Testimony of Lois Stanton

Virginia Education Association

Senate Finance Subcommittee on Education

January 24, 2008, 3 p.m., GAB 10th Floor Conference Room

Chairman Colgan, subcommittee members, I am Lois Stanton, President of the Chesterfield Education Association. Princess Moss, is out of state on association business, and she asked me to fill in for her. I am honored to be with you, and I will offer brief remarks regarding the Virginia Education Association's perspective on Governor Kaine's budget.

Let me begin by emphasizing that I am proud to be a Virginia public school teacher. Under tremendous pressures, my colleagues and I have contributed significantly to the quality of life of Virginia's children and the Commonwealth. Our record speaks for itself:

- Average achievement for Virginia 4th and 8th grade students in reading and mathematics on the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress tests was significantly higher than that of students nationwide and in the South. Students in only two states performed at a statistically higher level on the fourth-grade reading test, and students in only five states achieved at a higher

level on the eighth-grade reading test. The performance of Virginia's fourth graders was especially noteworthy as overall achievement increased in both reading and mathematics. In no state did African-American fourth and eighth graders perform at a statistically higher level in reading and mathematics than black students in Virginia.

- The number of Virginia public high school students taking Advanced Placement (AP) examinations increased by more than 11 percent in 2007. According to results released by the College Board, the number of AP exams taken by Virginia public school students who qualified for college credit rose by 12.3 percent, compared with 9.3 percent for public school students nationwide.

- In 2006, Virginia students ranked 9th nationally on SAT scores.

As a teacher, I am proud to be part of an education system whose success bodes well for our children's future.

Specific to the budget bill before you, first, we are pleased that the Governor funded the re-benchmarking of the Standards of Quality. However, we have great concern regarding what is becoming a repeated pattern on the part of state policymakers, failing to honor the contribution rate called for by the VRS Board of Trustees. This decision proved harmless last year when market performance far

exceeded expectations, but the current economic outlook begs a more sober approach. When we last entered the mild recession of 2001, the teacher fund stood at a 106.2% funding level. Today, that level is 78.2%.

We are pleased that the Governor funded the Categorical, Incentive and At-Risk funds, and hope that you will work to preserve this funding which is essential to the success of our schools.

Our greatest concern is the lack of funds for a teacher salary increase in the first year of the proposed biennial budget. Virginia is experiencing a teacher shortage which will grow as baby-boom teachers retire in greater and greater numbers.

This shortage; the consequence, at least in part, of failing to offer competitive salaries; is hitting the poor localities, which are most reliant on state funds, the hardest. Officials from Petersburg's school system recently informed the Board of Education that entire departments in their high school are staffed by substitutes – entire departments without a qualified teacher. A rising sophomore at Petersburg High School told the Board, "In one of my major SOL classes, we did not have a teacher or a substitute for five school days. We were told to sit there in the classroom and keep the door closed."

This inexcusable problem is not confined to Petersburg, and it grows worse. A growing body of research indicates that this problem is having a harsh negative impact on poor students who most need an education of high quality.

Let's be specific about the status of teacher salaries in Virginia. Between the 02-03 and 06-07 school years, Virginia's ranking among the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) states fell from 4th to 7th. Our national ranking has fallen to 31st. While teachers in our nation make 88 cents for every dollar of those in comparable occupations, in Virginia the figure is 82.8 cents for every dollar. The national average teacher salary exceeds the Virginia average by $6,089 dollars. In the last eleven years, only once did the average increase in per capita income of the average Virginian fail to far exceed the average increase in teacher salary.

There is something out of kilter when a wealthy state with low taxes ranks 32nd in the nation in state aid per pupil. Virginians have the capacity to increase State funding for schools and provide appropriate wages to attract and retain quality educators.

Without funding support and guidance from the state, salaries of Virginia teachers will continue to lag behind in the region and the

marketplace. We all pay the price. Research consistently shows that the most important factor in student achievement is teacher quality.

Virginia's teachers face a staggering workload and myriad pressures. New testing requirements, additional classroom responsibilities for the SOQ, SOL, and NCLB, diverse student populations, increases in single parent families -- all of these combine to make the teacher's job more difficult than ever before.

And, yet, we have risen to these challenges and provided high-quality instruction to the children of Virginia.

Teachers deserve to be recognized for the success they have achieved.

Let me close with a pledge to work with you to improve the quality of education for our young people and the quality of life for all Virginians. Thank you.

