



# SKI COUNTRY EDUCATOR

March – April 2007

## **Governor Ritter signs HB 1048, CSAP Reform**

House Bill 1048 directs the Governor and the Colorado Department of Education to convene a technical advisory panel to speed development and implementation of a method that permits teachers and parents to see how students are progressing over time. Currently, students' scores are compared to the previous year's group at the same grade level. As a result, test data are relatively meaningless.

The importance of motivating students and rewarding their achievement cannot be overestimated. Currently, students are discouraged and frustrated by being labeled as unsatisfactory or partially proficient by the CSAP ratings; when, in fact, they have made significant progress. This bill is good for students and teachers, and will result in a more accurate measure of school accountability.

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**If you haven't done your taxes for 2006 remember your Association dues are tax deductible.**

Association members can deduct the total of your unified dues (local-UniServ-CEA-NEA) as a miscellaneous itemized deduction on your federal income taxes, but not as a charitable contribution.

Your dues are one sum for January-August 2006 plus a different sum for September-December 2006, because the calendar year overlaps two Association membership years. Use your paycheck stubs to determine the dues amounts for your 2006 taxes.

**Also, remember the Teachers and Para-educators out-of-pocket classroom deduction.**

In December before recessing for the holiday, Congress extended the Teacher Tax Deduction for two more years. Teachers and Para-educators can deduct up to \$250 for out-of-pocket classroom expenses as the "educator expense deduction" if you worked at least 900 hours in 2006. Your qualified expenses are subtracted when figuring your adjusted gross income. For more information, see [irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,id=107557,00.html](http://irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,id=107557,00.html) this links to 2005 information, but it applies to 2006.

# Death and Taxes

We've all heard the phrase, but where did it come from and what does it mean?

**Nothing is certain but death and taxes**

## Meaning

A rather fatalistic and sardonic proverb. It draws on the actual inevitability of death to highlight the difficulty in avoiding the burden of taxes.

## Origin

Several famous authors have uttered lines to this effect. The first was Daniel Defoe, in *The Political History of the Devil*, 1726:

"Things as certain as death and taxes, can be more firmly believed."

Benjamin Franklin (1706-90) used the form we are currently more familiar with, in a letter to Jean-Baptiste Leroy, 1789, which was reprinted in *The Works of Benjamin Franklin*, 1817:

"In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."

Another thought on the theme of death and taxes is Margaret Mitchell's line from her book *Gone With the Wind*, 1936:

"Death, taxes and childbirth! There's never any convenient time for any of them."...[www.phrases.org](http://www.phrases.org)

## Senators Urge Overhaul of NCLB Testing Mandates and More

Ten U.S. senators have stepped up to the plate and signed off on a statement that the No Child Left Behind Act's testing mandates must be "overhauled significantly during the reauthorization process." And they didn't limit their concerns to testing issues. In a powerful February 15 letter, Sen. Russ Feingold (D-WI) and 9 cosigners told the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee that there are wide-ranging NCLB issues that need attention. They clearly demonstrated a complete understanding of the difficulties that the current law presents for administrators, teachers, and students.

The letter urged the Senate HELP Committee to focus its hearings on the following:

- Adequate funding and financial burdens facing school districts
- Sensible accountability models
- Differences in school districts' size and composition
- Effect on teachers, students, and curriculum
- Supportive interventions for struggling schools

For more information on Sen. Feingold's letter and to see the list of cosigners declaring their support (is your state represented?), visit [nea.org's ESEANCLB issues area](http://nea.org's/ESEANCLB%20issues%20area).

