

WE...too

Washington Education
Association – Retired

March/April 2013

P.O. Box 9100, Federal Way, WA 98063-9100

Vol. 25, No. 3

Volunteer opportunities with the WEA Children's Fund

You probably remember those students in your class who came to school without a warm winter coat and who wore shoes that were either way too small or totally worn out. It is heartbreaking to see those kinds of problems and to not be able to do anything about it. You may have been able to access the WEA Children's Fund to help one of your students because the WEA Children's Fund is one way that teachers and other school employees can get help for students in need.

The WEA Children's Fund is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that helps provide some of the most basic necessities for our students. It relies on charitable donations from the community. A lot of those donations come from the same education employees who work in our schools.

Besides money, it takes a lot of time to administer a successful assistance fund such as this

and we are looking for volunteers who would be interested in helping with the Children's Fund. The work would take place at the WEA Building in Federal Way and training will



WEA CHILDREN'S FUND

be provided. Some of the volunteer work could include:

- ◆ Returning phone calls,

emails and answering general questions;

- ◆ Processing requests and reimbursements;

- ◆ Fulfilling information requests for brochures, etc.;

- ◆ Attending WEA Children's Fund Board Meetings (4-6 year);

- ◆ Writing thank you letters;

- ◆ Maintaining the database; and/or

- ◆ Helping at the Children's Fund booth at the WEA Representative Assembly and other events.

If you live in the Puget Sound area and are interested in volunteering approximately 4 hours a week, please contact Kit Raney at kraney@washingtonea.org for an application.

Volunteering with the WEA Children's Fund would be another way for you to continue to help Washington students.

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President's Message

Theater of the absurd

Also known as the Washington State Legislative Session — where one must expect the unexpected and where what is important is ignored.

First there was the Senate coup where Democratic Senators Tom and Sheldon joined with the Republican Caucus to form the Majority Coalition Caucus. This BINO (Bipartisan in Name Only) coalition allowed for a takeover of committee chairs, committee make-up and Sen-



Kit Raney, WEA-Retired president

ate procedures; ensuring that the Republican minority in the Senate would control which bills got heard and moved out of committee.

Next there has been bill after bill after bill that ignored the State Supreme Court's McCleary decision to fully fund our schools and instead intro-

duced such nonsense as grading schools from A to F, flunking third graders if they fail a reading test and arming teachers.

The State's Paramount Duty is to fully fund education. The McCleary decision affirms this and, in December, the Supreme Court chastised the Legislature for their lack of progress towards addressing the McCleary decision by saying that "Slowing the pace of funding cuts is necessary, but it does not equate to forward progress; constitutional compliance will never be achieved by making modest funding restorations to spending cuts." This lack of positive action by the Legislature is why the State Supreme Court has retained jurisdiction over the McCleary decision. Watch for more chastising by the court in the future.

Grading schools, arming teachers and continuing with our State's obsession with testing does nothing to restore the cuts to K-12 funding of over \$2.6 billion during the last five years and

does nothing towards meeting the State's Paramount Duty. Washington classrooms remain the fourth-most crowded in the nation and Washington ranks 43rd in per-pupil spending. These are all distractions to avoid dealing with the real problem and our legislators must hear from all of us the message: "FULLY FUND EDUCATION NOW."

As we know from experience, nothing is safe while this Legislature is in session and that includes our pensions. Will the Legislature help balance the state budget by not funding pensions or eliminating benefits as they have done in the past? Will they once again illegally take from our pensions to balance the budget?

There are currently 13 bills in the Legislature that deal in some way with pensions. Seven of these are bills that WEA and WEA-Retired support such as a bill that would allow Plan 2 members who separate from service access to enrollment in state health plans, and a bill that would provide the Rule of 85 to determine full retirement eligibility. So far there are no bills that would negatively impact current retirees. While our emphasis is on the need for the State to address the underfunding of Plan 1, we must remain vigilant against any pension take ways that may still raise up to smack us. The DRS website www.drs.wa.gov/legislative has an updated page on retirement issues in the Legislature. Please stay informed and take action. Visit www.ourvoicewashington.org daily. Subscribe to the Our Voice Action blog. Let our legislators know that their diversionary bills and bad bills will not distract us from our message to them: "FULLY FUND EDUCATION NOW" and "HANDS OFF OUR PENSIONS!"

