

Local teachers to stage penny protest at Capitol

By [CHRIS SEGAL / News Herald Writer](#)

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PANAMA CITY — A charter bus will depart from the Panama City Mall at 5 a.m. today, carrying 50 teachers and more than 39,000 pennies to Tallahassee.

The teachers from Bay District School are taking a personal day to join a rally at the state capitol to push for a one-cent sales tax to support public education.

The sales tax would last three years and is estimated to generate \$9 billion to fund public education.

To show legislators that budget reductions and cuts hurt education, school districts throughout the state are collecting pennies to represent the student they teach.

"It says a lot about educators because they care about kids," said Candy Parker, president of the Association of Bay County Educators. "We give a lot of our time for education and that is why we care."

The rally will begin at 11 a.m. today. Joining the teachers from Bay County will be nine students from Mosley High School.

Mosley students helped gather 3,000 pennies for the Pass a Penny campaign, said Mosley teacher Lora McCalister-Cruel.

"These students are planning on being educators in the future," McCalister-Cruel said. "They will go and look the legislators in the face because this is their future as well."

Bay County voters approved a half-cent sales tax in 1998, with the stipulation it would expire in 2008. The \$106 million raised for schools in those 10 years went to fund renovations at 30 district schools. Voters rejected extending the tax an additional 10 years in November 2007.