VIRGINIA HAS A MODEST BILL coming due for retiree health care benefits for its public sector employees—about $3 billion. With about $682 million socked away, the Commonwealth was one of just 13 states with any funds set aside as of the end of 2006 to cover its non-pension benefit costs over the next 30 years. On the pensions side, Virginia's funds aren't in as healthy shape as they used to be, and the state has stumbled a bit in making its full annual contributions toward its long-term obligation. The funding ratio of Virginia's pension plans dropped fairly substantially between 2001 and 2005, and in the last 10 years, the Commonwealth has frequently made less than the annual required contribution, as set by its own actuaries. Still, the current pension funding level is close to the 50-state mean.

PENSIONS

TOTAL BILL COMING DUE: **$51.7 billion** [1]

FUNDS SET ASIDE: **$41.7 billion**

PORTION UNFUNDED: **$10 billion**

PERCENT FUNDED: **81 as of 2005** [2]

TEN YEAR FUNDING HIGH: **106% in 2001**

TEN YEAR FUNDING LOW: **79% in 1997**

HOW IS THE STATE DOING IN PAYING ITS ANNUAL BILL? 

ASSUMPTIONS: Virginia switched to using a 7.5% interest assumption on pension investments in 2006, down from 8% in previous years (8% is the 50-state median). In 2004, the state changed from using a modified market approach for calculating the actuarial value of assets to a five-year smoothing period, which is used by most states. The amortization period conforms to accounting standards.

1 Pension funds include state employees, state police, law enforcement officers and judicial employees.

2 50-state mean was 82% in 2006; Virginia's 2006 figure was not available at the time of Pew's report.

OTHER BENEFITS

TOTAL BILL COMING DUE: **$3 billion** [1]

FUNDS SET ASIDE: **$682 million**

PORTION UNFUNDED: **$2.3 billion** [2]

PERCENT FUNDED: **23 as of 2006**

HOW IS THE STATE DOING IN MANAGING THIS BILL? 

1 Based on a long-term discount rate of 7.5%, which assumes the state will pre-fund the liability.

2 62% of covered payroll, compared to a national median of 135%.

REFORMS: In 2007, Virginia authorized local governments and school districts to establish trusts to fund non-pension benefits. The state also removed its $120 monthly cap on its cash subsidy for retiree health insurance. (Employees are awarded $4 per month in health insurance credits for each year they serve.) The state improved public disclosure of changes in assumptions and actuarial methods, and required its pension systems to use consistent, generally accepted actuarial standards.

KEY:  Top Performer  Needs Improvement  Below Par  Non-Pension Benefits are Minimal

This fact sheet stems from a 50-state analysis of states' retiree benefit obligations by Pew's Center on the States. The full report and 50 state fact sheets can be found at www.pewcenteronthestates.org.

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MSNBC.com

Teacher absences are hurting learning

Vacuum in classroom linked to lower test scores, research shows

The Associated Press

updated 4:29 p.m. ET, Wed., Jan. 16, 2008

WASHINGTON - A year is a long time in a child's education, the time it can take to learn cursive writing or beginning algebra. It's also how much time kids can spend with substitute teachers from kindergarten through high school — time that's all but lost for learning.

Despite tremendous pressure on schools to increase instructional time and meet performance goals, the vacuum created by teacher absenteeism has been all but ignored — even though new research suggests it can have an adverse effect in the classroom.

The problem isn't just with teachers home for a day or two with the flu. Schools' use of substitutes to plug full-time vacancies — the teachers that kids are supposed to have all year — is up dramatically.

Duke University economist Charles Clotfelter, among a handful of researchers who have closely studied the issue, says the image of spitballs flying past a daily substitute often reflects reality. "Many times substitutes don't have the plan in front of them," Clotfelter said. "They don't have all the behavioral expectations that the regular teachers have established, so it's basically a holding pattern."

Link to lower test scores

Clotfelter's examination of North Carolina schools is part of emerging research suggesting that teacher absences lead to lower student test scores, even when substitutes fill in. And test scores have gained heightened importance, because the 2002 education law penalizes schools if too few students meet testing benchmarks. The goal is to get all kids reading and doing math at their grade levels by 2014.

Raegen Miller, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Washington, is examining the impact of teacher absences on fourth-grade test scores in a large, urban school district that he chooses not to identify. His findings show that 10 teacher absences within a year cause a significant loss in math achievement. When the regular teacher is gone for two weeks, it can set students back at least that amount of time.

"Teachers often have to re-teach material, restore order and rebuild relationships after absences," said Miller, who is conducting the research with Harvard University education professors.

