

# GEA Actionline

March 2003  
News From the GEA President

In January I promised to write about a contemporary vs. traditional salary schedule. I have decided to put part of that article on the GEA web site. The article explains how a salary schedule is developed and problems that have occurred over the years through bargaining. If you are interested, here is the web site for you to read and research: [www.gea-online.org](http://www.gea-online.org).

After reading the article please ask yourself these questions: 1. To what type of salary schedule would the GEA be willing to change? 2. Would District #205 want this kind of change and if they do, will the money be there for the change?

Bargaining is a year away. Education is changing by the minute. ESEA (No Child Left Behind) will have a major impact on all school districts throughout the United States. Will funding match the demands that the federal government has placed upon us? I have no idea on that one. Funding will be the biggest clue for us in bargaining. It will be very difficult to ask for more money if it is not available. The cash reserves that were there are quickly disappearing. Retirements will help the financial outlook and get the district closer to a balanced budget. Insurance is a major obstacle. What about the Flex Plan? Deductibles??? Raises that we received are now gone. In the state of Illinois, 60%-80% of the school districts are in deficit budget. Where will this end?

Margaret Tolley and I attended an insurance conference February 13<sup>th</sup> in Moline. We listened to Mike Gibler from the IEA talk about insurance. It was very interesting and also very depressing. There may be double digit increases for the next few years. Deductibles will be increasing. Teachers will have to pay more out of pocket costs due to budget cuts. At this time we are losing the battle. There are new insurance plans available; however, District #205 cannot afford them. **What is the solution?**

In July 2004 the TRS Teacher Retirement Insurance Program (TRIPS) will sunset (come to an end). Retired teachers are a large group of the voting public, so the end of TRIPS will help drive the state of Illinois to find a solution to the teachers' health insurance problem. School districts around the state are struggling to maintain the insurance coverage for their teachers. We must act now to secure a plan that will work for the retired as well as the active teachers in Illinois. I believe that the **IEA Rescue Plan** is the answer. It would be a state wide program that would help lower cost by securing lower bids for health benefits. PLEASE CONTACT SENATOR JACOBS **TODAY** ABOUT THIS ISSUE (<http://www.legis.state.il.us/Senate/Senator.asp?MemberID=730>). He heads the Pension and Insurance Committee. Encourage him to support **SB1513**, the **IEA Rescue Plan**, with his vote on **Tuesday, March 11**. Then write or call our other state legislators with the same message. Tell them the struggles that our self-funded insurance program is going through: increases in premiums as well as deductibles increasing by 100%.

The IEA will be lobbying for the Rescue Plan to get out of committee and then passed. Remember, TRIPS will sunset in July '04 leaving the retired teachers without an insurance plan. It will take one year to implement a new plan, so it is imperative that we secure a plan now.

In other news, the GEA bargaining team will begin gathering information for next year's contract negotiations. If there is an area of the contract that you feel needs better contract language or even new language, please send those ideas to Isaac Triplett. Isaac is the chief negotiator for the GEA.