

2015-17 Biennium final budget agreement brief summary from the OurVoice Action Team blog

The overall adopted budget for the 2015-17 biennium is \$38.2 billion. That represents a \$4.4 billion increase in resources overall — or 13.1% above the 2013-15 enacted budget. The K-12 portion of the budget increased by \$2.9 billion (up 19%) — and higher education is up \$427 million (up 13.8%) in state funding.

In summary — a significant amount of money is being invested in public education for the next two years. Unfortunately it falls short in many ways:

- The investments aren't always the right ones (investments in supplies instead of people),
- Some of the investments are temporary (a part of the K-12 salary increase and the ability to use local funding for increments at the community colleges), and
- Some very important investments are not made at all (K-12 staffing beyond grades K-3).

We have work to do at the local level this summer and fall to ensure the investments made by school districts are the right ones for our staff and students.

And here are the details regarding pensions and the Medicare subsidy:

The HCA retiree subsidy (the monthly remittance to the Health Care Authority to support retiree health benefits) is currently \$66.64 per month. That amount is reduced slightly in the first year to \$65.25 per month in 2015-16 and then increased to \$70.45 per month in 2016-17.

The monthly subsidy for retirees eligible for Medicare is maintained at the current rate of \$150 per month. Originally, the Senate had proposed reducing that rate to \$110 per month, but that proposed cut to retiree health care did not remain in the final budget.

Have you thought about substituting?

by WEA-Retired President, Kit Raney

Earlier this month you should have received a letter from WEA President Kim Mead and me telling you about the substitute shortage across our state and encouraging you to think about substituting. This is not just a problem in our state, it is a problem nationwide. It is a result of the improving economy, educators retiring at a later age and, in our state, the restrictions that prevent educators who retired under the 2008 early retirement factors and are not yet age 65 from substituting.

The enclosure which accompanied the letter detailed “post-retirement work implications” and these are important to review if you are considering substituting. We have also posted this on our website www.washingtonea.org/retired.

If you are interested in being a substitute, your service would be greatly appreciated. If you have questions, talk with some of your former colleagues who might be subbing or visit your former school and talk to educators or the principal. It is a “seller’s market” and you are the seller. I know some retirees who only substitute at their former school and some who only substitute if they know ahead of time. Whatever you decide would work for you will be appreciated.

From the president's desk

by *WEA-Retired President, Kit Raney*

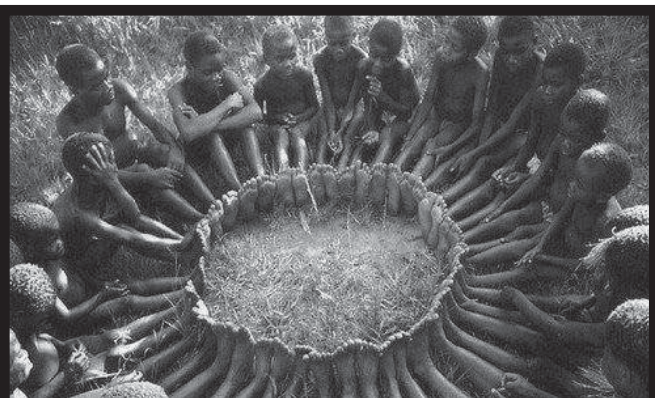
I like Facebook. I like seeing pictures of my friends' grandchildren and re-connecting with high school friends who live in other states. I like posting pictures of my dogs. I also find that I enjoy (and "like" or "share") articles and quotes that I would probably not run across if not for Facebook. Below is something that I am sharing because it touched me.

I have no idea where this picture originally came from (before Facebook) so cannot give the photographer credit. I did find it on several other websites and no credit was included.

I found out a little more from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

Ubuntu (/ʊˈbuːntʊ/ uu-boon-tuu; Zulu pronunciation: [ùbùnt'ù])[1][2] is a Nguni Bantu term roughly translating to "human kindness." It is an idea from the Southern African region which means literally "human-ness," and is often translated as "humanity toward others," but is often used in a more philosophical sense to mean "the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity".[3]

In Southern Africa, it has come to be used as a term for a kind of humanist philosophy, ethic



An anthropologist proposed a game to the kids in an African tribe. He put a basket full of fruit near a tree and told them that whoever got there first won the sweet fruits. When he gave them the signal to run they all took each other's hands and ran together, then sat in a circle enjoying their treats. When he asked them why they chose to run as a group when they could have had more fruit individually, one child spoke up and said: "UBUNTU, how can one of us be happy if all the other ones are sad?"