The potential harm multiplies when subs are used in long-term roles in a classroom. Though long-term substitutes often have better credentials than those chosen for daily fill-ins, they are no replacement for regular, full-time teachers who have gone through the normal hiring process.

Sub use doubles nationwide

Nationwide, the number of schools reporting that they used substitutes to fill regular teaching vacancies doubled between 1994 and 2004, according to Education Department data. The latest data showed more than a fifth of public schools use subs in this way.

One factor behind the increase was an overall rise in the number of schools reporting they had full-time vacancies. That points to teacher shortages in some communities.

Also, schools are being more thorough in reporting on vacancies and on school staffing generally due to requirements of the No Child Left Behind law, Miller said.

Standards for substitutes vary widely but are typically far below those for full-time regular teachers. Some states and local districts don't require background checks, and many don't require substitutes to have attended college, let alone graduated.

And states with the fewest standards for substitutes also rely most on subs. Principals in Arkansas, Louisiana,

Mississippi, Tennessee and Washington, D.C., are most likely to identify teacher absenteeism as a big problem, according to Education Department survey data from 2003-04, the most recent available.

Among those places, only Washington requires all substitutes to have some college. And even there, principals sometimes ignore that requirement when faced with teacher absences, according to a district review.

With math in particular, the higher the level taught by the absent teacher, the harder it is to find a substitute, said Francis Fennell, president of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. "If the prime teacher of calculus is going to miss some time — man, are you in trouble," he said.

Subs want improvements

At Baltimore Polytechnic Institute, a high school with a math and science focus, a substitute might be in a math class one day and an art or science class the next, said principal Barney Wilson.

"We're not expecting him to teach the material. We're expecting him just to follow the lesson plan that the teacher laid out," Wilson said.

Teachers at Poly, as the school is affectionately called, take that responsibility seriously. Algebra teacher James Todaro was recently injured in a car accident and needed to stay home for several days. Each day, the bandaged and bruised Todaro came to school to leave an updated lesson plan for the substitute.

That's not the case across the country, however, and substitutes themselves want improvements, said Geoffrey Smith, director of the Substitute Teaching Institute at Utah State University, which provides training to substitutes and schools.

"They will be the first to say, 'I wish we had more competent lesson plans left. I wish we had better control of the students,'" Smith said.

Nationwide, teachers are generally allowed 10 or more sick or personal days a year. They also can be out of the classroom for professional development.

In his research, Miller found big differences in teacher absence rates among schools in the same district. He said the "professional culture" of a school and the relationship between teachers and administrators affect absenteeism.

Principals in schools serving low-income and minority populations are more likely to say teacher absenteeism is a problem. That's consistent with Clotfelter's research, which shows the poorest North Carolina schools average almost one extra sick day per teacher annually than the wealthiest ones.

Low-income schools and vacancies

Schools serving poor and minority students also have more trouble filling full-time teaching positions, and they are more likely to fill those jobs with substitutes.

The federal law requires that all students be taught by a highly qualified teacher. That generally means teachers are supposed to have at least a bachelor's degree in the subject they teach or that they pass a subject-matter test.

Substitutes often don't meet those standards, but the law doesn't include sanctions to keep unqualified substitutes from serving for long periods. It merely requires that, after four weeks, parents be notified that their children are being taught by a teacher without the "highly qualified" label. Some schools rotate substitutes through a classroom in under four weeks to avoid having to send those letters, said Sandi Jacobs, vice president of the National Council on Teacher Quality, a research and advocacy group.

Lawmakers trying to update the federal law have not addressed that loophole, although they have put a provision in draft legislation that would increase training for substitutes and for administrators who manage them.

Children's advocates say kids are being hurt.

"We need to pay a lot more attention to the prevalence of substitute teachers, along with long-term vacancies and turnover rates, especially in schools with a lot of low-income students who can least afford instability in their classrooms," said Ross Wiener, who oversees policy issues at Education Trust, a nonprofit that advocates for poor and minority children.

