

2018 GENERAL ELECTION**November 6 only weeks away!**

Do you have a plan for voting? Do you know the location of your polling place?

Maryland has a few options for voters to make voting easy and efficient.

Voters can avoid the lines on Election Day and vote early or by absentee ballot.

Every county in Maryland must have at least one early voting center. The number of voting centers is determined by the number of registered voters in each county.

Early voting for the 2018 General Election will be held from **Thursday, October 25, through Thursday, November 1, 2018, from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. each day.**

Absentee ballots are available to Maryland voters who may not be able to get to the polls for early voting or on election day. They are perfect for voters who have difficulty getting to the polls, who may be out of town during the election, or who just prefer the convenience of voting at home.

The deadline to request an absentee ballot via mail or fax is Tuesday, October 30, 2018.

To request an absentee ballot via the internet, the deadline is Friday, November 2, 2018.

Voters with questions about voting in the 2018 General Election should check the Maryland State Board of Elections website. It has plenty of great information. The website address is www.elections.maryland.gov and click on "Voting."

They may also be reached by phone at 410-269-2840 or at 800-222-8683. Their email address is info.sbe@maryland.gov.

Every county also has a Board of Elections office that will answer questions about voting. You may access the county Board of Elections websites through the State Board of Elections website by typing the name

Vote YES on Question 1!

When Marylanders approved casino gaming, we thought the new revenue would increase education funding.

While almost \$2 billion in casino revenue went into the Education Trust Fund – which can only be used for funding public education – nearly the same amount of existing funding was **shifted from education** to other parts of the state budget.

The result? The new revenue from casinos didn't add to existing funding; it supplanted or simply maintained existing, minimum levels.

Passing (Constitutional Amendment) Question 1, which will be on the General Election ballot in November 2018, will **Fix the Fund**, stop this budget gimmick, and ensure that casino revenues go to increasing or supplementing school funding over current levels.

This could be an influx of \$500 million dollars within four years to education funding.

To learn more, go to www.fixthefundmd.org, and please **VOTE YES on (Constitutional Amendment) Question 1 this November!**



of the county in the search box at the top of the home page, then click "Counties." **If you wish to register to vote, have changed your address, or wish to change a party affiliation, you must do so by Tuesday, October 16, 2018, at 9 p.m.** Please vote for candidates at all levels of government that support public education, public education funding, and your defined benefit pension in the November General Election!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Ann Marie Downey



MRSPA – Connecting, Protecting, Making a Difference

Membership is the lifeblood of an organization, and the Maryland Retired School Personnel Association is no exception.

If you are an MRSPA member, you are vital to the success of our Association! We always encourage people to step into local or state leadership roles, but even if this is not the right

time for you to take that step, by being a member you are very valuable to MRSPA. We appreciate you, and we *need you* to spread the word about MRSPA!

We also need more of “you” to successfully continue MRSPA’s mission. It should come as no surprise that our membership numbers have gone down over the years, sadly in large part due to deaths. We *must* explore ways to encourage newly retired school personnel and others to join us, and we are working on ways to reach our pool of potential members and show the value of becoming a member.

Because membership and messaging are so crucial for our Association, MRSPA’s Board of Directors and local presidents attended a Leadership Conference at the Maritime Conference Center in Linthicum Maryland at the end of September. Training was provided by Widmeyer Finn Communications of Washington, D.C.

With the theme, “Using Building Blocks of Communications to Boost Member Recruitment and Leadership,” these professionals, working with MRSPA leaders, established a “blueprint” and a strong “foundation” for our efforts as we move forward. Equipped with some new “tools,” your leaders will share some real-world ideas for all of us to use as we seek and encounter prospective members. In addition to the September conference, local presidents attended a July Presidents’ meeting to gain information, share ideas and get the year off to a good start. Thank you for your dedication! As the great tennis star Arthur Ashe said, “**Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.**”

MRSPA News

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**MARYLAND RETIRED SCHOOL
PERSONNEL ASSOCIATION.**

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I am looking forward to this year of possibilities for MRSPA, as we work together to share what MRSPA has to offer and to build our membership.

2018 COLA

The 2018 COLA is **2.13%** for all retirees retired one full year as of July 1, 2018.

The COLA began with your July 2018 check.

For more information, visit the Maryland State Retirement Agency’s website at <http://www.sra.state.md.us/>.

VISION STATEMENT

The Maryland Retired School Personnel Association inspires the dedication, commitment, skills and abilities of its members in service to fellow retirees and the entire community in an ever-changing world.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Maryland Retired School Personnel Association is a nonprofit organization comprised of retired school system personnel. It serves as an advocate for members and provides expanding services to members, empowering them to enrich the quality of their lives. The organization is dedicated to excellence in education and life-long learning. It promotes community service by its members through a myriad of volunteer activities.

