

**Address by Catherine Boudreau, President, Massachusetts Teachers Association
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In 1990 Governor Weld was elected and all of us had contracts waiting to be submitted by then-Governor Dukakis, and at the last night, right before his term is up, he backtracks and does not submit the contracts. He makes it very clear he is not submitting the contracts, and then slowly the faculty and the staff and the state employees start getting agitated, and it results in the rally [where] the tulips were crushed. But soon thereafter, the legislators, who were supportive of funding the contracts, funded those contracts.

Right around that time, there is another desire to reorganize higher education again. What eventually comes out is what's called the Saxon Report. The Saxon Report recommends that the University be structured into its own entity, its own system, and that the state and community colleges similarly be broken up into their own system, which is what it was like 20 years prior to that. The only piece that is implemented for the most part is the University piece. It has its own board of trustees. The employees bargain with their own board of trustees and that's what you have been living under since.

During this time, the Board of Higher Education appoints a new chair, James Carlin, who doesn't like public higher education. He decides that he's got to get rid of tenure, and he has to have post-tenure review. He takes it to the public and starts talking about "no post-tenure review" and "we have to have accountability" and this discussion rages. (I'm on the faculty at Massasoit Community College.) MSP is the first group out there bargaining, "Everybody's gonna have post-tenure review." And I remember the years and the bargaining that you went through on it, and quite frankly, we would love to have your post-tenure review language compared to what the community colleges got. You were out there first, but you had a better ability; you were just the training ground for Carlin. Then he got his feet wet and it was the state colleges and the community colleges.

It takes us about 11 or 12 years, adjusted for inflation, to recover from where we were in the late '80s for money. All through this time, you may recall a few little attacks on our health insurance, but pretty much that's about it. What we are working for is to make sure there is an increase in the funding, and all of a sudden now, the cuts start coming (two years ago not counting this year). The cuts weigh in because there are few places where the cuts can be made; there's so much money that is earmarked. Just like any institution, your operating budget is made up of fixed costs. In higher education, because you can generate money, you can increase fees, you can increase tuition, so they cut the appropriation and pass it on to the students. And then to the libraries.

Now we have the problem again—contract funding. MSP is one of the first ones out there, and USA, our two locals and other AFCSME groups. Acting Governor Swift, as you know, submitted it, and then the legislature did not fund it, the house did not fund it, to our deep and profound disappointment. The new governor has made no bones about the fact that he is not going to fund or submit these contracts. Yet everybody pretty much, from what we understand in the legislature, supports this. Steve Tocco is on record, the Board of Higher Education is on record. Everybody is on record supporting the funding, and the legislature and the people we work with are loathe not to fund the contracts, and it's just not ours. There's probably 35 or 40 of them now in this holding tank because it will be the first time in the history of collective bargaining that a contract does not get funded. So that remains and will always remain our No. 1 priority, but now other things have kind of bumped up into that, and it has shifted the focus there.

What we do know now is that the governor and the few people surrounding him are talking to no one in higher education. There may be a few people that we don't know about, but certainly no one that we know about up until the last couple of weeks. The first meeting was held with the community colleges, and then there was a meeting with some community college presidents, and then there was a meeting with the state college presidents a couple of weeks ago, and as you know, no meeting with the University President or the chancellors. So, that is pretty much the extent of conversation that has taken place. Now I'm not saying that there are not people that have spoken to the governor, but they are certainly not people that we talk to. When the Saxon Report came out, and education reform happened in the early '90s, at that time, there were lots of committees, lots of groups that were all engaged in the discussion. Representative Ed Lambert from Fall River and Mark Roosevelt were the architects. They were the ones really charged with writing this new reorganization. Everyone had a chance to weigh in.

In February, we have a reorganization plan from the governor and no one knows who has spoken to whom. But we do know it is none of us--no faculty, no students, no staff, no presidents. We met with Peter Nessen who is going to be the new cabinet secretary. He sits on the Board of Higher Education. I asked him, "who did you talk to?" "Well, I had input." And I said, "You don't know anything about higher education." He said, "Well, I sit on the board." And I said, "Well, that's a little different, sitting on a board of higher education." He is from the Pioneer Institute. We are philosophically opposed to the philosophy of the Pioneer Institute. They support privatization, charter schools, everything that we do not stand for and that we hopefully do not believe in from everybody, and so there is the input.

We meet with Steve Tocco, who is the Chair of the Board of Higher Education, trying to find out where he is, and he does not agree. Then, somewhere along the line, the governor, with his group of people, decide they're going to take on the President's Office at UMass. I could not, in a million years, understand this. I am not here to pass judgment on what goes on in the school or talk about what you think about the President's Office, but the idea that somebody would come in, not knowing a whit about public higher education and decide that the goal here, when you peel it all away, is to get rid of the President's Office at UMass. When you take this reorganization plan that has come out—the newest edition yesterday—what comes out is the University of Massachusetts--this is not the final document, now. We understand now they're going to look for some input.