URL: http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/22686809/

Average Salaries for Teachers in the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)

	2002-2003		2003-2004		2004-2005		2005-2006		2006-2007	
State	Salary	Rank	Salary	Rank	Salary	Rank	Salary	Rank	Salary	Rank
Alabama	38,282	12	38,325	13	38,186	15	40,347	13	43,389	12
Arkansas	38,167	13	39,314 *	11	40,495 *	11	42,768	8	44,245 *	8
Delaware	48,791	2	49,366	2	50,595	2	54,264	2	54,680	2
Florida	40,281	7	40,604	7	41,590	8	43,302	6	45,308	5
Georgia	45,533	3	45,988	3	46,526	3	48,300	3	49,905	3
Kentucky	38,981	10	40,240	10	40,959	10	42,592	9	43,646	11
Louisiana	37,166	14	37,918	14	39,022	12	40,029	14	42,816	13
Maryland	49,677	1	50,261	1	52,331	1	54,333	1	56,927	1
Mississippi	34,555 *	16	35,684 *	15	38,212	14	40,576	12	40,182	16
North Carolina	42,411	5	43,211	5	43,348	4	43,922	4	46,410	4
Oklahoma	34,877	15	35,061	16	37,879	16	38,772	15	42,379	14
South Carolina	40,362	6	41,162	6	42,189	6	43,011	7	44,133 *	9
Tennessee	39,186	9	40,318	9	42,076	7	42,537	10	43,816	10
Texas	39,974	8	40,476	8	41,011	9	41,744	11	44,897	6
Virginia	42,665	4	43,655	4	42,768	5	43,823 *	5	44,727 *	7
West Virginia	38,481	11	38,461	12	38,360	13	38,284	16	40,531	15
United States	45,776 *	. . .	46,704 *	. . .	47,659 *	. . .	49,026 *	. . .	50,816 *	. . .
SREB Average	40,587 **	. . .	41,253 **	. . .	42,222 **	. . .	43,663 **	. . .	45,499 **	. . .

*Data estimated by the National Education Association, 2005 thru 2007 salaries from Fall 2007 Rankings and Estimates
** Calculated avg. from NEA data

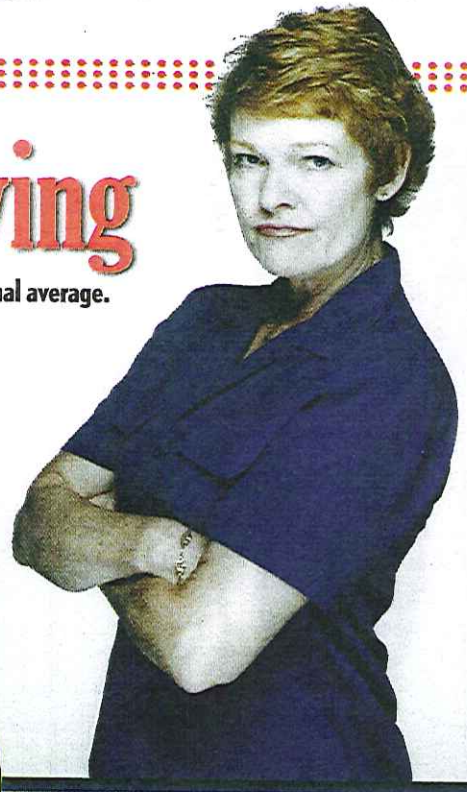
SOURCE: NEA Rankings & Estimates

VEA NEWS

January 2008 ▪ Volume 49 ▪ No. 4

A Rank Showing

rginia slips to 31st in teacher pay, $6,100 below national average.



anking 31st in a class of 51 wouldn't be something to trumpet on your resume.

But that's exactly where the Commonalth stands, with a new analysis by the ıtional Education Association showing that ·ginia teachers are 31st among the 50 states d the District of Columbia in pay— d nearly $6,100 under the ·ional average of 0,816.

Worse, Virginia's nding has slipped ong states in the ıth, where aries have tradi- ıally been lower. For ırs, Virginia was near top of the states in the ıthern Regional Education Board in ·rage teacher pay. Now it's a mediocre of 16, trailing such states as Maryland, orgia, and North Carolina, with whom it npetes for teachers.

Worse still, the gap h veen what Virginia teachers and their counterparts in other states earn is widening, not closing. In 2002-03, Virginia teachers lagged the national average by $3,111. The gap has nearly doubled and is now $6,089.

