**MEA-Retired Tribune**

**February, 2023**

**Each of us can be part of the promising couple of years ahead**

How exciting it was to receive an email from MEA Director of Public Affairs Doug Pratt sharing the exciting news that we’re expecting some legislative action on both the pension tax repeal and the 3rd grade reading retention repeal this week.  We encourage you to contact your lawmakers as soon as possible to let them know the importance of taking action. [Click here to send a message](http://click.meaaction.org/?qs=92f1465de819f49ac78caa496a2d112397940aade5f4583bc55046d9bf193278950a7a878ba34a696dec3d5ec3841b10c143ddc54665b0c5) to your state senator and representative urging them to repeal the unfair pension tax.

January was definitely a month with some important action in Lansing from some of our own MEA-Retired activists. Vivian Davis and Fran Cullen traveled to the Capitol stand by in support of Governor Whitmer when she announced that she would work to repeal the pension tax. A couple of weeks later, new Legislative and Political Issues Committee Chair Rick Catherman, Secretary-Treasurer Jeanne Hansen, and Board of Directors Members Isabell Nazar and Jim Pearson testified at the Capitol about the importance of repealing the pension tax.

With the new Legislature in place for the next couple of years, we have the opportunity to make changes that will turn back the clock on some of the decisions made in recent years. We have the chance to make a positive difference for our members and do the same for our active members still working in public schools.

Every one of us may not be able to go to Lansing, but all of us can do our part to make the most of a potentially positive situation. Contact your legislators at the link above. Visit them when they are in your area and talk with them. Consider being an active part of the MEA-Retired Lobby Team (you will be trained by our lobbyists to visit legislators in Lansing and actually them about issues). Give generously to MEA-PAC https://pac.mymea.org/and the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education https://educationvotes.nea.org/donate/

Many thanks to our members who took the time to stand with Governor Whitmer and share crucial information about how so many of us have been adversely affected by the pension tax and the importance of eliminating it. Many thanks to all of you for understanding that the results of

the November election mean that more than ever, the time is NOW for each of us to take action and do whatever we can to help our Legislature make the right decisions for our students, staff, families and retirees.

***From mea.org:***

**Education issues important focus in Governor Whitmer’s address**

Issues important to Michigan educators took centerstage as Gov. Gretchen Whitmer delivered her annual State of the State address at the State Capitol.

Among several major announcements, Whitmer called on the Legislature to provide funding — before spring break — for her [“MI Kids Back on Track” tutoring proposal](https://www.michigan.gov/whitmer/-/media/Project/Websites/Whitmer/Documents/MISOTS/2023/01172023--Fact-Sheet-MI-Kids-Back-on-Track.pdf?rev=b8a32b9614a24822a0fbecbba73f8705&hash=8B8A8BB2C3D018AE4281B36CFB9EC90C), which would provide extra school-based support to students who fell behind during the pandemic.

“Whether you’re a third-grader learning about the solar system, a sixth-grader focusing on fractions, or a junior sharpening persuasive writing skills, tutoring addresses your specific learning challenges,” Whitmer said. “And we know that education investments matter to the private sector too. Employers know that today’s students are tomorrow’s workforce and entrepreneurs. We need tutoring to get our kids back on track for Michigan’s long-term economic success.”

Whitmer also asked the Legislature to [expand the Great Start Readiness Program](https://www.freep.com/story/news/politics/2023/01/25/whitmer-state-of-the-state-to-call-for-pre-k-for-all/69838576007/) so that every 4-year-old in Michigan would be eligible for publicly funded preschool.

“This investment will ensure children arrive at kindergarten ready to learn and saves their families upwards of $10,000 a year,” Whitmer said. “It helps parents — especially moms — go back to work. And it will launch hundreds more preschool classrooms across Michigan, supporting thousands of jobs.”

