



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

March 2017

Wow! I don't know about you, but for me this year is flying by. I hope everyone had an opportunity to have a relaxing Spring Break and is ready to tackle these next 2 ½ months all refreshed.

This has been a very busy year and I believe the Association has made great strides to improve our support to our membership. Between the new subscription to e-groups and the new TAPT News which allows members to receive important information prior to being sent out on e-groups has been a great benefit for our members. With the addition of the South Texas certification courses held in South Padre earlier this year, we have been able to increase the learning opportunities for our membership on top of those already held throughout the state during the year. The TAPT website underwent a major overhaul this year which hopefully makes maneuvering through the information easier.



Registration for the upcoming 44th Annual TAPT Conference located in Frisco, Texas is open and each member should have received their registration information. To help you through the registration process an email was sent out and registration tips can be found on the website. You can also check out the preliminary agenda for this year's conference on the website. Due to some logistical issues we are experiencing with the conference center, you will notice we have had to change things up a little to ensure we can offer a full complement of certification courses for our members.

This year's theme at the conference is "Remembering our Past – Preparing our Future". With that in mind, on Saturday night at the awards banquet, we will be going back to the early 70s when TAPT was first getting off the ground. During Saturday night's event, everyone is asked to wear something from the early 70s. So break out those old tie-dye shirts, one piece suits and bell bottoms. Please note that there may be certain items from the early 70s which may not be legally allowed! Tuesday evening, we will hold our President's banquet and back by popular demand will be the Texas Unlimited Band to provide our entertainment. Dress for this event will be dress your best, but feel free to put a western flare to it. Opening ceremonies this year will be held on Sunday and I am happy to have Author and Media Personality Vicki Hitzges as our keynote speaker. Also during the conference we will once again have NAPT Executive Director Mike Martin and from NYC Public Schools, Alex Robinson joining us during the week.

The final ballot for the upcoming election has been approved by the Executive Committee and should be posted any day now for your review. Once the ballot has been posted early voting will commence. There will also be a couple of amendments for the membership to consider which will be discussed at our April meeting. Once we have finalized those, we will get the information out for our membership to review prior to discussing and voting on at the conference. One major recommendation is to add a vendor representative to the Executive Committee. As we know, without the support of our vendors, there are a lot of activities that we would not be able to offer and this position would allow vendors to have a direct representative on the Executive Committee.

As a reminder, the deadline to get your scholarship applications and employee awards is April 1st! For a list of all scholarship and award opportunities, visit the website. There are a number of scholarships which are left lying on the table because no one put in for it. Please ensure that all your nominations meet the qualifications and all the required documents are submitted for each scholarship or award.

2017 finds us in quite an active legislative year and we are following a number of bills that may have a direct impact of school finance and specifically our budgets. One bill we have requested and has been submitted by

Representative Ed Thompson is HB 3184. This bill would exempt the paying of tolls for all vehicles which display exempt license plates. For a number of districts, this could be quite a cost savings in itself. Our legislative Chairman, Kayne Smith, is following all the bills and will provide our membership with an update as they progress through the legislative process and provide an update at the conference.

In closing, I would like to say it has truly been a pleasure and honor to serve as your President this year. I would like to thank the membership for your continued support to not only myself but to this great organization to help ensure we provide the safest means of transportation for the students we serve. I would also like to thank our vendors who play a vital role in our mission for their continued support. I am looking forward to closing out the 2016-17 year with a great conference and seeing you there.

God Bless and I hope to see you in Frisco!

Jim Abney