'UBUNTU' in the Xhosa culture means: "I am because we are"

or ideology, also known as Ubuntuism or Hunhuism (the latter after the corresponding Shona term) propagated in the Africanization (transition to majority rule) process of these countries during the 1980s and 1990s. Since the transition to democracy in South Africa with



WEA-Retired President, Kit Raney

the Nelson Mandela presidency in 1994, the term has become more widely known outside of Southern Africa, notably popularized to English language readers by Desmond Tutu (1999).

I also found a Ted Talk about Ubuntu — <http://blog.ted.com/further-reading-on-ubuntu/>. How wonderful society would be if we all lived by the Ubuntu philosophy. Our society is amazingly giving in a crisis. When there is a crisis, people willingly pitch in to help neighbors or even people they do not know. What if that was the everyday standard? The one-percenters would be lobbying the Legislature for a tax on capital gains, business owners would be calling for the \$15 minimum wage and paid parental and sick leave. Universal healthcare and daycare would be the norm and homelessness a thing of the past. Public schools and public transportation would be fully funded and highly valued.

Maybe I've been out in the sun too much this summer but I am going to consciously try to incorporate more Ubuntu into my life. Maybe to start I will be a little more gracious to the person stealing my parking place or will donate a little more time and money to causes that are important to me. What can you do?

2015 NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA Representative Assembly



NEA-Retired sent six elected delegates to these annual meetings held June 28 through July 6 in Orlando, Florida. The delegates were Karle Warren, Evelyn Horne, Kit Raney, Sharon N. White, Maureen Ramos and Joe Ramos who came from all parts of our state. Below is a compilation of their thoughts and impressions of these meetings. The name of the delegate's UniServ Council is listed next to their name.

Evelyn Horne — Riverside

What stood out in my mind from the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting was our visit from President Lily Eskelsen Garcia, Vice President Becky Pringle and Secretary-Treasurer

Princess Moss. They took time out of their busy schedules to address the retired delegation. They outlined the challenges that are facing NEA and NEA-Retired. They updated us on the Supreme Court case *Fredricks vs. State of California*, which concerns agency fee pay. A negative decision could impact payroll deduction of NEA and WEA membership dues. Action that was suggested was getting agency fee teachers signed up as members. After lunch on Sunday we heard from Director of NEA Government Relations, Mary Kusler. Mary is a powerhouse! She used touches of humor when reporting on serious topics such as ESEA and the Supreme Court Case. She urged delegates to contact our members of Congress. Mary was a favorite of the delegates.

I had a chance to meet with retirees from other states and it was good to know that the other states are working on membership and organizing, too.

Sharon N. White — Chinook

The part of NEA RA that I liked the best and moved me was the Teacher of the Year, Shanna Peoples', speech. She started with a story about a young girl who had many troubles and trials going to school. She had me in tears and then she revealed that the student she was talking about was herself and the people who had helped her. She was an inspiration and she emphasized what we have said all along that we need to tell the stories of our students and the teachers who teach them. The stories are moving and bring emotion to the problems that education is facing. Stories are a memorable way to get people involved with our problems. Stories are the hook that gets people to listen to what we are saying. Shanna certainly did that and I believe we all can, too.

If you are interested in reading the complete text and watching video of the speeches given at the NEA RA, go to <http://ra.nea.org/speakers-speeches/>. The keynote address by NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia is wonderful.

2015 NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA Representative Assembly continued

Karle Warren — Southeast

WOW, what a sight! A whole ballroom at the Hyatt Regency in Orlando, Florida with a multitude of tables filled with retired school employees from around the United States and one of the fastest growing membership categories in NEA.

We have many outstanding people working with us at NEA and one of those is Mary Kusler, director of NEA Government Relations. She gave a spell-binding report on Congress in action or not and the impact on students, employees, retirees and communities when dealing with education. She praised the NEA-Retired for their call to action with phone calls, email, personal visits and dedication in helping those active members in the field of education.

I had the honor of receiving an invitation to attend the 4th Annual Top Political Activist “Thank You” Reception on July 1. The reception was for recognition of my activism in campaigns and legislative advocacy during the past year. I was very pleased to represent WEA-Retired at this reception

Thank you for the opportunity to represent you at the NEA-Retired annual meeting!

