

January 1, 2011

Dear NCATA Members,

As we ring in a new year, teacher assistants face an unprecedented possibility for job cuts. A "Happy New Year" seems unrealistic when up to 5,313 teachers and 13,259 teacher assistants statewide could be out of work under the worst case scenario of a 10 percent cutback in classroom personnel at the start of the 2011-2012 school year.

It is hard to imagine such drastic cuts in our classrooms! Teacher assistants are the backbones of our schools. Who will assist the teachers in instruction and do the myriad of other duties that keep our schools functioning effectively and safely for our students? In 2009, the North Carolina General Assembly fully funded the teacher assistant allotment to the school systems. Unfortunately, in an effort to meet the discretionary reductions, many school systems cut either teacher assistant positions or teacher assistant hours.

Work has already started on the 2011-2013 budget. North Carolina faces an anticipated \$3.7 billion budget shortfall for the 2011 fiscal year. Most of this gap is caused by the loss of federal stimulus dollars and temporary taxes that are set to expire. The newly elected Republican majority has stated they will allow the temporary tax increases to expire and will look at cuts line item by line item. It is my hope that they will look at these cuts with our children in mind! I encourage them to go to the schools in the next two weeks and spend time learning firsthand what teacher assistants do. We are no longer the teacher aides of the past - we are instructional assistants who serve a vital role on our educational teams!

Now is the time to KNOW who represents you in the North Carolina General Assembly. Go to the North Carolina General Assembly website at www.ncleg.net and put your zip + four in to find contact information on your legislators. The General Assembly returns for the 2011 session on January 26. Governor Perdue and the NCGA have a tough session ahead of them.

NCATA members, please remember that your help is vitally needed. It is when great numbers of citizens respond to an issue that the legislators take note and listen! Write,

call, or e-mail your legislators. Contact them now! We need each and every one of you in this fight to save our profession!

It is the greatest of all mistakes to do nothing because you can only do little - do what you can.

~Sydney Smith

Do what you CAN and together we CAN make a difference!

Sincerely,

Melinda K. Zarate

NCATA Legislative Chair