From the

Executive Director

Wanda Ruffo Twigg



Quite a few years ago in a different job, I attended a leadership workshop where one of the topics was **power**. I confess that I was uncomfortable with the word and the concept at the time. But, I will not forget the lesson learned in those three days and in the years following.

It is simple, but so very important. If you choose not to use your power, someone else will take it. Use your power and do not allow others to take it without fighting the good fight.

Sometimes you are successful and sometimes you aren't, but the fun and the power are in the fight.

As President Jimmy Carter said, "Our dreams are big, our hopes high, our goals long-term and the path is difficult. But the only failure is not to try."

This November, citizens across Maryland will have the opportunity to use their power by voting in the General Election.

Choosing not to vote is a choice not to try and to give someone else your power. Voting is so convenient now that you can vote early or by absentee ballot if you cannot get to the polls on the actual November 6 Election Day.

See the article on **Page 1** that talks about voting and how to locate your polling place, or early voting locations, dates and times, or to request an absentee ballot.

As you are deciding which national, state, and local candidates will get your vote, please be sure to consider their positions on supporting retired educators, your defined benefit pension, and your retiree health benefits.

Funding for your health benefits comes from all three levels of government taxes, as all three levels provide money to your local school system.

State and local funding supports your defined benefit pension. It is imperative that we all use our power to support candidates at all three levels who will support us.

You may recall a referendum several years ago when Maryland voters approved legalizing gaming. The idea was that the additional tax revenue would be spent on public education. Maryland voters supported this concept, but the fine print allowed this gaming revenue to supplant state funding to schools rather than supplement it.

During the 2018 General Assembly session, MRSPA supported legislation (HB 1697/SB 1122) that called for a referendum on a Constitutional Amendment that **puts the gaming revenue in a lock box for public education that would supplement current public education funding**. The legislation passed and was approved by the Governor.

Now, the referendum will appear on the ballot as **Question 1 in the General Election**. Please be sure to vote **YES** on Question 1 when you go to the polls in November!

MRSPA continues to be the **only** organization in the state that works exclusively to represent retired educators and to protect your defined benefit pension.

Please join us in using your power to vote for pro-public education, pro-defined benefit pension, pro-retiree health benefit elected officials in the November 6, 2018 General Election.

Feel the power- VOTE!

Introducing the Maryland Retired School Personnel Association Visa® card

Support Maryland Retired School Personnel Association and earn cash rewards

Welcome to Maryland Retired School Personnel Association! Now that you're a member, you can show your support by getting the MRSPA Visa card.



Enjoy a \$100 bonus¹ - simply spend \$1,000 in the first three billing cycles and earn enough rewards to redeem for a \$100 bonus.



Get 1.5% back¹ on purchases made with your card, every day.



Support Maryland Retired School Personnel Association with every dollar you spend.

APPLY TODAY

Visit <https://www.affinitysolutionsfbc.com/P4H4>

Get rewarded when you use your card on millions of purchases like these >>>

SPEND	1.5% BACK
Groceries	✓
Bills	✓
Entertainment	✓
Dining out	✓

¹See Rewards Terms and Conditions in the Summary of Credit Terms provided at time of application. \$100 bonus accumulates as 10,000 bonus points. 1.5% equals 1.5 points per \$1 spent and points will never expire. Cards are issued by First Bankcard®, a division of First National Bank of Omaha, pursuant to a license from Visa U.S.A., Inc. VISA and VISA SIGNATURE are registered trademarks of Visa International Service Association and used under license.

FACT OR MYTH?

Welcome to Fact or Myth, a new column for *MRSPA News*.

Have you ever wondered if something you heard about MRSPA is true or not?

If so, here's where you can separate fact from myth. Send us your inquires. To start –

Myth:

MRSPA will continue to take dues out of my retirement check after I am deceased.

Fact:

Know that you can enjoy the ease of Dues Deduction without the worry that your estate will continue to be charged.

- Dues deduction ends when Maryland State Retirement System (MSRS) is notified of your death.
- Should an MRSPA dues deduction occur between your death and the notification to MSRS of your death, MSRS will recoup this charge in subsequent disbursements to MRSPA. Retirement monies to MRSPA end upon your death. MSRS will not hold dues paid after your death from your estate.

Please advise your executor and family members to notify both MSRS and MRSPA upon your death.



