

# THE SCHOOL BELL

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## TEACHER, ESP TAX BREAK

WASHINGTON D.C. - For the 2002 and 2003 tax years, teachers and education support professionals (employed for at least 900 hours in a school year) can claim an above-the-line deduction for the first \$250 of "out-of-pocket" spending on student supplies. The above-the-line deduction is important because an eligible school employee does not have to itemize to qualify.

The new deduction is included in the economic stimulus bill signed by the President on March 9. After three years of effort by Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME), the personal investment educators make in learning tools for their students will be acknowledged. Senators Mary Landrieu (D-LA) and John Warner (R-VA) also helped shepherd the tax provision through the process.

## FINANCIAL SERVICES TRAINING SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 23, 2002 AT 4:30 PM

THREE RIVERS - Dan DeGraw will be at the MEA office at 1170 W. Michigan Ave with food and door prizes. MEA Financial Services can help you plan for the future. Learn about the new tax changes that help you save \$\$\$! It is never too early or too late to begin planning for your retirement or your children's education.

### TEACHERS' LEGAL RIGHTS INFO

**4:30 – 6:30 pm on May 23<sup>rd</sup> at the MEA office.** This session will focus on discipline, snap-suspensions, special ed suspension, tenure hearings, and touch on certification issues. We will also briefly review probationary teacher issues and mentoring. Please RSVP 279 5285.

## *Let The Reader Beware!*

SUMMARY OF THE GREAT LAKES CENTER REPORT ON THE MACKINAC CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH.

For those of you who often find flyers and "newsletters" from the Mackinac Center in your mailboxes, the following report from the Great Lakes Center, a think-tank sponsored by MEA, might be of some interest.

The Michigan-based Mackinac Center for Public Policy has emerged as one of the largest and most prolific state-based think tanks in the United States, with a mission of enabling "Michigan citizens and other decision-makers to better evaluate Michigan public policy options. . .from a 'free market' perspective." Notwithstanding its description of itself as "non-partisan," the organization supports market solutions for public policy challenges and opposes government intervention—positions that can be fairly characterized as politically conservative.

The Mackinac Center states it is committed to delivering "the highest quality and most reliable research on Michigan issues." This report puts that claim to the test. An independent review of the Center's documents is important because private think tank research often enters the mainstream of public discourse without being rigorously scrutinized.

The evaluation of education related documents described by the Mackinac Center as studies found that:

- Many of the documents described by the Mackinac Center as "studies" do not represent genuine social science research.
- Overall, the quality of those education studies published by the Mackinac Center that can be considered social science research ranges from inadequate to just adequate. Applying the rating system established in this evaluation, studies classified as original research received, on average, an overall quality score of 1.80 on a scale of 1 to 3, with 3 being the highest. Studies classified as interpretive research received, on average, an overall quality score of 2.09.