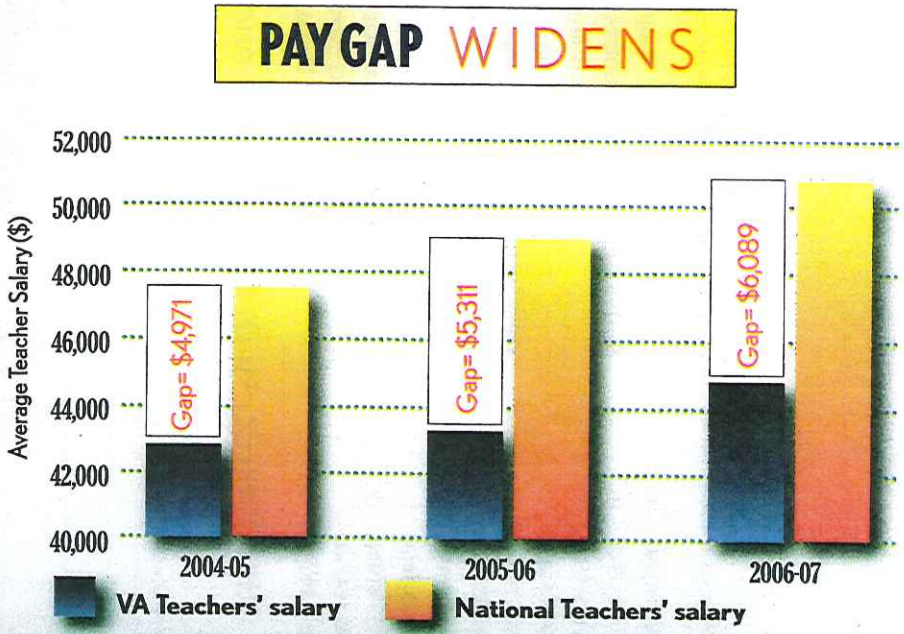
"Virginia teachers are producing top results, so it's discouraging that their commitment is not being matched by the elected officials who make the decisions on funding," said VEA President Princess Moss. "The numbers don't lie. At a time when every state is raising standards for teachers and trying to attract top candidates, Virginia is losing ground."

Virginia can do better. The state ranks 7th in the nation in per-capita income but 32nd in state aid per pupil. Though Gov. Tim Kaine advocates raising Virginia teacher salaries to the national average, neither he nor state lawmakers nor local budget decisionmakers have followed through with sufficient funding to achieve the goal—or even to close the gap.

Hig salaries are not going to be given to us—we all have to fight for them. Read Princess Moss' "Perspective" on page 2 and check out our special "VEA Member Guide to the 2008 General Assembly" (insert) for background information and ideas on how you can drive teacher pay upward.

Virginia's National Rank

2004-05	28th
2005-06	28th
2006-07	31st



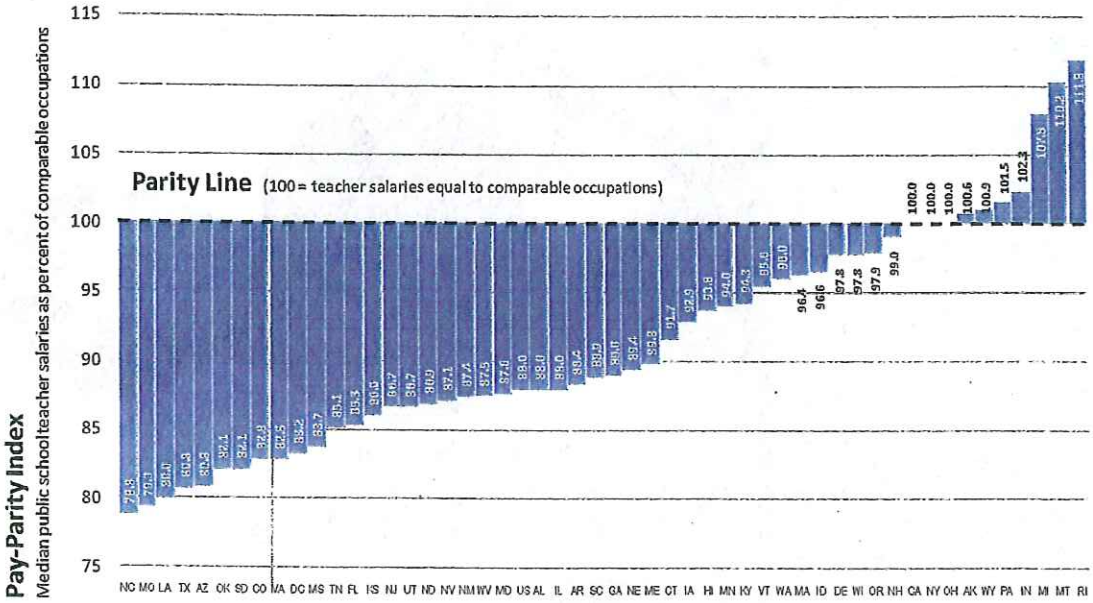
Extra Credit

Go to **www.fundqualityschools.org** to sign the petition urging lawmakers to fully fund public education in Virginia.