Jill Holley, center, receives her MRSPA scholarship from Anne Humphrey, president of Cecil County Retired School Personnel Association, left, and Wanda Twigg, MRSPA Executive Director, right. Jill was unable to attend the Annual Meeting in May, so Wanda traveled in June to North East Middle School where Jill works to make the presentation during a staff meeting. Anne provided donuts for the school staff and flowers for Jill, which were purchased by MRSPA.

Congratulations To Jill Holley

Jill Holley, center, receives her MRSPA scholarship from Anne Humphrey, president of Cecil County Retired School Personnel Association, left, and Wanda Twigg, MRSPA Executive Director,

“Collections of Connections”

If Maryland experiences a paper clip shortage this next year, MRSPA might be responsible! Each local was given a “starter kit” of red, yellow, black, and white paper clips for the “Collections of Connections” activity.

At the first gathering of your local that you attend, you will be asked to link a paper clip to your local’s “attendance chain.” You will attach a link only once.

Locals may set their own “spin” on this activity.

The plan is to join the link “collections” of all 24 locals for display at our next Annual Business Meeting in May 2019, providing a visual way of recognizing our connections across the state.

Recruitment Incentive

\$10 Gift Card for Recruiting New Member with Dues Deduction

Until October 1, 2018, MRSPA is offering a \$10 gift card to **ANY** member who recruits a **NEW** member who signs up for **DUES DEDUCTION**.

All you have to do is get the NEW member to complete an application form, signing up for DUES DEDUCTION, and then WRITE YOUR NAME on the application before sending it to MRSPA.

MRSPA will send you a gift card. You can recruit as many NEW DUES DEDUCTION members as you like. Just remember to put your name on each application.

The NEW member will also receive the ONE-TIME \$10 reduction in state dues so their state dues will be \$35 for 2018-2019.

Remember local dues are additional.

Just call the MRSPA office for applications.

Final Billing Notices

The second and final billing notices for cash dues paying members were sent in July. Any person who has not remitted their cash dues renewal by November 1, 2018, will be dropped from our roles.

If you are unsure if you have paid your cash dues, please contact the MRSPA office at 410-551-1517.

Local dues will be sent to local treasurers. If a local has or will be making a change in treasurers, contact the MRSPA office to update the address files.

Cecilton's Sit and Stay Campaign Dedicates First Public Bench to Emeritus Member Becky Smith



PHOTO BY JACOB OWENS, CECIL WHIG

CECILTON — In kicking off a new campaign to encourage locals to congregate more around town, officials couldn't have been happier to see the scene at Cecilton Elementary School in June 2018.

There elected officials, Cecil County Public Schools leaders, town service organization representatives, local residents and more gathered to celebrate the dedication of a public bench to **Rebecca Smith**, who at **103 years old** has spent the vast majority of her life in Cecilton.

Smith spent 31 years teaching history in CCPS and 10 more years serving as a guidance counselor. After retiring, she was elected to judge of the county orphans' court, where she served 24 years.

"Ms. Becky had a very positive impact on her students, with many of them staying in contact with her today. I think that's incredible," said Mayor Joe Zang, surrounded by many of her former students.

"There can be no other person than Ms. Becky Smith for Cecilton to choose to be the recipient of our very first Sit and Stay bench."

The Sit and Stay campaign, developed by Town Administrator Mary Cooper along with town staff, will place at least five public benches around the small town as intended gathering places.

Smith's bench was placed on the eastern edge of Cecilton Elementary School in honor of her contributions to education.

Cecilton Elementary Principal Meghan Pugh said the school was honored to be the site for the first bench.

"After they shared Ms. Becky Smith's history with me and how she dedicated her life to the service of children, we couldn't think of a better place than right on the corner of the school to have this bench," she said.

Smith said she felt honored that you have remembered me in this way."

Smith said she "had a passion to be a teacher" because some of her elementary and high school teachers inspired her.

She graduated college at age 20 and immediately got a job at Perryville High School, where she taught five classes a day, coached and ran a home room.

In 1943, she moved to Elkton High School where she stayed for 33 years.

Smith remarked about how rare it must be for something to be dedicated to a 103-year-old and have the recipient attend in person.

"I pray, give thanks for every day and I keep moving, otherwise you'll find yourself sitting in a chair someplace in a nursing home."

Long known for her independent streak and bevy of friends and supporters, Smith encouraged all to enjoy the town's Sit and Stay campaign.

"The bench is here now and you all are welcome to come sit on it with me," she said.

"Bring a book, sit here and look at nature, or come take a rest."

(The above article was written by Jacob Owens and reprinted from the Cecil Whig newspaper.)

