

Maryland Retired School Personnel Association

Legislative Resources

The MRSPA Legislative Committee is a standing committee. The charge to the Committee is:

- 1) to provide leadership to the members and local associations by informing and monitoring legislation which will affect members, schools, and older persons,
- 2) to mobilize support for or against specific legislation and to testify as needed,
- 3) to plan and deliver a state legislative workshop.

The committee is comprised of members from all regions of the state. All legislation related to retirement/pensions and other issues impacting retired educators is monitored. The committee determines if action is required. The committee is focused on the full actuarial funding of the State Retirement and Pension System and sustaining defined benefits for current and future retired educators.

Success of the MRSPA Legislative program is dependent upon teaming with the local associations. MRSPA supports and provides limited funding for local efforts to have constructive and meaningful interaction with state delegates and senators. Each local is encouraged to schedule local forums to share and discuss issues. Talking points and explanations of positions taken by the legislative committee are shared with local leadership to improve the dialogue and exchanges with elected officials and provide a resource of accurate and specific information as required.

Resources available to locals include:

- Legislative Update available on the MRSPA website. Contains a list of legislation with recommended positions.
- Legislative Priorities Brochure is an annual publication.
- Financial support for local reception/meetings with legislators is available.
- Online resource for links to the Maryland General Assembly and contact tool to communicate with local senators and representatives by legislative districts.
- Legislative Day is an annual event in Annapolis to brief and discuss issues anticipated in the upcoming legislative session.
- Speakers are available for local meetings to update membership on current issues/topics.
- Collaboration/cooperation with other organizations including United Seniors of Maryland (USM), AARP Maryland, National Council on Teacher Retirement (NCTR).
- Legislative Aide monitors bills that are filed and shares the relevant proposed legislation with the committee. Testifies before the committees of the General Assembly on specific legislation when the committee has taken a position for the association.

Local leadership is encouraged to share with membership the tools available through MRSPA, especially on the website, to contact elected officials on MRSPA's legislative priorities and positions. This broad and coordinated effort with the state and locals working in partnership is an effective strategy to advance the priorities.

Maryland Retired School Personnel Association

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E-mail: mrspa@mrspa.org

Every member is a Lobbyist

Every member can be an effective MRSPA lobbyist by . . .

- **Establishing and maintaining consistent contacts with legislators**
- **Developing positive relationships based on honesty, integrity, and trust**
- **Keeping well informed on important legislative issues**
- **Informing legislators of MRSPA views on important issues**
- **Lobbying legislators in the home district or at the state Capitol to support MRSPA positions on legislative issues**
- **Providing information to fellow MRSPA members and others about legislative matters, including legislators' views on key bills or issues**
- **Organizing meetings or activities for the purpose of lobbying legislators in their home districts**
- **Organizing MRSPA members and others to contact legislators via telephone, e-mail, regular mail or face-to-face communication on legislative matters**
- **Keeping MRSPA informed about local lobbying activities and contacts with legislators**

Keys to an Effective Visit with a Legislator

- **Be brief and succinct**
- **Be prepared - plan ahead**
- **Know the issues - both sides**
- **Make an appointment and be on time**
- **Be positive and courteous**
- **Limit handouts to a minimum**
- **Have materials and thoughts well organized**
- **Stick to one or two issues, focus on your message and what you want the legislator to do**
- **Build a relationship over time**
- **Listen for clues from the legislator and others who might be knowledgeable**
- **Be honest and clear**
- **Don't try to answer a question if you don't have the knowledge. Tell him/her you will get the answer**
- **Honor your commitments**
- **Keep the door open for a later visit**
- **Say thanks for the visit, then follow up later with another note of thanks**
- **Treat the legislator the way you would want to be treated**

Contacting Your Legislators

You may contact your legislators by phone, email, snail mail, or a face-to-face meeting:

**MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY
1-800-492-7122**

OFFICIAL ADDRESSES

SENATORS

**Miller Senate Office Building
James Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991**

DELEGATES

**Low House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991**

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY WEBSITE:
www.mlis.state.md.us**

**MRSPA WEBSITE:
www.mrspa.org**

The Maryland General Assembly Website: A Great Resource

<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/>

Take a few minutes to visit and explore the Maryland General Assembly website. You'll find:

- Access to both the Senate and the House of Delegates
- Legislation by topic, number, senator or delegate name, and year
- Names and information about senators and delegates
- Committee schedules and testimony opportunities
- Budget information
- Synopsis and status of every bill
- At home access to live legislative sessions and committee hearings

Then take a few more minutes and **contact your senator and your delegates**. If you use the General Assembly website, you will be required to enter your name and address. This identifies you as a constituent. Your letter might read as follows:

Dear Senator (or Delegate) _____,

As your constituent, I want to thank you for your service to our district. I hope that I can assist you by sharing my thoughts about the following legislation.

EXAMPLES:

Senate Bill ___ (give the bill number and name when possible) greatly reduces the state's promised supplemental pension contribution. This will create an unreasonable burden for future taxpayers and reduce the likelihood that the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System will return to full actuarial funding as soon as possible. The promise to do this has been an unfulfilled legislative commitment for several years. I count on you to change this by supporting full funding of all state pension promises.

House Bill ___ (give the bill number and name when possible) provides state support for long term care insurance by creating an annual tax deduction instead of the one-time deduction now available. The first year of such a bill would actually create revenue for the state, while costs would ostensibly increase in future years. However, by encouraging the purchase of this insurance, the state could actually benefit as the senior population grows, but also has greater ability to care for itself.

Please oppose Senate Bill ___ (or House Bill ___) which provides tax deductions for contributions to private schools. Public schools should be the recipient of any state tax benefits, especially since funding them has been so challenging in recent years. Reducing state revenue in order to provide for private schools is counter to the responsibility the state has to public education. As my representative, you are charged with protecting the public interest. Providing the strongest possible public school system is clearly a large part of doing this.

Thank you for your attention to my concerns about this (these) bills. I look forward to following your work.

Sincerely,

(Sign your name and include your address, phone number, and email.)

Finding Your Local Legislators

Go to <http://mdelect.net>. Look halfway down the page for this language, "Find your Federal and State Elected Official." Fill in your address in the address blank and click on the text "Find elected officials". The listing of your local legislators will appear on the left side of the page.

Contacting Your Legislators

1. When calling your legislator in Annapolis, dial toll-free 301-970-5400 or 410-946-5400 and ask to be connected to the office of your legislator.
2. When emailing your Delegate or Senator, type in their name with a period separating the first and last name (michael.busch) and add @house.state.md.us (the final email address would then read michael.busch@house.state.md.us or when emailing your Senator, add @senate.state.md.us so the final email address would read thomas.v.mike.miller@senate.state.md.us.
3. When sending your legislator a letter, you would need to call the Annapolis toll-free number and ask for his/her specific building and room number and the last line of the address would be: Annapolis, MD 21401-1991.