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WEA-Retired

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Website
www.washingtonea.org/retired

Mailing address:
P.O. Box 9100
Federal Way, Wa 98063-9100



Washington Education Association Political Action Committee

Membership Information (required)

Name _____ Home E-mail Address or Phone Number _____
 Home Address _____ School District/Employer _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Local Association _____
 Job Title _____

Contribution Options—There are two ways to become a member:

Option 1: Easy Pay – A monthly WEA-PAC contribution from your checking account

VOIDED CHECK REQUIRED IF CHOOSING OPTION 1

Make the minimum contribution by choosing your employee category.

- K-12 certificated staff, full-time higher education staff, WEA staff, UniServ or affiliated staff: **\$1.67 per month.**
 ESP staff, part-time higher education staff, WEA-Retired or WEA Student: **\$1.25 per month.**

OR help us speak louder and choose a higher monthly contribution.

- \$4 \$6 \$10 (silver) \$20 (gold)

AND support national efforts by adding a monthly contribution to your federal PAC, The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education.

- \$1 \$2 \$5 \$10

VOIDED CHECK REQUIRED IF CHOOSING OPTION 1

I hereby authorize the WASHINGTON EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (WEA) to initiate debit entries to my checking account indicated below and the credit union/bank named below, hereinafter called BANK, to debit the same to such account. I will not hold BANK liable for any erroneous debits made by the WEA.

Conditions: This authorization is to remain in full force and effect until BANK has received written notification from me of its termination in such time and in such manner as to afford BANK a reasonable opportunity to act on it. A customer has the right to stop payment of a debit entry by notification to BANK prior to charging account. After account has been charged, a customer has the right to have the amount of the erroneous debit immediately credited to his/her account by BANK up to fifteen (15) days following issuance of statement or forty-five (45) days after the charge, whichever occurs first. Deductions will be made on the 10th day of the month, except when the 10th falls on a weekend or holiday, in which case the deduction will occur on the next business day.

Signature _____ Date _____

Thank you for joining WEA-PAC. Your contribution works to support children and public education.

Signature (required)

Conditions: I understand that contributions to WEA-PAC and to The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education ("NEA Fund") are voluntary; making a contribution is neither a condition of membership in the Association nor of employment; and that members have a right to refuse to contribute without suffering any reprisal. WEA-PAC and NEA Fund use the contributions which they collect for political purposes, including, but not limited to, in the case of WEA-PAC supporting friends of public education who are candidates for state and local office, and in the case of NEA Fund making contributions to and expenditures on behalf of candidates for federal office. Although NEA Fund suggests an annual contribution of \$12.00, this is only a suggestion; a member may contribute more or less than the suggested amount or not at all without affecting his or her membership status, rights, or benefits in NEA or WEA.

Federal law requires The NEA Fund to use its best efforts to collect and report the name, mailing address, occupation, and name of employer for each individual whose contributions aggregate in excess of \$200 in a calendar year.

Contributions or gifts to the WEA-PAC and NEA Fund for Children and Public Education are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes.

Signature _____ Date _____

Tear off top (white) copy and return to WEA-PAC in the envelope provided or mail to: WEA-PAC, P.O. Box 9100, Federal Way, WA 98063-9100



Option 2: Annual Contribution

The WEA-PAC membership year is September through August.

If using Option 2, choose your method of payment:

- Cash Check VISA MasterCard

If you prefer to make your contribution as a lump sum, choose your employee category.

- K-12 certificated staff, full-time higher education staff, WEA staff, UniServ or affiliated staff: **\$20 annual.**
 ESP staff, part-time higher education staff, WEA-Retired or WEA Student: **\$15 annual.**

OR help us speak louder and choose a higher contribution.

- \$48 \$72 \$120 (silver) \$240 (gold) Other \$ _____
 (Make **separate** check payable to WEA-PAC.)

AND support national efforts by adding a contribution to your federal PAC, The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education.

- \$12 \$24 \$60 \$120 Other \$ _____
 (Make **separate** check payable to NEA-FCPE.)