Virginia – State Highlights 2008

Reaching the Parity Line

An original analysis by the EPE Research Center finds that public school teachers nationwide make 88 cents for every dollar earned in 16 comparable occupations. Ten states reach or surpass the pay-parity line, meaning teachers earn at least as much as comparable workers.

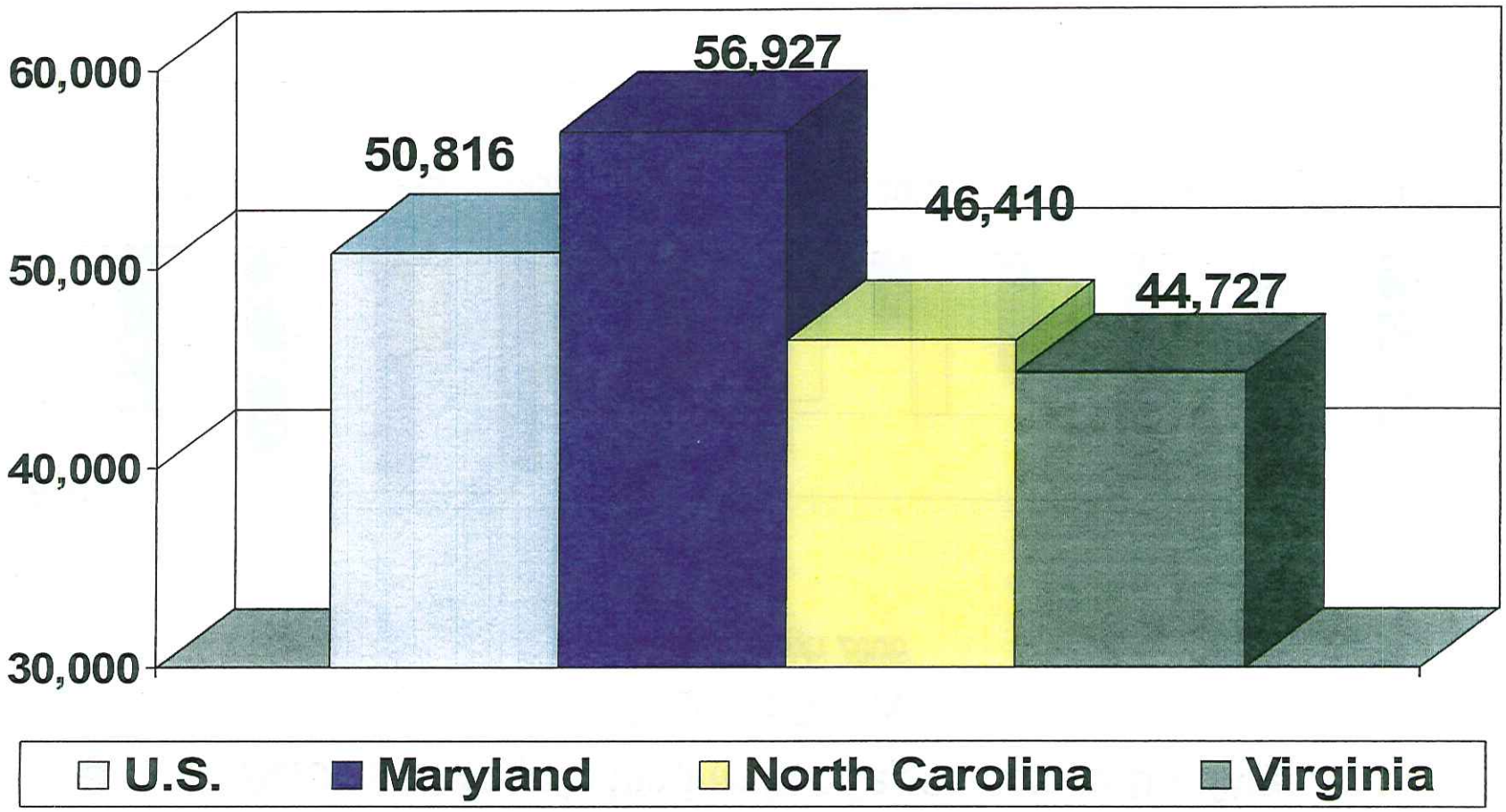


Occupations Comparable to K-12 Teachers

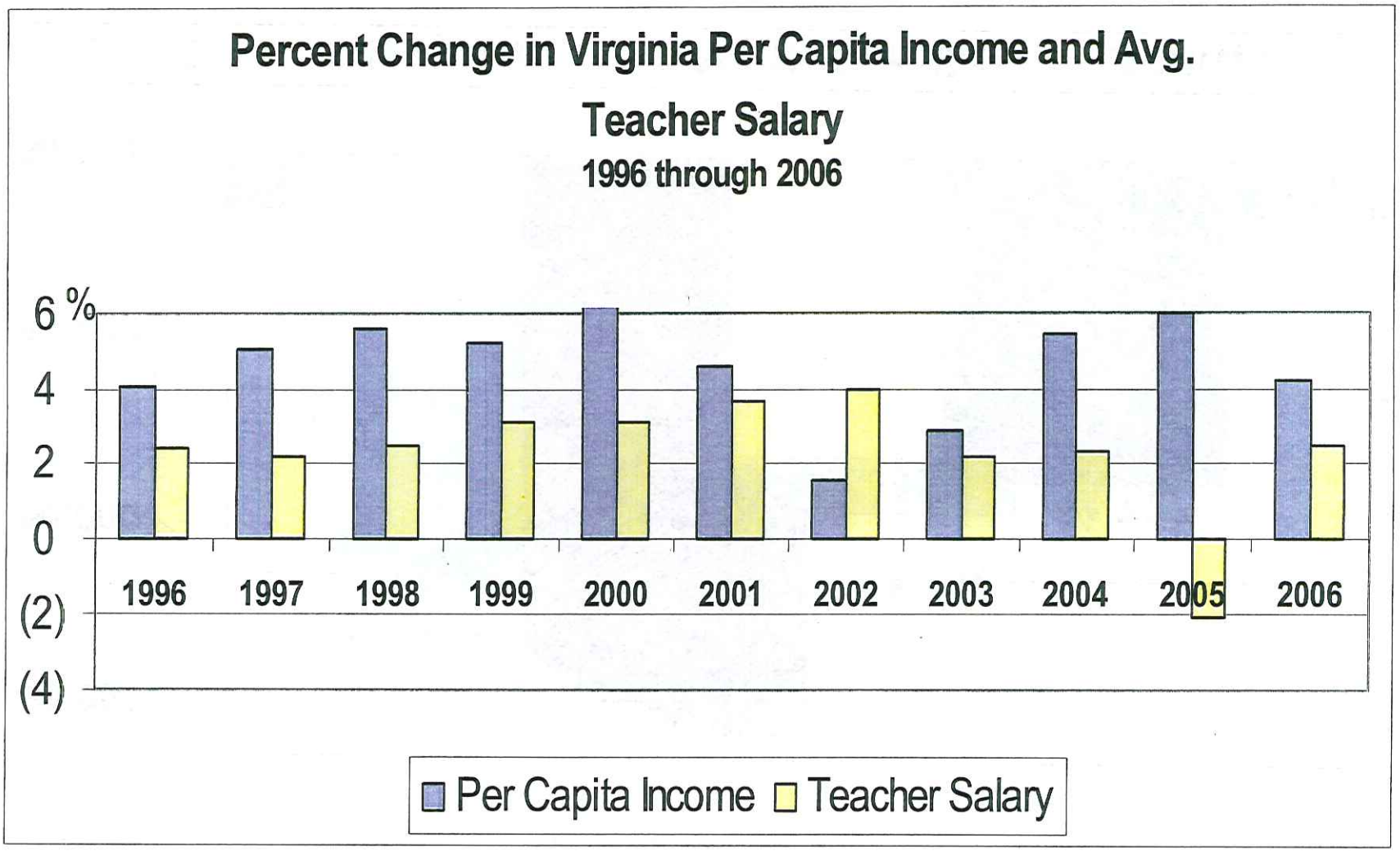
- Accountants and auditors
- Architects, except naval
- Archivists, curators, and museum technicians
- Clergy
- Compliance officers, except agriculture, construction, health and safety, and transportation
- Computer programmers
- Conservation scientists and foresters
- Counselors
- Editors, news analysts, reporters, and correspondents
- Human-resources, training, and labor-relations specialists
- Insurance underwriters
- Occupational therapists
- Other teachers and instructors (excludes preschool, K-12, and postsecondary)
- Physical therapists
- Registered nurses
- Technical writers

SOURCE: EPE Research Center, 2008. Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey. Occupational categories adapted from *How Does Teacher Pay Compare?* (Economic Policy Institute, 2004).

