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A note from our President Vicki Flotta

Before my two-year term as President concludes at the end of this month, I wanted to take this time to thank you for the opportunity to lead this great organization that has meant so much to me over the past 25 years.

With the onslaught of social media putting out information both good and bad, new government regulations for school employees (and now volunteers), and all of the changing issues we deal with on a day to day basis, effective school district communications are more important than ever. School Communications Professionals provide the vital link to our schools and communities, letting them know about the things that matter, and in some cases, setting the record straight when the Rumor Mill churns out of control.

And when you need help or a sounding board about how to correctly and effectively deal with and communicate about these issues, it's good to know you are not alone. You have a network of capable professionals at your disposal with PenSPRA, who are ready and willing to offer a listening ear, a word of advice and valuable assistance when you need it.

I've used this analogy in the past, and since this is my final message to you, I'll take the liberty of sharing it with you one more time. PenSPRA is like a cruise ship. You can get on the ship and not do much or you can get on the ship and do so many things. My feeling is the more you do, the more you'll get out of your cruise experience. It's the same with PenSPRA. If you just pay your dues, you probably won't get very much out of the organization. But if you get involved and do things such as attend the workshops and annual Symposium, utilize the resources contained in the E-Comm and Library and call/network with your colleagues across the state, I think you're going to find that your PenSPRA experience has been enhanced and that you will be better for your efforts. If you've not been active with the organization, please make it a priority for 2015-2016. I know we're all busy, but making time for PenSPRA is one of the best things you can do for yourself and your career. I look forward to seeing you in 2015-2016.

PenSPRA moves forward because of its active, talented and committed Board members, and I want to thank all of them: Shelly Belcher, Nicole Bloise, Cissy Bowman, Jason Davidek, Rachel Hathhorn, Greg Hayes, Christine Liberaski, Angela Linch, Nicole McGalla, Pat McGlone, Kim Newell, Kristen Rawlings and Executive Director Karen Smith for their time and dedication to the ongoing success of PenSPRA. I know PenSPRA is in good hands with our new President Jason Davidek beginning his term in July.

I hope you are all using the "quiet" of the summer to catch up on some larger projects you might not have been able to get to during the school year, to have time to think about something for more than five minutes before being interrupted by a ringing telephone or the "ding" of a text or email message, and to enjoy the sunshine. My hope is that you will also have some quality time away from the office, to rest, relax and unplug from everything.

Thank you again for continued support of PenSPRA. The organization is as great as it is because of its members. Have a wonderful summer and a productive 2015-2016 school year!

Vicki F. Flotta, PenSPRA President

Revisions to child safety law

The House passed a revision to the child safety law last week. The revisions would allow for the following changes, if passed by the Senate:

Exempt school district and university workers from getting clearances if they work with 16 and 17 year olds, as some university professors and other university employees do.

Exempt employers who work with minors who are participants in a co-op or internship program.

Allow background checks obtained by school bus drivers who are independent contractors to be portable so they can be used for multiple employment positions that require clearances.

Require employees who work directly with children to re-certify their FBI background check clearance every five years, instead of every three.

In other news about the law, the Wolf Administration announced it had waived the \$10 cost of criminal background checks from the state police and the \$10 child abuse clearance from the Department of Human Services, for volunteers. They also reduced the price of clearances to \$8 for non-volunteers.

Here is an article about the changes.

[http://www.pennlive.com/politics/index.ssf/2015/06/house\\_passes\\_revisions\\_to\\_stat.html](http://www.pennlive.com/politics/index.ssf/2015/06/house_passes_revisions_to_stat.html)

Congrats to our education policy Fellows

Congratulations to PenSPRA members Christine Liberaski and Randy Ziegenfuss and Exec Director Karen Smith, who recently graduated from the EPLC's Education Policy Fellowship program. During this program, Fellows develop a broadened understanding of the policy process and the various aspects of education policy. Christine, Randy and Karen are now Senior Education Policy Fellows.

The program, which is run by the Education Policy Leadership Center (EPLC), runs for ten months, and is a professional development opportunity for educators, state and local policymakers, advocates, and community leaders. Past participants include state policymakers, district superintendents and principals, charter school leaders, school business officers, school board members, education deans/chairs, statewide association leaders, parent leaders, education advocates, and other education and community leaders.

EPLC works in conjunction with the national organization the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL.) If you are interested in learning more about the program, click here and feel free to reach out to Christine, Randy or Karen to hear about their experience.

<http://www.eplc.org/2015/05/apply-now-for-eplcs-2015-2016-pa-education-policy-fellowship-program/>

News from around the state and nation

Current Budget status in Harrisburg:

<http://www.post-gazette.com/news/state/2015/06/25/Pennsylvania-legislators-losing-hope-of-reaching-budget-compromise/stories/201506250089>

The Basic Education Funding Commission released its report last week; here is a summary

[http://www.pennlive.com/politics/index.ssf/2015/06/at\\_a\\_glance\\_what\\_the\\_proposed.html](http://www.pennlive.com/politics/index.ssf/2015/06/at_a_glance_what_the_proposed.html)

70% of districts are planning a tax hike; pension costs up 22%; health care up 7%

[http://blog.pennlive.com/capitol-notebook/2015/06/survey\\_finds\\_70\\_percent\\_of\\_sch.html](http://blog.pennlive.com/capitol-notebook/2015/06/survey_finds_70_percent_of_sch.html)

Here is the annual PASBO/PASA budget survey

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/269028853/Pasbo-2015-Survey>

Hundreds rally in Harrisburg for fair ed funding

[http://www.pennlive.com/politics/index.ssf/2015/06/conference\\_in\\_support\\_of\\_fair.html](http://www.pennlive.com/politics/index.ssf/2015/06/conference_in_support_of_fair.html)

PA Ed funding; the battle of the beer head versus the well head

<http://www.mcall.com/news/nationworld/pennsylvania/capitol-ideas/mc-education-funding-in-pennsylvania-the-battle-of-the-beer-head-versus-the-well-head-20150623-story.html>

Keystone moratorium passes the Senate

[http://articles.philly.com/2015-06-17/news/63488405\\_1\\_keystone-exams-pennsylvania-core-high-school-students#d8qEoCuvFHlb6YWm.99](http://articles.philly.com/2015-06-17/news/63488405_1_keystone-exams-pennsylvania-core-high-school-students#d8qEoCuvFHlb6YWm.99)

Teacher evaluation system reveals... very little

<http://www.post-gazette.com/news/education/2015/06/15/New-rating-system-finds-nearly-all-Pennsylvania-teachers-are-qualified/stories/201506080003>