If using a credit card, fill in the following:

Account number _____

Expiration date ____ / ____

Exact name on card _____

Signature of cardholder _____



Automatic Credit Card Renewal Option

- I hereby authorize WEA-PAC to deduct the amount indicated above annually in the month of September from the credit card listed above. Such deductions will cease upon written notification no less than 30 days prior to the scheduled deduction date.

Note: Credit card information obtained from WEA members is used only to charge credit card accounts for authorized contributions to WEA-PAC and/or The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education. This information is held in strict confidentiality and will under no circumstances be transferred to third parties.

Member Notices

Alert regarding benefit phone calls

In the past few weeks, we have heard from members who received phone calls from someone implying that he has information on benefits that school retirees may be missing. He told at least one person that he was “hired” by a state retiree group and wanted to set up an appointment.

Neither WEA nor WEA-Retired are responsible for these calls. After checking with the Executive Director of Washington State School Retirees’ Association (WSSRA), he confirmed that the person making the calls is probably an employee of the company that WSSRA employs to provide their association benefits. The company is Association Member Benefits Advisors (AMBA).

Again, these calls are not sponsored by WEA or WEA-Retired or NEA/NEA-Retired but are from a company hired by WSSRA. If you are interested in member benefits, go to the NEA Member Benefits website www.neamb.com to register, and check out the benefits available to you as a WEA and NEA-Retired member.

NEA Member Benefits has the negotiating power of an NEA membership of over 3 million and works only for us. NEA Member Benefits offers valuable discounts and programs including finance, insurance, shopping and travel.

If you do receive one of these phone calls, consider very carefully whether or not you wish to invite this person into your home. And resist buying anything from him before you have compared the products they are selling with what is available from NEA Member Benefits.

The best option is probably to not make the appointment as what they are offering will not beat what is available from NEA Member Benefits.



Litigation update as of Feb. 19, 2013

by Kit Raney, WEA-Retired president

Gainsharing - Our (WEA, WFSE and Costello plaintiffs) Response Brief is due February 28 at the State Supreme Court. The State will then have the opportunity to write a Reply Brief. The date for the Oral argument has not been set yet.

In the Uniform COLA case, the parties have entered an Order (the document that has to be filed to finalize a ruling before an appeal can be filed) in the trial court commemorating Judge Wickham’s ruling. The parties are discussing next steps as there are some issues that remain at the trial court. However, it is certain that the State will appeal the trial court’s ruling.

Watch for mailing

Some of you will be receiving a mailing from WEA-Retired in the next week or two. The purpose of the mailing is to get updated email addresses for our members. If you receive the mailing, it is because we do not have a working email address for you or you have “unsubscribed” so that we are not allowed to send email to you.

Please read the letter and return the postage paid card so that we will have an updated email address for you and we will be better able to communicate with you. Thank you!

Calling all Bloggers

Do you maintain a blog or website of your own? Let us know! There will be a listing of member blogs and websites in the next issue. Don’t hide your light under a bushel.

The state of our pensions

by Kit Raney, WEA-Retired President

Our pensions are important. As retirees, we rely on them in order to pay our bills, and those still working and paying into their pensions assume that those pensions will be there for them when they retire. With all of the news about pensions in other states, what about our Washington state pensions?

The following is information from a report, "State of the State's Pension System," issued on January 25 of this year by State Actuary Matt Smith. The entire report is available at:

http://osa.leg.wa.gov/Actuarial_Services/Publications/Presentations.htm

There is also information from a report by the Washington State Investment Board (WSIB). They manage our pension funds. Find this report at http://www.sib.wa.gov/wsib_story.pdf

Here are some highlights from the Actuary's report:

- Our state is a national leader in pensions and is one of the top four funded nationally.

- Since 1956, pension promise has been deemed a contractual right (Bakenhus case, State Supreme Court).

- Funded status as of June 30, 2011 – All pension plans funded above 100% except for PERS Plan 1 (71%) and TRS Plan 1 (81%).

- Pension plans require consistent, stable, and adequate funding to remain affordable (for the state).

- From 1992 to 2011, the state did not contribute the actuarially required contribution rate in 12 out of those 20 years.

- The Pension Trust earned investment returns of 13.2 and 21.1 percent for fiscal years ending June 30, 2010 and 2011.

