

Dear Fellow School Psychologist:

Last week at the MSPA Midwinter Conference we gave our legislative award to Representative Carlos Mariani. He has been a member of the legislature since 1990 and is one of the legislators representing St. Paul. He is the Chair of the House Education Policy and Oversight Committee. You will read more about this event in our next publication. However, I did want to note that in his remarks he mentioned that it is important for the voices of Minnesota school psychologists to be heard at the legislature. He said that other voices will be heard, some of which we would not agree with. That is one of the reasons why our Day On The Hill is so important. This is February 19th (Thursday). Please, please give strong consideration to being there. For too long the voices of Minnesota school psychologists have not been adequately heard at the legislature. The school counselors, school nurses and school social workers, among others, have long done much better in this area than we have. If you would like to sign up for Day on the Hill or would like more information, please contact Heidi Springborg at Heidi.springborg@mahtomedi.k12.mn.us or at 651-329-9846.

The Senate had a major committee restructuring this session with regard to education. There is only one education committee. The policy and finance committees were combined. This has been somewhat problematic for me since the Senate Education Committee meets the same time as the House Education Policy Committee. Education bills for this session have not yet begun to be heard in committee. That will begin in the House next week. Committee meetings to date have been informational. This includes finances, GRAD tests, mandates, the achievement gap, the legislative auditor's report on Q Comp. Tomorrow in the House the discussion will continue on the Q Comp program with testimony by teachers and administrators and then the K-12 Education Finance Committee will hear from the Perpich Center for the Arts. The Governor has proposed turning this facility into a charter school which would eliminate its function as a boarding school for greater Minnesota students. It would essentially serve only Twin Cities students as I now understand it.

One important item on the agenda this year in the education committees is to eliminate X number of mandates currently on the books to save school districts money. The School Boards Association has gone through the mandates and made suggestions for ones to change or eliminate, or at least

so consider. A couple which were passed just last year, which would affect school psychologists, are to reduce the number of lock-down and fire drills from mandatory five to two per year and to look at the safe school levy which last year mandated school districts to spend money in the specific area of student support services. Others which would affect school psychologists are a series of special education mandates in which Minnesota requirements exceed federal requirements. If you have need for further information or clarification; please contact me at rdm2490@aol.com.

Ralph D. Maves

MSPA Lobbyist