteers who serve on various state and local committees are the backbone of all our associations. Without such dedicated members giving freely of their time and talents none of us would be able to serve all our members so successfully. Likewise, without dedicated members stepping up to take leadership positions at the state and the local levels we could not serve all our members effectively.

One thing that has been clear over the past two years is that despite all the fear and trepidation caused by Covid, despite all the interruptions to our daily routines, despite all the hardships and losses we have endured, retirees from Maryland school systems have remained resilient. You have been creative in handling normally ordinary tasks in unordinary ways. You have adapted to the challenges of dealing with technology that previously may have been foreign to you. You have supported your family and friends during their times of need. You have donated food, money, and time to support needy causes. You have continued to serve your communities with scholarships and community service projects.

(Continued on page 4)
When I was in elementary school, it seemed like I was always selling something. Girl Scout cookies, raffle tickets, stationary, Christmas Seals, and World's Finest Chocolate bars among other things. Since I was painfully shy, it was an ordeal for me to go door to door and ask people for money even though most were polite and bought something. When they didn't, they never yelled or got angry that I was bothering them. I hated asking people for money even though the money was used for good things for lots of people near and far, and once it even paid for horseback riding lessons for me. I had to get out of my comfort zone, and I did.

Fast forward many years and I am still asking people for money. In fact, I have spent much of my adult life asking local, state, and federal leaders for money. Money for schools, for students, for teachers, school support staff, and administrators. Money for membership dues in my local teachers association then, and now membership dues in MRSPA.

I have grown used to asking people for money as I understand the value and importance of membership in advocacy organizations and of advocating on behalf of others. Money is the lifeline for our schools and school staff and for us retirees, too. Indeed, that money supports our local and state economies as well. As the 2022 General Assembly session gets underway, know that MRSPA is here advocating for you. Your annual membership dues make that advocacy possible.

Like me in elementary school, it may be uncomfortable for you to ask others for money, too. Yet, there are thousands of retired school personnel out there who are not yet members of MRSPA. We could be so much stronger with those non-members included in our ranks. If you know any non-members, please consider breaking out of your comfort zone to ask them to join. Like my former neighbors, they won't get angry, though a few may say no. They can't say yes or no if we don't ask.

Thank you in advance for breaking out of your comfort zone to ask some retirees to join MRSPA!
The Maryland Retired School Personnel Association serves as an advocate for and provides services to members to empower them to enrich the quality of their lives. A significant part of our advocacy results from the activities of the Legislative Committee. The Committee is comprised of members from all regions of the state. The role of the Committee is to inform members and local associations by monitoring legislation that may affect members, schools, and older persons. Our primary focus is the protection of our defined benefit pension and the sustaining of this benefit for current and future retired educators.

The Committee begins its work each August as we meet to discuss and update, as necessary, the Legislative Priorities for MRSPA for the coming session of the General Assembly (GA). We set the meeting schedule for the coming year and begin planning for the Legislative Workshop. This year we added a Civic Participation priority.

As we meet prior to and during the GA session, we discuss all legislation related to retirement/pensions and our other legislative priorities. The Committee determines if action is required.

After discussion of legislation, we take a position of support or opposition. Our position and reasons are then shared with the legislature through letters, testimony, and personal contact. These actions are published for our members as the Legislative Update on the MRSPA website and emailed to members via Constant Contact.

As the Legislative Aide, I monitor bills that are filed, and share the relevant proposed legislation with the Committee. I then prepare the Legislative Update for the Committee and website. Committee members write the position letters and testimony. Then, the MRSPA staff and I prepare the letters for the legislators, and I deliver them to the appropriate committees. When needed, I testify before the committees of the General Assembly on specific legislation. As a retired high school government and history teacher, I love working with the MRSPA Legislative Committee and serving as the connection with state legislators.

Success of the MRSPA Legislative program is dependent upon teaming with the local associations. In addition to the Legislative Update, the MRSPA website (mrspa.org) contains online resources such as links to the Maryland General Assembly and contact tools to communicate with local senators and representatives by legislative districts. We also provide talking points and sample letters for members to use to advocate for specific legislation. This is one of the great advantages of living in the digital age. YOU can affect the workings of the Legislature from any location in Maryland or beyond. These actions are then shared with the legislature through letters, testimony, and personal contact. These actions are published for our members as the Legislative Update on the MRSPA website and emailed to members via Constant Contact. YOU can be an advocate!

Virginia Crespo, MRSPA Legislative Aide

As we look forward to the coming of spring, I leave you with this thought: “If you feel like you’re losing everything, remember that trees lose their leaves every year and still they stand tall and wait for better days to come.” --Anonymous

Stand tall, better days are coming.

Best wishes and stay safe!

George D. Denny, Jr.

(President’s Message continued from page 2)

We may not have gotten out of the woods yet with Covid and its many strains, but the end of the tunnel is in sight. I challenge each of you to keep doing the great things you are doing for your family and friends, for your fellow members and for your community. One day we all will look back on these times and marvel at what we accomplished because we worked together.
By the January 31, 2022 deadline, 73 applications for the four $2,000 MRSPA scholarships were received. The scholarships are open to uncertified teachers, paraprofessionals and other public school system employees pursuing Maryland teacher certification. Our scholarships are also open to certified Maryland teachers pursuing certification in a different education specialty field such as school counseling, speech pathology, school social work, school psychology, Raffle article and physical or occupational therapy.

With the rising cost of tuition and the financial struggle that students face, it is becoming more and more difficult for school employees to get required certifications, with some working more than one job, as a result. The MRSPA Fund is designed to help those individuals. It is imperative that we do our part as retired educators to keep qualified active personnel in our schools.

