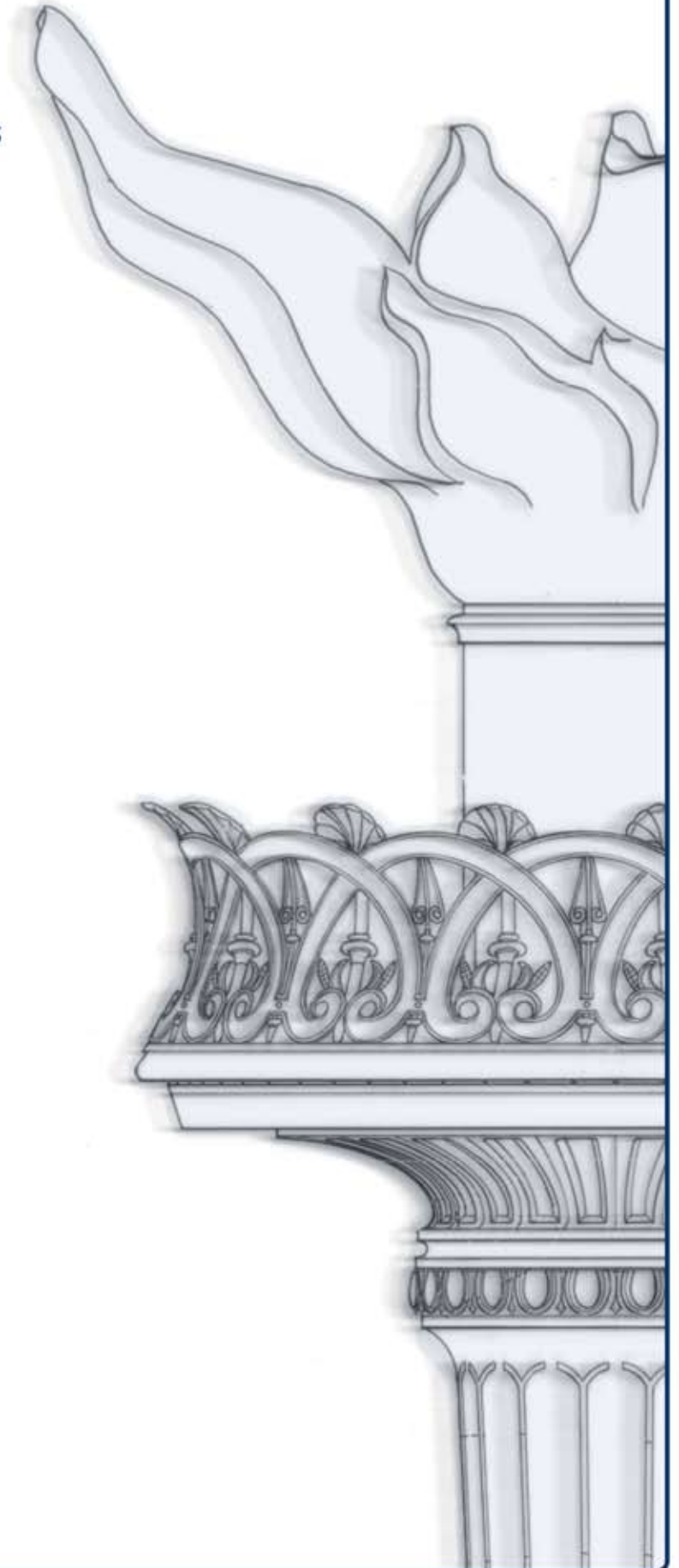


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Texas Association of College Teachers  
Defending Academic Freedom  
Volume LXII Number 2



## Quarterly eBulletin

Oct/Nov/Dec 2008

# The TACT Quarterly eBulletin

July/Aug/Sept 2008 - Volume LXII Number 1

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## Letter from the President

**by Dr. Debra Price  
TACT President**

As the national economy slips further, Texas has been fortunate enough to weather the storm better than the rest of the states. Our housing and employment rates are above national average, and our large cities are consistently listed as the most economically stable places to live in America. However, since 1982, college tuition in Texas has grown a staggering 430%, and while we have been able to stave off the national crisis for a while, the costs of tuition are rising so steadily that even the most affluent may find college a difficult expense. For the first time, we are at risk of becoming a nation where the younger generation is less educated than their elders. TACT is committed to encouraging our state to better fund higher education to stem its runaway costs.

This rising trend can, in part, be attributed to the deregulation of tuition from the State to the Boards of Regents in 2003. The Texas Tomorrow Fund was created to protect families from the rapidly increasing cost of tuition. The fund secured the cost of tuition when they opened the account and the State covered the difference. After Texas gave the schools the license to set their own tuition, the cost of higher education increased 40%. As a result, the Texas Tomorrow Fund incurred a \$3.3 billion deficit, which caused the state to freeze the funds in 2005.

In 2007, the legislature approved reopening the fund under the name Texas Tomorrow Fund II. This fund would shift the burden of covering the discrepancy of tuition from the State to the universities. The problem is, since deregulation, the universities' new obligations will likely be offset by even more increases in tuition. This would create an even larger rift in Tomorrow Fund and non-Tomorrow Fund student tuitions. As the universities increase tuition to make up for Texas Tomorrow Fund II students, the State's share for those on the original plan grows. This sets a dangerous precedent of universities shifting their financial inconveniences to already strained Texan citizens. In addition, universities, particularly flagship schools, may want to use their endowments to cover their portion of Texas Tomorrow II fund and lift the burden off their students.

