

Teachers Tout Victory in Factfinder Report

Just over one year ago, teachers, parents, and community members banded together to pass twin ballot issues that made history in our school district. For the first time, voters approved a mill levy increase and a construction bond issue in a widely diverse community where such measures had never succeeded. Equally historic was the St. Vrain Valley School Board's promise to put \$6 million of the new funds toward increasing teacher pay, so that the school district would be more competitive in recruiting and retaining qualified classroom teachers.

To fully understand this story, you must go back to 2002 when district officials mismanaged the taxpayers' money and ran the district's finances into crisis. Teachers and all other district employees took a seven point one two five percent (7.125%) pay cut in 2002—in addition to a salary freeze that effectively resulted in losing a step on the salary schedule. This enormous salary loss (it happened suddenly in the middle of the school year) was and still is a unique event in Colorado school district history. It stung then and, to this day, continues to offend district employees who lost many thousands of dollars in career earnings and retirement pay because of the district's missteps.

Today there is victory in the long-fought struggle to regain their salary and get back on the path to respectable career earnings. "A huge victory," according to SVVEA President Jerri Modrall, who led SVVEA to the win of a 3% base sal-

ary increase and the reinstatement of the "lost step" from 2002.

Hearing officer and factfinder Bennett Aisenberg, following a formal process in which he listened to testimony from SVVEA and the district, concluded that the SVVEA be given "a 3% wage increase, 2.5% to be added to the base and .5% to be a stipend." Aisenberg's findings are in his report dated November 2, 2009.

When the parties entered the factfinding process by mutual agreement and after months of negotiations, they had already agreed that teachers would get a step on the salary schedule to make up for the 2002 loss. They were positioned a half percent apart on an increase to the base pay. The district contended it could not afford more than it had previously offered. Testimony in the hearing proved otherwise—that the district's estimates of its ability to raise salaries were "highly conservative" and that the district's general fund revenues had continued to grow while employee salaries were, in effect, held down. Testimony also showed that among its peer group districts, St. Vrain ranked second to last in both average and career teacher salaries.

Rob Kellogg, CEA Director of Research, testified that "despite an increase in general fund money over time, (continued on page 2)

Calendar of Events

SVVEA Board of Directors' Meeting

SVVSD Board of Education Meeting

Hanukkah

SVVEA Association Representatives' Meeting

Islamic New Year

Winter Break

Christmas Day

Kwanzaa

New Years Eve

- **December 8, 2009 at 4:00 pm @ SVVEA Conference Room**

- **December 9, 2009 at ESC, 7:00 pm**

- **December 12, 2009**

- **December 15, 2009 at 4:00 pm @ Longmont Senior Center**

- **December 18, 2009**

- **December 21, 2009—January 5, 2010**

- **December 25, 2009**

- **December 26, 2009**

- **December 31, 2009**

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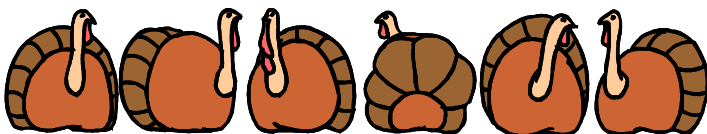
the District was choosing not to allocate to teachers' salaries and that despite the information put out by the District regarding the mill levy override in 2008, i.e., that \$6,000,000 would be used for increases to the base teacher salary, only \$3,000,000 was being used for this purpose."

Aisenberg said both parties "presented compelling arguments," but that he balanced "the District's ability to pay for 2009/10 with the impact an overall 3% wage increase will likely have in future year." Aisenberg found that the district could afford the base pay increase for which SVVEA advocated and he granted it.

Jerri said, "All along we believed the money was there to cover both the 'lost step' and the base raise. Yes, of course, we are conscious of the importance of fiscal responsibility. However, our district is doing quite well financially and we did not ask the school board to be irresponsible with the taxpayers' money—but to recognize and reward the significant contribution educators make in this district.

"We are thrilled that the factfinder upheld our position that the district should begin to live up to its 97% goal. We are honored to represent St. Vrain Valley teachers, and today we are particularly proud of their strength and commitment in this year's negotiations. Three percent is an excellent settlement. We are keenly aware of just how good it is when we see how our fellow teachers in Boulder Valley and Greeley are struggling to get fair settlements."

