

NCATA Legislative Alert

January 26, 2011

“There is no “I” in TEAM, but there is always a “TA” in TEAM!”

Dear North Carolina Teacher Assistants,

This alert is for the members of NCATA and EVERY teacher assistant in the state of North Carolina! It's time! It's time to pull together as professionals and work TOGETHER to save our jobs! NEVER has there been a more real threat to teacher assistant positions than now! North Carolina legislators return to Raleigh today at noon and, without a doubt, they have a monumental task ahead. Our budget deficit now looms near the four billion dollar mark. Opinions are divided as to how to whittle this down and balance our budget for 2011-2013.

In the Raleigh News and Observer Under the Dome blog called [“Two ways to balance the budget”](#) published on January 23, 2011, two viewpoints are offered concerning the best way to deal with the budget deficit. One viewpoint is by Chris Fitzsimon, director of the N.C. Policy Watch, and the other is by John Hood, president of the John Locke Foundation.

I quote from John Hood, “Education is the single-largest spending category. We propose about \$1.5 billion in savings across a General Fund education budget of about \$11.5 billion. In K-12, recommendations include rolling back recent class-size reductions (accomplished mostly by leaving coming vacancies unfilled), reducing teacher assistant positions, reducing administrative and support-service costs, and contracting out services such as transportation.”

Chris Fitzsimon wrote, “Balancing next year's budget by slashing services alone would result in the loss of at least 21,000 jobs, according to the Budget & Tax Center - and that's a conservative estimate. When a plant closes and 200 workers lose their jobs, it's a major crisis that makes headlines across the state. More than 100 times as many workers (and taxpayers) could lose their jobs if lawmakers refuse to address the budget shortfall with a balanced approach.”

Over 13,000 of those proposed 21,000 job cuts are teacher assistants! The harm that will be inflicted on our students because of such cuts will be substantial and long-term. The future of our state economy depends on the education our students receive in the present! Teacher assistants are vital members of our educational teams. We are MORE than teacher aides, only putting up bulletin boards and doing predominantly clerical tasks. We are working right beside the teachers in instruction. With our experience and guidance as well as necessary professional development, teacher assistants DO make a difference in student achievement.

WHAT DO WE DO RIGHT NOW? We each contact [OUR OWN LEGISLATORS](#) and share a story of how we, as a teacher assistant, have made a difference in the classroom. We encourage them to please look at the long-term impact that cutting teacher assistants will have on our schools. We tell them what we do every day and how critical our efforts are in helping teachers in the education of our children. Then, we ask our family, friends, teachers, parents and administrators to do the same – contact their legislators. Find out who your state legislators are using this handy link on the NC General Assembly web site: <http://www.ncleg.net/GIS/RandR07/Representation.html>.

The NCATA Legislative Committee and our lobbyist, Joanne Stevens, have met this month and will meet again in February. We are committed to obtaining the information you need to be an effective and powerful voice for teacher assistants! We are only ten voices. We need your help!

WE NEED EVERY TEACHER ASSISTANT IN NORTH CAROLINA TO JOIN OUR EFFORTS! [Please join NCATA](#), the ONLY association that works ONLY for teacher assistants! Together we CAN make a difference!

Sincerely,

Melinda

Melinda K. Zarate
NCATA Legislative Chair

Link to Raleigh News & Observer's Under the Dome blog: <http://www.newsobserver.com/2011/01/23/937875/two-ways-to-balance-the-budget.html#ixzz1Bxu5ro80>