To help achieve her goal of having [60% of Michiganders earn a degree or certificate by 2030](https://www.sixtyby30.org/), Whitmer called on lawmakers to continue their support of initiatives like the [Michigan Achievement Scholarship](https://www.michigan.gov/mistudentaid/programs/michigan-achievement-scholarship), which provides significant tuition relief to tens of thousands of college students who need it the most.

She also asked lawmakers to lower the eligibility age to 21 for her [Michigan Reconnect](https://www.michigan.gov/reconnect) program, which pays community college tuition for people without degrees, helping them earn an associate’s degree or skills certificate so they can land a better career.

In addition, the governor said [repealing Michigan’s unfair tax](https://secure.ngpvan.com/rcqfw3SMLk-Nv5MrG_QuAA2) on retired educators and other public employees’ pensions must be a top priority.

“Repealing the retirement tax will make a huge difference for our seniors,” Whitmer said. “Ultimately, it will save 500,000 households an average of $1,000 a year. That’s money for prescriptions, groceries, gas, or gifts for grandkids.”

MEA President Paula Herbart [said](https://mea.org/mea-statement-responding-to-whitmer-state-of-the-state-address/): “Gov. Whitmer showed again tonight what being a pro-education governor looks like — and now, with allies in the Legislature, Michigan students and educators can count on desperately needed support to come their way. From individual tutoring and interventions for struggling students, to a path toward universal pre-K, to increased access to post-secondary opportunities, Gov. Whitmer’s vision for public education will lead our state to a prosperous future.”

***From ssa.gov:***

**Top ten Social Security webpages for your perusal** There’s no better place to learn about Social Security programs and do business with us than on our redesigned website at [SSA.gov](https://www.ssa.gov/). Visitors to SSA.gov will experience a new design to help them find what they need more easily. Here are our top 10 webpages:

1. [*my* Social Security](https://www.ssa.gov/myaccount) — You can open a personal *my* Social Security account to verify your earnings, view your *Social Security Statement*, get benefit estimates, and more.
2. [Social Security blog](https://blog.ssa.gov/) — Our hub for Social Security news and updates is our blog at [ssa.gov](https://blog.ssa.gov/). You can use social media to easily share these informative articles with others.
3. [Frequently Asked Questions](https://faq.ssa.gov/en-US/) (FAQ) — Do you need answers to Social Security-related questions? Our [FAQ webpage](https://faq.ssa.gov/en-US/) is another valuable source of information.
4. [Retirement Application](https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/retirement/) — You can complete and submit your online application for retirement benefits in as few as 15 minutes.
5. [Disability Application](https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/disability/) — You can conveniently apply online for disability benefits.
6. [Publications](https://www.ssa.gov/pubs/) — Visit our online publication library for information on key subjects (includes audio versions of publications).
7. [Medicare](https://www.ssa.gov/medicare/sign-up) — Sign up for Medicare.
8. [Online Services](https://www.ssa.gov/onlineservices/) — You can take care of most business with us by visiting our online services page.
9. [Forms](https://www.ssa.gov/forms/) — Find and fill out our forms easily.
10. [Fraud and Scam Prevention and Reporting](https://www.ssa.gov/fraud/) — Learn how to recognize Social Security fraud and scams – and how to report them.

Remember, if you need information or want to do business with us, the first place to go is our website. Please share these top resources with your loved ones.

**Sarah Says: From NEA-Retired President Sarah Borgman** Ah, February…the month of love when all thoughts turn to what some of us have been thinking of all year!!!  Don’t you wonder why it was slated for the coldest time of the year…at least here in Indiana?  Well, NEA Retired isn’t waiting for a spring thaw or words of love to warm things up.  We continue to move forward on membership outreach, on better and more frequent communications, and always on reaching out to legislators to hold them accountable.  We can “Woe is me” all we want to on political issues, but the reality is we must press on.  Never sit back and say, “What’s the use?”  Holding legislators accountable is the only way to be heard and protect democracy.  It is YOUR job; it is MINE!  Write those letters, make those calls, and give to PAC!  All of us together can make a difference!