MRTA Day at the Capitol - A Total Success!

MRTA President Sandy Applegate, a former math teacher, posed a question to attendees at MRTA Day at the Capitol, "I was told it takes an average of eleven seconds to go through the security checks entering the Capitol. If you have 1,200 MRTA members and it takes each of them eleven seconds to go through security, how long will it take to get them all into the Capitol?" Stay tuned for the answer later in our article. As you know, MRTA Legislative Day was cancelled due to new security measures in place at the Capitol. MRTA started planning our 2017 Legislative Day in February 2016; we did not know then that new security measures would be in place. We planned on 15 buses and 1,200 attendees from all corners of the state for a 10:30 rally. When those security measures were put in place in January, we were left with no choice but to cancel. If you are waiting on the answer to President Applegate's question it would have taken 3.67 hours to get everyone through security. This does not include all the other people entering the Capitol for other reasons and events. It was just logistically impossible.

MRTA members would not take no as an answer; however, due to popular demand we restructured the event. MRTA Capitol Blitz Day and MRTA Day at the Capitol were born! MRTA Capitol Blitz Day was planned for those who could not attend our event at the Capitol. Members emailed, called, and wrote their legislators about the issues important to them and to MRTA. MRTA Day at the Capitol was a scaled down version of MRTA Legislative Day. We hoped for 200 attendees, we got over 400! It was a huge success! Senator Scott Sifton, Senator Gina Walsh, and Representative Steve Cookson addressed the crowd and promised they would work to protect retiree pensions and public education. MRTA members left enthused and legislators left better educated on the issues.

“Showing up” in numbers is the reason for the success of MRTA. We sincerely thank each and every one of you who took the time to participate in these events. There is strength in numbers! See page 2 for pictures from the event.

The World is Run by Those Who Show Up!

Petition Delivered

MRTA President Sandy Applegate and MRTA Director Kreider delivered our COLA petition which gathered 21,299 signatures to Governor Eric Greitens on February 15th.

The petition asks the Governor to make new appointments to the PSRS/PEERS Board of Trustees a priority and requests he consider MRTA’s input when appointments are made.
MRTA Day at the Capitol!
PRIORITY - MRTA opposes SB 228 (Koenig R-15). Establishes a hybrid retirement plan and requires all new members of the plan to participate in the Defined Contribution Plan (DC) for MOSERS, state employees and elected officials. This does not include educators at this time. It is only one amendment away if this bill is not stopped. Voted out of committee DO PASS.

PRIORITY - MRTA opposes SB 32 (Emery R-31). This is a voucher scheme allowing special needs and foster children a voucher tax credit. This legislation could take $25 million from public schools. Voted out of committee DO PASS.

PRIORITY – MRTA opposes SB 141 (Emery R- 31). This act provides that statewide elected officials and members of the General Assembly serving for the first time on or after January 1, 2018 shall participate in a 401(k) defined contribution plan instead of the current defined benefit plan. Voted out of committee DO PASS.

PRIORITY – MRTA opposes HB 634 (Roeber R-34). This legislation allows charter schools in any school district in the state.

PRIORITY - MRTA supports HB 304 (Pike R-126). This legislation is an MRTA priority and allows pension benefits to “POP UP” after a divorce with the ruling on assets by a court. The bill also allows an extension from 90 days to one year for a retiree to add a beneficiary if remarries. Voted out of committee DO PASS.

PRIORITY - MRTA supports HB 305 (Pike R-126). This legislation is an MRTA priority that closes the “Kelly Services” loophole requiring every retiree and school district statewide to follow the 550 hour Work After Retirement (WAR) law. Voted out of committee DO PASS.

PRIORITY – MRTA supports HB 891 (Cookson R-153). This legislation mandates a 2% COLA for PSRS/PEERS retirees if the CPI is between 0% and 5%. If the CPI is over 5% the COLA will be 5%. This mirrors the 2011 PSRS/PEERS Stabilization Policy.

PRIORITY – MRTA supports HB 755 (Cookson R-153). This legislation allows for the salaries of PSRS-PEERS employees to be public record. Currently PSRS PEERS is the only system in Missouri where they are not public record.

PRIORITY – MRTA opposes HB 619 (Dogan R-98) and SB 409 (Koenig R-15). This legislation changes and lowers the retirement benefits of active Saint Louis City educators at the same time raising their contributions to the system. This would set an extremely bad precedent for all Defined Benefit Plans in Missouri in that the promise when you were hired could be broken. MRTA is proposing a better version of these two bills which will include a 2% COLA for St. Louis City retirees.

PRIORITY - MRTA supports full funding of the Foundation Formula and opposes the use of public tax dollars for private schools. The Missouri Constitution mandates adequate funding of K-12 education through HB 2 which requires education funding as the second priority of state expenditures. The Public School Foundation Formula is currently underfunded by at least $50 million dollars. This is particularly troublesome for rural schools and inner city schools because a high percentage of their funding comes from the state.

WITHDRAWN - HB 650 (Cookson R-153). Withdrawn due to drafting errors. HB 891 has replaced this bill.
Professional Liability Insurance
The MRTA Professional Liability Plan provides coverage against a variety of legal actions that could arise from your duties as a part-time educator—at an affordable group rate of only $17.25 per year for MRTA members for $1 million coverage.

Dental & Vision Insurance
Dental Plan. Enrollment in the affordable MRTA Group Dental Plan enables you to receive benefits for periodic exams, X-rays, cleanings, fillings, crowns, bridges and denture repair. Now with an expanded network of providers!

Auto, Home & Life Insurance
Liberty Mutual Auto & Home Insurance. Quality auto and homeowners plans are available through Liberty Mutual with an exclusive group discount for MRTA members. You can learn more about this program by visiting www.libertymutual.com/lm/mrta or calling (800) 835-0894. In Missouri, call Clare Hill at (888) 443-7536, ext. 55674.

MRTA Mighty Mite® Final Expense Insurance Plan. Give your family a gift that will last a lifetime. This flexible, guaranteed-issue whole life plan sponsored by MRTA lets you choose between four coverage amounts. The plan accumulates cash value to help provide financial security and needed protection for your loved ones. (Limitations apply for death from natural causes during the first two years of coverage.)

Travel, Legal & I.D. Protection Plans
International Travel Medical Plans & Trip Protection. International travel can be an exciting adventure, but it can also bring many unpredictable situations if you should need medical care while you’re abroad. That's why we've put together an array of flexible travel medical plans for MRTA members. Both domestic and international trip protection plans are available.

Deals & Discounts
Hearing Benefit Plan. Hearing loss develops slowly and often goes unnoticed for years. With the benefit plan from Hear In America, MRTA members receive a free annual hearing screening through reputable providers. If hearing correction is needed, hearing aids from top manufacturers are available at discounted prices. To register for free Hear In America hearing plan benefits, call (800) 286-6149.

Home Health Care Indemnity Policy
An affordable solution that gives you the flexibility in utilizing the type of care that's right for you... in the comfort of your own home. These benefits are paid in addition to Medicare and other insurance. Optional benefits include: Annual Physical Exam, Vision, Hearing, Ambulance and In-Hospital Private Duty Nurse. For more information, call (800) 821-7303 ext. 1644.

For more information, visit www.ftj.com/mrta or www.MRTA.org or email info@ftj.com