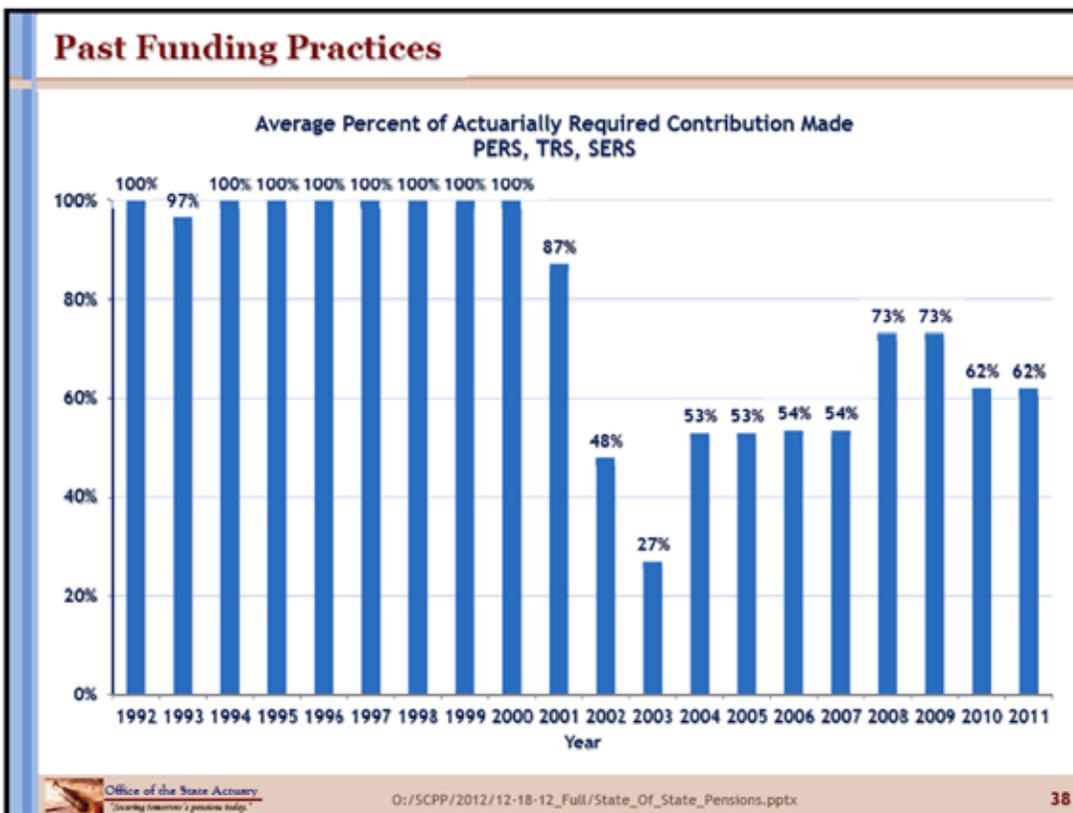
And from the report by the Washington State Investment Board:

- As of September 30, 2012, investment returns in the Comingled Trust Fund are 8.54% since June 1992.

So what does this mean in plain English? The state will have to pay our pensions even

if the fund runs out of money. The WSIB does a great job and the 8.54% growth is above the assumption of 8% needed to fund the pensions. While we always made our required pension contributions, the state did not make their required contributions which resulted in a smaller pot of money growing at that 8.54%.

If you enjoy reading information about our pensions, watch for links to more sources of pension information in our next newsletter.



News for Members

The Year in Review: How federal issues of importance to NCTR fared in 2012

From National Council on Teacher Retirement E-News, Dec. 19, 2012

Public pensions continued to be the subject of attention and attack in Washington, DC, during 2012, both on Capitol Hill as well as at a number of Federal agencies. Unlike the previous year, Congressional hearings on governmental plans were not held, but a number of Congressional studies and reports focused on public pensions in 2012.

Legislatively, despite one notable exception discussed below, no major efforts were made to approve bills designed to address state and local governmental pension issues. However, given that the lame duck session of the 112th Congress has yet to complete its work as of this writing, there could still be attempts to include such legislation in any last-minute deals that are

completed before the end of this year.

On the Federal regulatory front, there was some good news as long-disputed proposals appeared to finally be breaking in favor of public pension plans. But other agency challenges appeared to be more difficult to resolve in 2012, and in some cases, may ultimately require legislative responses in 2013.