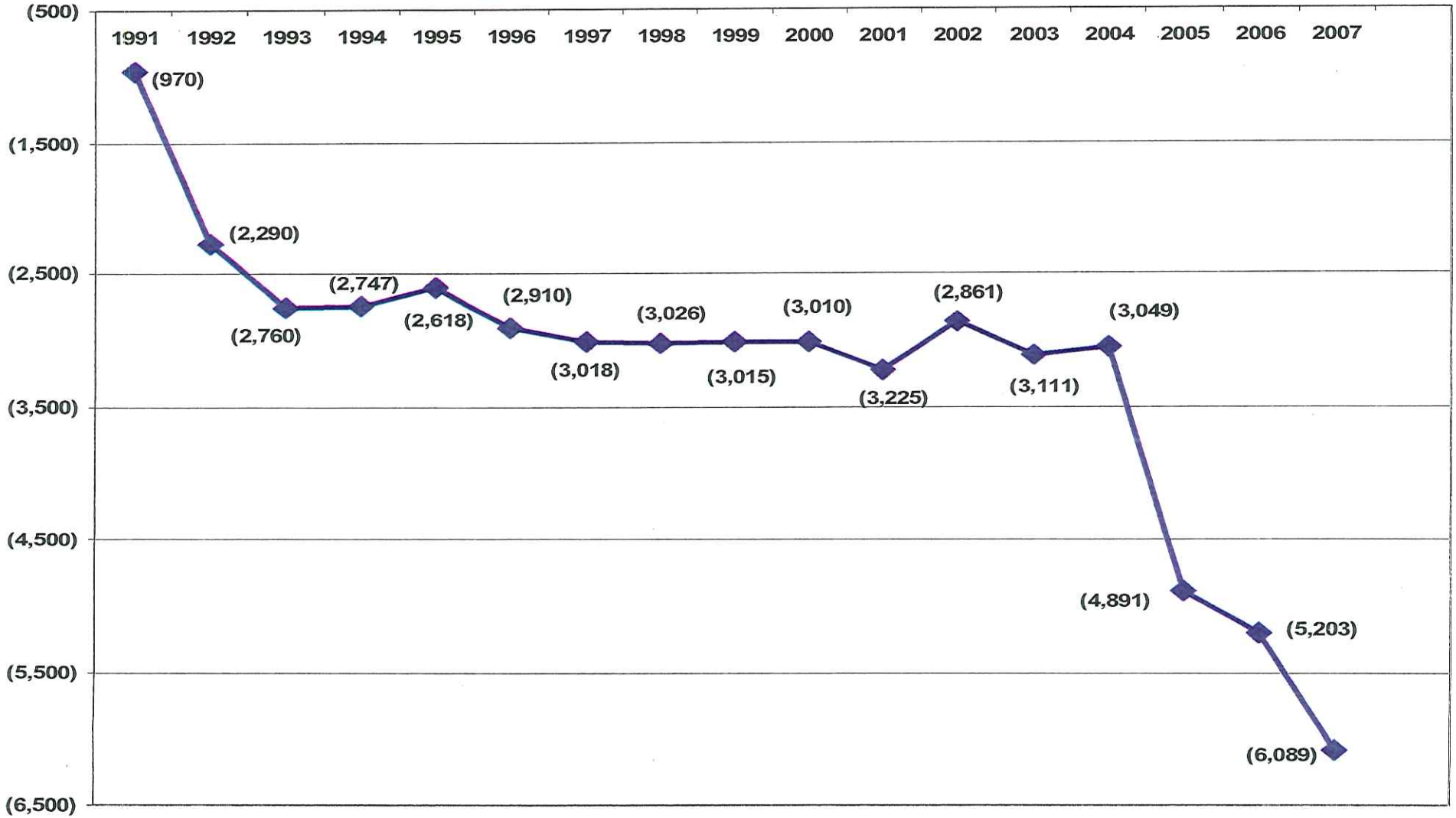
Average Teacher Salary 2006-07



NEA Rankings &
Estimates, Fall 2007


Percent Change in Virginia Per Capita Income and Avg.
Teacher Salary
1996 through 2006
6 %
4
2
0
(2)
(4)
1996
1997
1998
1999
2000
2001
2002
2003
2004
2005
2006
Per Capita Income
Teacher Salary

Losing Ground on National Average!



Source: NEA Rankings & Estimates various yrs.