TACT supports Senator West and his goal to limit tuition increases. We have seen that deregulated tuition alone does not work. In this turned-down economy, higher education becomes more important than ever. Our State has the responsibility to provide an affordable, quality education to its constituents.

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## Executive Director's Report

**by Chuck Hempstead  
TACT Executive Director**

A deep holiday breath, and it's upon us – the 81<sup>st</sup> Regular Session of the Texas Legislature.

We might know less this time than previous Decembers of even-numbered years: what will be the effect of a nearly even division among House Democrats and Republicans? Will the House Speaker hold his office, and what will that mean for committee leadership? Is the economy tanking or recovering, and what will that mean for state revenues projected as far out as two and a half years from now to pay for services during the next biennium?

Will those who hold the appropriations purse strings be comparatively confident or conservative considering the cloudy crystal ball? Will they invest in the people of the state, anticipating a return on that investment, or take a wait and see attitude? We'll know more, and you can learn and contribute, during TACT's Legislative Day at the Capitol February 27. Jot it down and stay tuned; if you haven't participated in one of these it's a day you'll never forget.

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**Thank you to everyone who joined us at the Capitol  
to visit with our legislators!**



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## Retirement in Texas

**by Chuck Hempstead  
TACT Executive Director**

I recently attended the Teacher Retirement System annual actuarial valuation. Let me say that it definitely lacked its traditional holiday theme. The official report was for year-end August 31, 2008, in which the prognosis for the retirement trust fund was quite positive compared with similar investors in a declining market. But the lion's share of the discussion was an up-to-the-minute review of what has happened since then, including the fund declining from \$112 Billion on August 31 to \$96 B on September 30 to \$82 B by the end of October, a month which was the single worst in stock market history.

The actuarial advisors used terms such as "this is a time of extreme caution" and "we are in uncharted waters." They will make an updated report to the Legislature on February 28, and anticipate recommending that the Legislature leave benefit levels constant and not implement any changes which may add risk. In other words, if benefits are increased, the cost should be appropriated immediately, and there is a high probability that state contributions to the fund will need to be increased someday.

During this time of economic uncertainty, TACT is dedicated to protecting our members' hard-earned investments. Thanks to the new ORP report, TACT members can generate customized, easy-to-read results detailing how their investment stacks up against the market average and what steps need to be taken to meet or exceed it.

This powerful resource is free to all TACT members. To access it, just go to:  
<http://www.tact.org/members.shtml>.

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**Thanks to all the TACT members who made our 60th a success and enjoyed a piece of cake with us!**



## A Look Back at the Past 60 Years

1948 – College Classroom Teachers Association (CCTA) originated as a section of the Texas State Teachers Association (TSTA).

1953 – CCTA opened a State Office with staff on the campus of the University of Texas at Austin.

1956 – CCTA officially changes its name to the Texas Association of College Teachers (TACT) and disaffiliates with TSTA.

1963 – TACT Retirement Committee suggested a separate retirement system for college teachers, leading to the Optional Retirement Program.

1975 – TACT publishes "An Evaluation of Retirement Alternatives" for faculty.

1983 – TACT successfully lobbied for level funding of the Optional Retirement Program.

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1993 – TACT participated in a coalition to successfully encourage the Legislature to grant unprecedented benefit improvements to members of the Teacher Retirement System.

1995 – TACT began offering Educators Professional Liability Insurance to its members.

1996 – TACT released a website, e-mail service, and Legislative First Alerts to better communicate with its members. Suggested amendments were adopted for post-tenure review.

1998 – Senate Committee adopts TACT's recommendation to eliminate tiered employer contributions to the Optional Retirement Program in lieu of the higher level.

1999 – TACT participated in creation of new "Texas Grant" scholarship program and a ten percent benefits increase for TRS. TACT orchestrated the election of Past President Mary Alice Baker to the TRS Board of Trustees.

2001 – Texas Legislature increased higher education funding by one billion dollars, including TACT priorities of scholarships, ORP, and faculty health insurance.

2003 – TACT legislation was passed, permitting institutions to use local money to supplement the state appropriations to ORP up to a total of 8.5 percent of salary.

2007 – TACT defeated the Academic Bill of Rights, a piece of legislation which would have curbed the free discourse of ideas in the classroom.

2008 – TACT released a totally redesigned, interactive ORP report to give its members more control over their retirement plan.

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## The James M. Puckett, Ph. D. Government Relations Fund

The TACT Dr. James M. Puckett, Ph.D. Government Relations Fund is a result of optional contributions made by those committed to TACT's heightened public affairs program. It is not used for candidate contributions, but is used for activities that will increase awareness of TACT among influences of public policy. Your contribution of \$29, \$59 or \$99 will assist in TACT's legislative efforts to improve Texas higher education. All expenditures are approved in advance by TACT's President, President-elect and Legislative Committee Chair.

### Thank you to the following contributors

Frank Fair

Gary Coulton

Andrea Williams

Debra Price

Chuck Hempstead

David Castle

Joe Kemble

Thomas LaPoint

Victor Scherb

Carl Ruthstrom

Russ Higham

Mary Lynn DeShazo

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