Jerri added, "the salary step we lost in 2002 has been a reminder every year since then that all district employees were severely harmed by the district's mistakes—for the rest of their careers. So many of the teachers who worked in the district in 2002 have retired or moved on. I wish they were here today to celebrate this great victory with us."



Honor 23: Put Kids First

The Legislature funded K-12 at 4.9 percent last spring, in compliance with Amendment 23. Lawmakers did this only because Association members convinced them to honor the constitutional protection for K-12 funding that requires the State to fund public schools at inflation plus one percent.

Legislators put a condition on how much of the 4.9 percent school districts could spend, asking them to put 1.9 percent of the total in reserves—about \$110 million statewide—saying they would let districts spend the money if they decide in January that they will not make cuts in the K-12 portion of the state budget.

We expect that the Legislature will consider rescinding the \$110 million when lawmakers convene January 13. Which means that St. Vrain would lose \$7,087.50 per pupil or \$3,368,232.

Once again we must fight to preserve Amendment 23. The rescission would violate the State Constitution. We believe this money should stay in our school district where local decisions will be made about how to spend it. If we lose Amendment 23 in January, K-12 education will be more vulnerable to huge cuts in the future.

Locals around Colorado are engaged in hometown activities to support the statewide Honor 23: Put Kids First campaign. Here in St. Vrain we have asked our members to sign a post card for us to sent to Representative Jack Pommer. See your AR if you haven't signed a card yet.

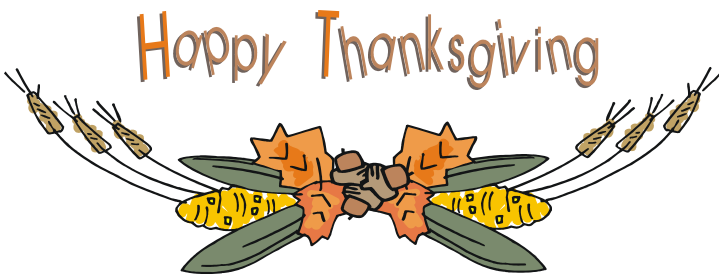
As you well know, we are in the middle of a state fiscal crisis of enormous proportions. We have the tightest state budget in 60 years. While we are not surprised at the suggestion that K-12 funding should be cut, this suggestion reinforces our decision to advocate for our students and stand up against any cuts, beginning with money the Legislature funded last spring and may now want to take back.

Doing so will also support our larger, statewide effort, now in its third year: Believe in a Better Colorado (believeinabettercolorado.org). Working in a

coalition of like-minded organizations, we are trying to find a way to fix Colorado’s constitutional public funding know. Though a difficult task, it is critical because our state’s investment in all essential public services—from K-12 and higher education to health and safety, transportation, natural resources, and corrections—is in the bottom third of all states. The fiscal crisis only makes this clearer.

CEA is one of 10 founding organizations of the Colorado Reform Roundtable, an alliance of labor, business, and nonprofit groups, similar to that which helped pass Referendum C in 2005. Besides CEA, the founders include the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce, Colorado Forum, Colorado Concern (100 of the state’s top business executives), Club 20 (a Western Slope business group), and other large labor unions.

Referendum C is a five year time-out on TABOR, the Taxpayers Bill of Rights, that temporarily ended TABOR’s goal of shrinking the state budget. Ref C expires in 2011 at the same time that Amendment 23 shrinks, becoming a requirement to fund K-12 only at the rate of inflation. While Amendment 23 and Ref C’s small steps have helped in the last few years, they are not enough and many in the Colorado Reform Roundtable believe our state budget will be poised to fall off a financial cliff in 2011.



SVVEA Every Member Option
 \$10 of each member’s SVVEA annual dues will be set aside, as they are collected, in a political action fund separate from dues. This is called the Every Member Option (EMO). If a member does not want his/her \$10 EMO used for political action, SVVEA will rebate the money to the member. The window for this written request is September 15 through December 15. Just send a letter with your name and signature to the office requesting your EMO.

