

# Random Notes

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## Is Third Time a Charm?

### District Gears Up for Another Levy Try

Just what you wanted to hear coming off a refreshing (hopefully) summer break...Akron schools are back on the ballot in November, hoping to pass a 7.9 mill levy.

The levy committee has been meeting all summer long. Honorary co-chairs have been named and strategies are in place. As was the case last November and May, the campaign will require large numbers of volunteers (read "mostly teachers") to have any chance of success. Before you dismiss the thought of the levy passing as a wild pipe dream, keep in mind that last May's effort fell only 500 votes short of passing, and the governor's race will likely bring out more voters who typically are sympathetic to school issues.

There's no point belaboring the consequences of repeated levy failures. Larger class sizes and the absence of familiar programming (music, foreign language, etc.) will be close to home reminders, not to mention paychecks that for many Akron teachers will be the same as last year in the face of soaring fuel prices and modest inflationary increases in other areas.

We will again be seeking a levy captain in every building to help line up volunteers and solicit contributions. Not every BR will be able to take on the role, so please step up if asked. Additional information about the levy will be arriving after the opening of school.

## Who Is Ted Strickland?

The man who represents our best hope for improving education in Ohio is, ironically, virtually unknown among many teachers in Akron and elsewhere.

That fact is evidenced in one way by an Ohio Federation of Teachers survey of its members. When asked whom they would support in Ohio's gubernatorial race (Ted Strickland or Kenneth Blackwell), 36% of those surveyed responded they were undecided! Given the education agenda of both candidates and Blackwell's track record as a member of Bob Taft's administration, it's scary to think that a teacher would even consider supporting Blackwell.

Ted Strickland (D) is a six-term member of the United States Congress. His record on public education during his terms includes:

- Co-sponsoring the Keep Our Promises to America's

(See "*Strickland*" on back)

### Thirty-Three Members Face Unemployment as School Year Begins

Akron classrooms will be about 100 teachers leaner this year, including 33 members who will be laid off and waiting on the recall list to be restored to a teaching position. (The number 100 includes close to 60 teachers who retired and were not replaced.)

Elementary and foreign language teachers dominate the recall list with 9 and 6 members respectively. The areas of certification and the number of members awaiting recall within each are as follows: Elementary (9), Foreign Language (6), Career Education (1), English (2), Math (5), Social Studies (1), Art (2), Music (5), and Dance (2).

Although of no consolation to those who remain on the list, the number of laid off members is much lower than what was anticipated only weeks ago. At that time, it appeared that nearly seventy teachers would be without work this fall. The number has dwindled not as the result of an onslaught of new student enrollment, but largely because of additional retirements, leaves of absence and, as can be expected, a greater number of veteran teachers leaving Akron for districts with more stability and brighter futures.

With the exception of foreign language, dance and music, chances are good that all members will be recalled during the course of the year.

**AEA WELCOMES ALL** new teachers to the Akron Public Schools. The district hired 19, all of whom teach special education, including one speech pathologist.

# Strickland

(Continued from front)

Children and Teachers Act which requires full funding of both NCLB and IDEA.

- Introducing the Comprehensive Learning Assessment for Students and Schools (CLASS) Act which allows more flexibility under NCLB.
- Co-sponsoring the Teacher Tax Relief Act and the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Act, which would provide more financial incentives for people to become teachers and stay in the profession.
- Consistently opposing measures to funnel public dollars into nonpublic charter and parochial schools.
- Co-sponsoring bills to protect and expand Pell Grants for college students.

Strickland leads Blackwell in virtually every poll taken in the race for Ohio governor. His election would be a huge first step in reforming Ohio school funding and would go a long way toward breaking the one-party, anti-public schools leadership that has dominated state government since the early 1990's.

## Re-election Campaign Underway

### Ex-Superintendent Brian Williams Seeks Second Term in Ohio House

Former Akron schools superintendent Brian Williams is completing his first two-year term as an Ohio House member and is revving up his November re-election effort. Akron teachers played a huge role in Brian's race two years ago, generously funding the campaign and volunteering countless hours phoning voters and dropping literature. Brian's opponent's claim to fame is that he played football for Ohio State and the Browns; beyond that, we've heard little about him and know less.

AEA will host a reception for Brian on **Thursday, September 28** at the AEA Office. Watch for your invitation and a volunteer sign-up form in your school mail.

## Your Generosity is Critical

AEA will be counting on the generosity of members to help us succeed on a number of initiatives this fall.

The levy campaign has asked us to raise \$40,000. To reach this goal, or even come close to it, we will have to ask ATPAC to make a substantial contribution and ask for individual contributions. ATPAC will also be contributing to several teacher/public schools-friendly candidates on the November ballot.

We encourage you also to attend a reception at our offices for Brian Williams (see above).

And finally, we ask that you get involved again in the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk either by walking, sponsoring a walker, or just making a contribution. Please watch for and read mail from us regarding all of these events.

## Board Settles Supplemental Contract Tiff

When board members approved budget reductions last spring, they "cut" a number of supplementals that are part of the Collective Bargaining Agreement. In response, we filed a grievance. It is AEA's position that the board cannot unilaterally "cut" or eliminate supplemental contracts. Once a supplemental is negotiated, it can only be removed from the contract through negotiations. What the board can do is not fill negotiated supplementals if the activity for which they are bargained has been eliminated. For example, as part of the budget cuts the board decided to eliminate middle school athletics. It stands to reason, then, that the coaching supplementals for middle school would not be filled. However, the contracts remain in the Agreement in the event middle school athletics are restored.

We believe the board violated the Agreement when they cut certain supplementals, but did not eliminate the activity for which they were negotiated. Assistant Band Director is a good example. The board did not cut high school bands, but attempted to cut the **Assistant Band Director** contract. Contracts for **Assistant Varsity Tennis Coach, Assistant Varsity Swimming Coach, Assistant Athletic Director**, and **Drama Coach** were similarly cut.

Following grievance settlement discussions, the board agreed to restore the contracts listed above.

## *While You Were Out...*

Although schools were closed for the summer recess, the last twelve weeks were very busy times around the AEA office.

We hosted a meeting for teachers identified for possible layoff with representatives from Ohio Jobs and Family Services. We spent hours on staffing and transfer issues. We are again hosting the APS Levy Committee which met several times over the summer. We finalized plans for our participation in the Broadway Across America program and the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk.

We also spent some time in Columbus with two groups with whom we are affiliated: the Hands Off Our Health Care Coalition and the Coalition for Public Education (CPE). The State Health Care Committee continues to meet but does not appear to be close to making any recommendations regarding state-wide health care coverage. CPE's lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of Ohio's charter schools is still before the Ohio Supreme Court. We are expecting a decision in the very near future.

In all, it was a very busy and productive summer.