Legislative Committee Votes to Support Constitutional Amendment Question 1

At its recent meeting, MRSPA's Legislative Committee voted to support Maryland Constitutional Amendment **Question 1**, which will be on the **General Election ballot on November 6. Passage of the Amendment would increase funding for education.**

This proposed constitutional amendment would require that the Governor, beginning in fiscal year 2020, provide in the annual budget submission supplemental State funding for public education through the use of commercial gaming revenues.

The supplemental funding must be **in addition** to the State funding provided through the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2002.

The supplemental funding included in the submission must total at least \$125 million in fiscal year 2020, \$250 million in fiscal year 2021, and \$375 million in fiscal year 2022.

In all subsequent fiscal years, 100% of the gaming revenues dedicated to public education must be included as supplemental funding.

The Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act established funding formulas for direct State aid to public schools.

The Education Trust Fund is a special fund that is separate from the State's General Fund and currently used for the continued funding of the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act formulas and programs.

The General Fund consists of revenues collected by the State that are not dedicated by law to any specific purpose; a special fund consists of revenues, the use of which are statutorily limited as to purpose.

A portion of the proceeds from video lottery terminals and table games is dedicated to the Education Trust Fund.

Currently, all proceeds credited to the Education Trust Fund are budgeted for the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act formulas and programs.

Designating the use of a portion or all of the money credited to the Education Trust Fund for supplemental funding will require General Fund expenditures for the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act formulas and programs to increase by an equal amount.

LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE SEPTEMBER 26-27

Local presidents and MRSPA Board of Directors will participate in training sessions presented by Widmeyer Finn Partners, a public relations and communications company. The training will be held at the Maritime Conference Center in Linthicum Heights, Maryland, on Wednesday and Thursday, September 26 and 27, 2018.

The conference will be focused on communications strategies to improve membership recruitment, retention, and activism.

Beginning promptly at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, the event will end at 2:30 p.m. on Thursday, September 27.

The Maritime Conference Center is located at 692 Maritime Boulevard, Linthicum Heights, Maryland 21090.

October 7-13 is Fire Prevention Week

This week focuses on making people aware of causes of home fires and to remember to practice fire safety all year.

On average, seven people die in U.S. home fires per day. Half of home fire deaths result from fires reported between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m.

Cooking equipment is the leading cause of home injuries, followed by heating equipment. Smoking materials are the leading cause of home fire deaths, and most fatal fires kill one or two people.

Make an escape plan and practice it with the family. Check the smoke detectors and change batteries regularly. You have less than 6 minutes to exit a burning home!

Deadline for Local Web Masters

Deadline to update information on local association websites is November 28. Websites not posting current information at that time will no longer have a link on the MRSPA website.

Information is available in the newly revised Public Relations section of MRSPA's Resource Manual, which is available on its website.

If further assistance is needed, contact the Public Relations Committee at the MRSPA office.



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MRSPA CALENDAR

- September 26.....AARP Maryland Andrus Awards Luncheon
- September 26 & 27.....MRSPA Leadership Conference at Maritime Conference Center, Linthicum, Md.
- October 25.....Maryland Senior Citizens Hall of Fame
- November 6.....General Election Day
- November 11 & 12.....Veteran’s Day (observed)
- November 14.....MRSPA Legislative Workshop Annapolis, Md.

MRSPA 2019 TRIPS

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| Best of Africa: South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Botswana
1-800-322-6677 | January 3 – January 19, 2019 |
| Kingdoms of Southeast Asia: Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos
1-800-848-3273 | February 18 – March 9, 2019 |
| London Explorer
1-800-848-3273 | March 23 – 31, 2019 |
| From the Alps to the Adriatic: Italy, Slovenia, and Croatia
1-201-228-5228 | April 1 – 9, 2019 |
| America’s Music Cities: New Orleans’ Jazz Fest, Memphis, and Nashville
1-800-848-3273 | April 26 – May 3, 2019 |
| France Culinary Delights: Paris to Normandy Cruise
1-800-322-6677 | June 18 – July 1, 2019 |
| Best of Chile and Argentina During the Solar Eclipse
1-201-228-5228 | June 30 – July 11, 2019 |
| Best of the Canadian Rockies: Calgary to Vancouver
1-800-221-2610 | July 25 – August 8, 2019 |
| Viking River Cruises “Romantic Danube”: Nuremberg, Krems, Vienna, and Budapest
1-301-384-3402 | October 6 – 13, 2019 |
| New England and Cape Cod Autumn Foliage
1-810-797-5710 or 1-443-904-4540 | October 8 – 15, 2019 |
| Imperial Cities with Oberammergau Passion Play: Budapest, Vienna, and Prague
1-410-296-8330 | February 18 – March 9, 2020 |