MRSPA's Fund is managed by the Community Foundation of Frederick County. This Fund depends on the market value of the investments, the annual raffle fundraiser, and the generosity of our members. Please use the form below to purchase raffle tickets.

The MRSPA Scholarship Committee thanks our regular raffle participants, past donors, and all who will donate for the first time. We can't be successful without your generous donations!

The MRSPA Community Service and Scholarship Committees provide tremendous support to students and staff in schools across Maryland. In the past, funds for these scholarships and mini-grants were partially obtained through in-person sale of raffle tickets statewide. Last year, we sold raffle tickets via this newsletter and via local newsletters with great success. This year we are again seeking donations to the MRSPA Fund to continue our work. All donations are tax deductible and come with our thanks and appreciation!

To show our appreciation, your name will be entered into a drawing upon receipt of your donation. Donations of $10 will earn 1 raffle ticket, and donations of $25 will earn 3 raffle tickets incrementally. MRSPA staff will write your name on the correct number of tickets when we receive your check. The drawing will take place at the May 2022 Annual Business Meeting, whether held in person or virtually. You can win the $300 cash first prize, a Maryland themed basket valued at $150 second prize, or one of 5 third place themed baskets valued at $75: Cooking, Spa, Wine Lover, Movie Night, and Sports Lover. Out-of-state basket winners will receive gift cards in lieu of basket contents.

Entering the drawing is fun and easy!

1. Make your check payable to “The Community Foundation of Frederick County”
2. Write MRSPA Fund Donation on the FOR line
3. Date and sign your check
4. Mail check and completed form to:
   MRSPA
   8379 Piney Orchard Parkway, Suite A,
   Odenton, MD 21113
   Due by March 22, 2022

Please, include the form below with your donation. Receipts will be sent via email or US Mail.

MRSPA Fund Donation

Your Name: ___________________________________________________________
Your Address: _________________________________________________________
Home Phone: ___________________________ Cell Phone: ___________________
Email: __________________________________________________________________

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New Membership Cards Are in the Mail - Watch Out!

In the Fall and Winter 2021 MRSPA News, we informed members that our new plastic membership cards were to be delivered to you in the US Mail beginning in mid-November. Then, we told you that the cards were delayed in production and shipping. Please know that the cards have been produced and are in the US Mail! Delays with the postal service may still occur. These delays are out of our control.

Please be on the lookout for this important piece of mail. A photo of the envelope your card will arrive in is below for your information. Do not throw it away thinking it is junk mail, as we cannot send duplicate cards.

These new cards are permanent and can be kept in your purse or wallet for several years. If you didn't renew your membership for 2021-2022 before November 1, 2021, you will not receive a new card in this initial distribution. Plastic cards will be distributed quarterly to new or late renewing members. New members will receive a paper card to use until you receive your plastic card.

Your new card includes information on how to access the benefits of membership on the MRSPA website. The link to access this important information is: https://www.mrspa.org/memberbenefits. If you do not have a computer, you can call the MRSPA office to request member benefit information at 410-551-1517.

We hope you take advantage of your MRSPA member benefits and ask for your patience as you await the arrival of your new membership card.
STAYING HEALTHY TODAY MEANS BEING PREPARED FOR THE FUTURE.

With Long-term Care coverage from MRSPA & AMBA, you can live for today without worrying about tomorrow.

• You select the daily amount
• You select the benefit period
• You choose the waiting period
• You choose your inflation protection

Learn More: 1-877-556-4582
myambabenefits.info/mrspa

MRSPA - Maryland Retired School Personnel Association

Proud to support the education community

Educational Systems Federal Credit Union offers special financing and services for the education community.

Join today
Visit esfcu.org, call 301.779.8500 or find a branch near you.
MRSPA CALENDAR

February 15 .............. Legislative Committee Meeting
via Zoom

February 21 .............. President’s Day

March 1, 15, 29 .......... Legislative Committee Meetings
via Zoom

March 9 ..................... Board of Directors Meeting
via Zoom

March 16 .................... Local Presidents’ Meeting
via Zoom

April 11 ...................... Sine Die, General Assembly Ends
Annapolis

May 11 ......................... Annual Business Meeting
Camelot by Martin’s

MRSPA TRIPS AND TRAVEL 2022

Backroads of Iberia: Spain and Portugal, April 2 – 17, 2022, Overseas Adventure Travel (GrandCircle Travel Small Group) Contact Amanda Turrell at (386) 597-1380 or (386) 290-2997 or ATurrell@oattravel.com Code: GO-28192.

Holland and Belgium Springtime River Cruise, April 2022 (Collette) Contact Leigh Ann Keller at Action Travel at (301) 843-0887 or admin@actiontraveltours.com.

America’s Music Cities Featuring Nashville, Memphis, & New Orleans, May 20 – 27 or September 30-October 7, 2022, (Mayflower Cruises and Tours) Contact Debbie Martinez at (810) 797-5710 or (630) 673-0773 or Debbie@mayflowercruisesandtours.com.

Oberammergau and Passion Play, May 22 – 31, 2022 (Collette) Contact Leigh Ann Keller at Action Travel at (301) 843-0887 or admin@actiontraveltours.com.

Alaska Cruise/Tour, July 8 – 20, 2022 (Cruises Plus) Contact Judy Warsaw at (410) 494-1414 or judycruisesplus@aol.com.

Mackinac Island, October 1-9, 2022 (Collette) Contact Leigh Ann Keller at Action Travel at (301) 843-0887 or admin@actiontraveltours.com.

Check our website at www.mrspa.org, click Travel to locate more information.

All MRSPA trips are open to MRSPA members, their family and friends. Please use Code: GO-28192 anytime you travel with Grand Circle Tours to access a special deal for you and MRSPA, even if it’s not a MRSPA sponsored trip.