All in all, a very busy year! Following is a brief synopsis of selected Congressional as well as Federal agency actions of interest to NCTR members during 2012, and their current status.

Go to <http://nctrfederalenews.blogspot.com/2012/12/the-year-in-review-how-federal-issues.html> to read the rest of this important article.

WEA-PAC fuels public education campaigns

*Adapted from
OurVoiceWashingtonEA.org*

With the legislative session under way, it is easy to see why our election work is so critical. The people we helped elect are part of the decision making regarding a slew of education and pension proposals, both good and bad.

You can follow their actions and antics on the OurVoice blog page www.ourvoicewashingtonea.org, or by signing up to receive the blog posts and action alerts on that same page.

The WEA-PAC board has set a goal of increasing membership by 5,000 before April 28. You can help by completing the form on page 3 and sending it in with your check.



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Lake Wenatchee book club thrives

by Nancy M. Miller, WE ... Too Editor

Lake Wenatchee Book Group meets once a month, in the evening, in our members' homes. We've been getting together since 2007.

We started with one rule: the gathering was not to become an eating and drinking club. Although we enjoy our hosts' generosity, and do nibble and sip, we are there to discuss books. We socialize for one half hour as we gather, then we discuss the book: there are also no side discussions.

We generally have our book list sketched out five or six months in advance. We choose our books rather informally. Usually someone has read the book, or read a book review. We try for a certain amount of balance and a certain amount of diversity in our choices: popular/classic, fiction/nonfiction, genre/literary, and now we have an evening scheduled with a choice from juvenile fiction, enhanced by our own favorites from childhood. Before one December, a member suggested a poetry reading aloud rather than a book discussion; we tried it, we liked it, and we've done it in December every year since. I think we all would say that the real pleasure of that month is the search for the poems. In our busy time, immersion in poetry is a real luxury.

The person advocating the book often also facilitates the discussion: that means find-

ing out information about the author, and having a few questions to ask should the discussion lag. Often the discussion has no evident facilitator. A very lengthy book (Goodwin's *Team of Rivals*, or Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* are examples) may be divided in half and discussed over two meetings.

We also have a fall-back position of three questions. We seem to use it if the conversation wanders, or is sluggish, or if the book seems like it will be difficult. The procedure is for each member to write down and put a question about the book that s/he would like to hear answered in a hat. Then we go around the participant circle three times: 1) each member identifies the most memorable part of the book for him/her, and says why; 2) each member draws a question out of the hat, and answers it; 3) each member says whether or not s/he liked the book, and why. Frequently the conversation livens so much that we do not get to #3, or even #2. On occasion, when a movie is available, we have shortened the discussion and viewed parts of the cinematic version.

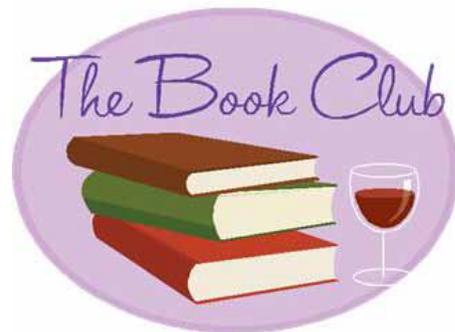
Our group's regulars are five men and seven women,

scattered in age from late 40s to late 70s. We come from a variety of family origins and a variety of life experiences. We are politically and religiously diverse. We have a couple of occasional members, who come depending on book choice, and some "lurkers" who receive our e-mail postings but do not attend (perhaps they will some day). We all live in the same neighborhood, if a neighborhood stretches ten or so miles in all directions.

I think that the diversity of our group keeps our reading fresh and interesting, and our conversation dynamic. We have read Westerns ('guy' book), novels of manners ('girl' book), science fiction ('nerd' book), mysteries ('popular' book), classics ('literary' book), and current issues ('politico' book). We are careful not to become focused

too much on one type of writing, and to appeal to the interest of each and all of our members, from time to time.

I think that for all of our members, book group night is a "regular" on the schedule that other events get scheduled around. I know how much I look forward each month to the assurance of getting together with my friends.





WEA-Retired Newsletter
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The only retired organization affiliated with WEA and NEA