And the foundation budget, just a little quick aside: Stan Rosenberg tried very hard for a couple of years to get a fair share funding formula budget in, and I am sure Ellen Story supported, and there was good support. We have talked about this for a number of years—'give us a foundation that every institution in the system can be guaranteed a base; then we will talk to you about tuition retention. But until you give us a base on which we can build, we can't talk about tuition retention because then we are always subject to the vagaries of the student enrollment and to the legislature.' And Peter Nessen has agreed, and Steve Tocco has agreed that that's a good idea, but not at this time. Steve Tocco has always supported it. The Higher Education Leadership Council, a group made up of all of the leaders of the MTA higher education union presidents, the MTA board members--about a 15-member board, and it's all the leaders--have gone through this and tried to plow through this and come up with our view of this.

So, today we have a new version of a report. Romney comes out with his reorganization, and now we have a reorganization with no input, and he pretty much dismantles the system. He puts UMass on its own and cuts away Mass College of Art and Mass Maritime and says, you're on your own, so to speak. We'll give you some money, but the goal is to bring outside students into this campus because we can charge them a lot of tuition.

At the joint House Ways and Means and Senate Ways and Means hearing, Peter Nessen was there presenting this plan: 15,000 new students for UMass Amherst would generate millions and millions and millions of dollars. The question, rhetorical probably, was well, do you have the adequate resources, classrooms, and what you need now for the students that you serve, rather than bringing in 15,000 new students? The same thing for Mass College of Art and Mass Maritime. Also in the plan is a merger for Holyoke and Greenfield Community Colleges, and a merger of Mass College of Art in North Adams with Berkshire, Fitchburg and Mount Wachusett. In all instances, the employees are decertified from their local unions. They're on their own with a new employer. So that's part of the plan, and about six weeks ago, the governor puts out a change in our collective bargaining law and proposes to just about strip us of our ability to bargain over a number of issues that we hold near and dear: just cause dismissal, evaluation, a whole number of things. This is the part that also peels away chairs and people that look like non-faculty or secretaries. Anybody that may have some supervisory responsibilities is peeled off. So not only does the proposal strip us of our collective bargaining rights, it's also to cut down on the people who have the ability to bargain over their salary, conditions of employment, and so on and so forth.

Within the next week or so, out comes the change of our pension system, from a defined benefit to a defined contribution. Then there's health insurance. We pay 15 percent of our health insurance. Then the proposal came out to change that so the only thing you could get was an HMO individually. Your families, from state workers, right down to cities and towns--no family coverage. You would have to pay for family coverage yourself. That's all you would get.

Now you look at this organization and you start taking a look at these other proposals that are coming out. Then in the State of the State you hear "There is lots of waste. Can you imagine that there are bumping rights, that

there is seniority?" And you start listening to what the attack is. And the attack is on the worker, whether you are in higher education, faculty, staff, you're working in the cities and towns, that's where it's going. It just keeps on rolling out. And you wonder, my goodness, what's going on here? Favorability ratings of the governor slipped a little bit. But there is also a concern that when he ran, he said, I can handle a \$2 billion deficit. I will not have to raise taxes, and I will not cut essential core services. Now he's admitted that, in fact, his budget is not balanced.

It is our opinion that education is the most important core service in this country, let alone this commonwealth, and it has been cut. A lot of other areas have been cut too, like health and human services.

Representative Peter Larkin from Pittsfield has a task force on education funding. That report came out yesterday, along with the reorganization report. The reorganization report comes out and, if you were to read it, you would say, gee, this is not bad, UMass is off on its own. It will be with the medical school; you can do pretty much what you want. The Board of Higher Education, however, will cap the number of students you can have from out of state and will cap the tuition. However, the system has changed. There's tuition retention, but the legislature still has to fund you. The governor and a few people have decided that they are going to reorganize our public higher education system, and they have not spoken to one person who lives and breathes public education for the students of this commonwealth. The criticism is everywhere. Everybody's kind of taken aback about what's happening, and there is not this clarion call for public support, though a few little boards of trustees are struggling to say they think this is a great plan.

We're advocating for a system that we keep as a system, a system that people from the outside, who know nothing about this, cannot come into and dismantle and then rebuild into some image that we can't even grasp. Are there things that can be done? Absolutely, no question about it. Can we talk about preserving resources? Can we talk about maybe doing things differently? Absolutely. But it should be the people who live and breathe and work in this environment; people who talk about how we can improve the delivery of education to the students. Because, ultimately, when you peel it all away, that's what it's about. You can't change the system without us because we are the system for these students.

We are talking to all of our locals across the state. If we want to talk about reorganization of higher education, then maybe we should try to have a commission, a blue-ribbon committee. At least we should have a committee that's made up of people who can have an honest discussion and not have somebody else's view imposed upon them.

The big thing that's come out is allowing the boards of trustees to elect their own chairs. We're going to fight that with every breath that we have. I don't think Romney can succeed in doing this. When you make that kind of frontal, public attack--listen to his State of the State. What did he go after? Every little hot-button issue that the public reacts to. We have 800 lawyers and counting in this state. We have too many public relations people. We have bumping rights? Can you imagine that? We have unions. Every one of those are tied for the most part to either working people or those things that the public reacts to in poll after poll. "We're gonna have one big, huge giant law office." Now the MCAD can barely do its work because they are understaffed.

There's nobody in your legislative delegation that would support that. I don't think it has any place. But, not to take it lightly. A little history lesson: The proposal to strip us of our collective bargaining rights is the same proposal that came before the legislature in 1977. It was against the MBTA bus drivers, and nobody said it would pass, and it passed, and it stripped them of their rights. This is the exact same proposal, so please, do not become complacent.