

Legislative News

This is a difficult time. Many teacher assistants are already learning from their superintendents that their jobs *may* be cut. It seems ironic that at a time when educators are most stressed with the EOG tests imminent, that we also have to worry if we'll have jobs next year. This year teacher assistants are not alone in their worry. The pot is still being stirred in Raleigh and it may be July or later before we know what the results will be!

So what is NCATA doing? The NCATA Legislative Committee has been discussing the issues since September 2008. Our lobbyist, Joanne Stevens, told us *then* that the next couple of years would be a tough and not only because of the recession but also due to the health care crisis with Blue Cross Blue Shield. NCATA adjusted our legislative goals accordingly and sent those out to our members.

Once the North Carolina General Assembly came back into session, our legislative committee was on high alert with Joanne keeping us informed on an almost daily basis. Legislative alerts were composed and sent out and our members once again made a difference. It was the alert concerning the NCDPI/SBE proposal of 4,663 teacher assistant positions being cut and the subsequent action from our members that we have been told influenced the Governor to not put that line item in her budget.

Three words to pay attention to are "LEA Discretionary Reduction." This means that the decision is given to the LEAs as to what to cut in their school systems rather than our state government making the decision. Remember too that your LEAs have local budgets and that depending on the situation in your area, there could be *locally paid* teacher assistant cuts.

Still, nothing is certain yet and the best we can do is to stay vigilant at the local level, be prepared to respond to alerts on a state level, and continue to do what we do best – assisting in the education of North Carolina's children!

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NCATA Legislative Chair