Membership Minute

Membership is expanding.

For November we are talking turkey. If a potential member signs up they have their choice of a free 10-15 lb turkey or a \$20 King Soopers gift card and of course the person signing them up receives \$20 cash. Get out and start asking potential members to become a member of their association.

Our newest members are:

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| <p>Christine Miller
 Karen Rossmann
 Tambrie Valdez
 Megan Allsup
 Elaine Connor
 Jolena Brusha
 Beth Lee
 Sharon Morrill
 Jeffrey Martinez
 Jennifer Trinkle
 Andrew Freeman
 Katrina Reimnitz
 Angela Roberts
 Dana Strotheide
 Stephanie Wolters
 Joshua Wilkin</p> | <p>Black Rock Elem
 Black Rock Elem
 Centennial Elem
 Coal Ridge Middle
 Coal Ridge Middle
 Erie Middle
 Erie High
 Erie High
 Heritage Middle
 Lincoln School
 Longs Peak Middle
 Mead Middle
 Niwot High
 Niwot High
 Northridge Elem
 Silver Creek High</p> |
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We are Thankful for our Association Representatives

Do you know who your building Association Rep (AR) is, and what he or she does? ARs are key to the success of our Association (SVVEA), because they take time to participate in monthly Association meetings, inform members, and talk with potential members. If a member sees a need for assistance from our Association, the building AR is the first contact.

In short, our Association could not exist without our building representatives. This month we want to acknowledge and thank them. If you haven't done so already, be sure to thank your building AR for fulfilling this important responsibility. **We are Thankful for our ARs.**

Alpine Elementary

Michelle Drangeid

Altona Middle

Kristie Boman

Black Rock Elementary

Carolyn Young

Blue Mountain Elementary

Teddy Hampton

Burlington Elementary

Shawna Fildes & Sarah Hightower

CDC

Bill Anthony

Centennial Elementary

Melissa Fike & Amie Spendlow

Central Elementary

Lenise Eiffert & Jeanne Dennison

Coal Ridge Middle

Melinda Dufour

Columbine Elementary

Elizabeth Reynolds & Jennifer Giles

Eagle Crest Elementary

Carrie Loos

ESC/LSC

David Baker

Erie Elementary

Diane Sherman & Alice Hosseini

Erie Middle

Pat Lienert

Erie High

Julie Wallace

Fall River Elementary

Jenny Pickett

Frederick Elementary

Luis Chavez

Frederick High

Jessica Klassen

Heritage Middle

Steven Aguirre & Dina Linzer

Hygiene Elementary

Betsy Sandoval

Indian Peaks Elementary

Lila Kennelly, Bill Kloser &

Shannon Hungate

Legacy Elementary

Christine Cope

Lincoln School

(Currently no AR)

Loma Linda Elementary

Susan Whipple

Longmont Estates Elementary

Margee Sekich & Jessica Shaffer

Longmont High

Kim Cash

Longs Peak Middle

Sue Hatton & Beckie Large-Swope

Lyons Elementary

Amy Stahl & Becca Briggs

Lyons Middle/Senior

Anna Marie Strzyz & Karen Gregg

Main St/Audio logy

Mary Checkvala

Mead Elementary

Natalie Wilson

Mead Middle

Michael Newell & Anna Youngs

Mead High

Cyrus Collier & Lisa Loughran

Mountain View Elementary

Sandra Stubblefield

Niwot Elementary

Lise Murphy & Julie Nelsen-Breyer

Niwot High

Susan Hartman & Pam Wright

Northridge Elementary

Jeff Cannon

Olde Columbine

John Farley

Prairie Ridge Elementary

Amy Schiers & Jen Olsen

Rocky Mountain Elementary

Trudy Navarro & Farah Holburn

Sanborn Elementary

Shawn Gregg

Silver Creek High

Kent Willmann

Skyline High

Jeff Swanson

Spangler Elementary

Rachael Martell

Student Services

(Currently no AR)

Sunset Middle

CeCe Balman

Trail Ridge Middle

Steven Villarreal

Westview Middle

Julie Thomas

