

This Week in Olympia (1/12/18)

The 2018 legislative session began Monday, Jan. 8. It's a 60-day supplemental budget year. Thanks to the election victory of Sen. Manka Dhingra, Democrats now narrowly control both the House and the Senate for the first time in five years.

In his state of the state speech Tuesday, Gov. Jay Inslee highlighted his plan to boost K-12 funding by \$1 billion, which WEA supports.

On Wednesday, more than 120 WEA members came to Olympia and hand-delivered WEA's Unity Agenda to more than half of the state's 147 legislators. Sen. Dhingra thanked WEA members for their support, and she vowed to fight for quality public schools in the Legislature this year.

WEA members can support the Unity Agenda by emailing their own legislators on our key priorities:

- [Support equal bargaining rights for community and technical college faculty.](#)
- [Tell legislators to support Gov. Inslee's \\$1 billion supplemental budget.](#)
- [Take action to support WEA-Retired.](#)

Here's what happened this week in Olympia (Jan. 8-12):

United for Students

WEA testified in support of [Senate Bill 5689](#), which will help protect immigrant students and their families. The bill is sponsored by Senate K-12 & Early Learning Committee Chair Lisa Wellman, and it is a WEA priority bill.

WEA also testified in support of [House Bill 1488](#) and Senate Bill 5074, which ensure that non-resident college students have access to financial aid.

[House Bill 1508](#), Breakfast after the Bell, was the first bill to pass out of the state House of Representatives this year. Educator and WEA member [Rep. Monica Stonier](#) of Vancouver is the prime sponsor.

"We know that kids can't learn if they're hungry," Stonier said.

WEA supports the bill, which provides breakfast to students in low-income schools. The House passed the bill last year, too, but Senate Republicans blocked it. WEA also testified in support of the Senate version, [SB 6003](#).

United for K-12 Classified and Certificated Employees

WEA President Kim Mead testified in support of Gov. Inslee's supplemental budget, which would add another \$1 billion for K-12 salaries. She appeared before both the Senate and House budget committees.

“We are glad the governor’s budget includes the funding needed to fully implement the state’s school funding plan by September of this year. Competitive compensation is necessary to attract and keep caring, qualified and committed educators to teach and work in schools,” Mead said.

WEA testified in support of [Senate Bills 6090](#) and [6095](#), the capital budget, which includes school construction funding. Senate Republicans blocked passage of the capital budget last year in an unrelated fight over water rights, delaying some school construction projects.

Rep. Laurie Dolan has introduced [House Bill 2717](#) and Sen. Sam Hunt has introduced [SB 6397](#), which make much-needed improvements to the McCleary school funding plan and budget the Legislature approved last year. The bill would make changes to the new teacher salary allocation formula and the salary regionalization formula, and it would provide more flexibility for school levies, ensure phase-in of I-1351 – all of which are part of WEA’s Unity Agenda. The bill was just introduced, which means no hearings are scheduled yet.

Superintendent of Public Instruction Chris Reykdal also introduced his McCleary funding-related legislation this week ([HB 2717/SB 6362](#)). It corrects implementation issues at the state level, postpones reductions in local school district levies by one year, expands levy capacity in future years, and delays K-3 class size reduction compliance by one year.

United for aspiring educators

[House Bill 1827](#) is a comprehensive bill that includes conditional student loans and loan forgiveness for college students who become educators. Loan forgiveness is a WEA Unity Agenda priority, and WEA supports that part of the bill.

What’s happening next week in Olympia (Jan. 15-19)

Monday

United for Students

WEA members are organizing a [Justice for Children Rally](#) on Martin Luther King Day, Monday, Jan. 15, on the Capitol steps.

According to WEA members organizing the rally, “WEA members fight every day for racial and social justice. The #Justice4Children Rally is organized by our independent caucuses who believe that public education provides the best platform to advance racial and social justice so that all students and their families have the opportunity to succeed.”

For nearly two decades, WEA members have supported legislation removing tests as a high school graduation requirement. On Monday at 1:30 pm, [Senate Bill 6144](#) has a hearing in the Senate education committee. WEA support the bill, which removes “the statewide assessments as a high school graduation requirement,” according to the official bill digest.

In a notable move, the Washington State Board of Education voted this week to support delinking tests from high school graduation.

United for Higher Education

[Senate Bill 5993](#) provides full and equal collective bargaining rights for community and technical college faculty. The bill will be heard in the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee Jan. 15 at 1:30 pm. It's WEA's top policy bill priority. Prime sponsor Sen. Karen Keiser spoke to WEA members at our Day of Unity this week.

"We have been trying to change this for 10 years but it kind of sometimes takes that long to educate others on the issue. We're going to try to get this done this year – we're going to work across the aisle" Keiser said.

"Our college teachers work really hard and spend a lot of time caring about us, their students. They should be paid fairly and have the chance to have a say in that," said Lily James, a student at Lower Columbia College.

[HB 1237](#) is the House version, sponsored by retired educator and WEA member Mike Sells.

Tuesday

United for retired educators

On Tuesday, the Senate Ways and Means Committee will hold a hearing on several bills that would allow retirees who retired using the 2008 early retirement factors to work in retirement for under selected circumstances.

WEA and WEA-Retired support these changes to retirement rules that would allow expert educators to continue to serve Washington students when their expertise is needed. They include [Senate Bill 5310](#), [SB 5487](#) and [SB 5601](#).

[House Bill 1560](#) will be heard in the House Appropriations Committee on Wednesday. This bill would make the defined contribution plan (Plan 2) the default pension option for individuals who do not make an active selection among retirement plans. WEA and WE- Retired have supported this bill sponsored by Rep. Stanford in prior years and will testify on Wednesday.