

District Budget and You Background for Mesa School Employees



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It's a Perfect Storm ...

... and we are doomed

The bad news keeps piling on. This year's district budget is based on last year's student enrollment. We lost 2,200 students last year: a loss of over \$10 million to this year's budget. Teacher salaries are partly paid for with the Classroom Site Fund (Prop 301). Those revenues are based on sales tax and state trust land revenues. With the recession, those funds have declined sharply – in Mesa by over \$12 million.

Then there's the State Legislature. In early July they passed a budget bill for schools. That was the "good bill," and it cut the Mesa District over \$26 million. They passed that bill but didn't provide the revenue to pay for it, so they continue to work in special session. The Republican-only bill now in the works would make even deeper cuts to education – now and into the future.

On top of this, Mesa is faced with a Budget Override renewal election this November. If voters fail to renew the Override, 10% of the operating budget (\$35 million) will be phased out over the next three years. That would mean pay cuts and staffing cuts.

With all of this in mind, the MEA and MESPA Meet-and-Confer committees agreed to a salary freeze in July and felt lucky that the results weren't worse.

Or do we fight back?

The Association does not passively accept any of this.

At the national level, NEA saw to it that the Economic Stimulus package included billions of dollars in direct aide to state and local education. Our Legislature has stimulus money to "backfill" some of the revenue loss. Our district will receive an increase of \$28 million for Title I and IDEA. NEA lobbying helped to make this happen – saving jobs in the process. The downside: at the district level, new federal dollars are "supplemental," and cannot be used to offset losses in other areas.

At the State Capitol: AEA members have been there every day this summer, many MEA and MESPA activists among them. We've made a difference! Senator Carolyn Allen (R, Scottsdale) is standing with us against her own leadership because she shares our values for education. AEA helped to elect her in a tough primary fight 3 years ago. The Republican-only budget bill continues to fail to pass the Senate. AEA lobbying and organizing will continue as we push for a bi-partisan bill.

Here in Mesa, the Association is a key partner in the community-based Override campaign. Our PAC contributed the major seed money this summer (\$5,000) to get the campaign started. Our volunteers will put up signs. Our phone banks will turn out votes. Our members will contribute more money.

It's all about politics. We couldn't make this fight on any level without the Association. Be part of our campaign. If you're not a member, join now. If you are a member, volunteer to help.

On the back – Enrollment Form for New Members



MESPA

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