Maureen Ramos — Spokane

NEA: UNITE, INSPIRE, LEAD! About 7,000 educator delegates gathered in hot and muggy Orlando for the largest democratic assembly in the world to do the business of supporting the best teaching and learning for our public school students. The Washington state delegates were active participants in the process with numerous New Business Items leading to times at the mics and on the big screen!

New NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia, at the podium for her first RA, brought humor, grace and order to some difficult debate. “We are the circulating blood and the beating heart of the cause of public education,” stated Lily as she urged us to take power of our numbers, unite and lead to a future that respects the whole child, the whole community and respects the education employees doing the job.

Some highlights of the RA include a Constitutional Amendment which revised representation on NEA committees formerly “comprised of 75% classroom teachers” being changed to be “comprised of at least one classroom teacher and one Educational Support Professional.” This Amendment had been brought to the RA for the past two years but had failed. The third time was the charm as committee membership now can be representative based on the focus of the committee’s task/assignment.

The Student Success Task Force report took on the current narrow focus on testing and its impact of equity and access. The bottom line of the report explained for every student to have success there must be a shared responsibility for how our school system will best serve students. All hands on deck!

This RA set a new record of the amount of money spent on New Business items of which there were 123. Additionally there were NBIs A-D, fourteen Legislative Amendments, sixteen Resolution Amendments, plus other Policy, Standing Rule and Constitutional Amendments ... that is a lot of democratic debate! I am pleased to report the debate was professional and courteous.

Members are lucky to have NEA Executive Director John Stocks who is passionate and articulate. His message was that educators are part of a “New American Majority” that is demanding action on a wide range of economic and social justice issues.

“This movement is fueled by growing income inequality, the scourge of racial injustice, attacks on our voting rights, a political system rigged to benefit the wealthy and powerful, the corporate takeover of our public school system and the threat of global climate change,” Stocks said as he urged delegates to advocate for our students by telling our stories.

A full explanation of RA action, elections and speeches can be found on the NEA website at www.nea.org. Thank you for electing me to attend!

Joe Ramos and Maureen Ramos — Spokane

While the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA RA were both informative and, as always, full of surprises, there was an area of concern for those of us from Washington state. Washington state is unable to tap into support from NEA’s political dollars for things like I-1351 because a lawsuit several years ago forbids our state organization access to those funds. In order to get financial support from NEA for Washington state, dollars are taken from the NEA Contingency Fund.

The cost of New Business Items (NBIs) passed by the RA has averaged around \$350,000 over the past 6 or so years. The 2014 RA did go beyond that amount with the cost of NBIs reaching into the \$800,000 range. The high cost of NBIs requires the NEA to dip into the Contingency Fund, which is budgeted at around 3 million. However, this year was simply CRAZY. Even with WEA President Kim Mead and other state delegates reminding our delegation to be aware of costs, the 2015 delegates, nationwide, passed NBIs totaling \$1,413,422 — about half of the total NEA Contingency Fund. Additionally the total cost of 2015 NBIs referred to the appropriate committees adds another \$182,226. While there may have been merit in most NBIs, there seemed to be no regard to impact on NEA’s budget.

Those of us representing WEA-Retired are concerned with the nonchalance of the spending frenzy. There needs to be a direct teaching element in state caucus meetings regarding budget impacts of NBIs. Delegates/members need to realize the NEA cannot afford to offer a blank check to pay for wish lists.

Kit Raney — Pilchuck

As you can see from the reports above, it was a very full 10 days. Walking into the assembly filled with thousands of other members passionate about our profession, still gives me chills. It is democracy in action and can, at times, be slow and messy. As always, I was very proud of our WEA-Retired delegates and the whole WEA delegation. They were attentive and involved throughout the long days of the assembly. Being a delegate to the NEA RA exemplifies the WEA-Retired motto of “Retire from your position, not your profession.” We still care deeply about what happens to our colleagues who are still working and to public education.



Pictured: Maureen Ramos, Joe Ramos, Sharon White and Karle Warren — July 4th on the floor of the RA.

NEA-Retired delegate nomination form for the 2016 and 2017 NEA-Retired annual meeting/NEA RA

NEA-Retired Annual Meeting/NEA Representative Assembly will be held in Washington, DC in 2016 and Boston, Massachusetts, in 2017.

Nominees must be retired and not hold a contract with a public school district. Nomination forms must be postmarked by Oct. 15, 2015. Nominees must agree to attend all sessions. All nominations must have the consent of the nominee. Self-nomination is acceptable. Delegates are elected to serve for two years. Delegates can submit a biography of 50 words or less. These will be printed in the November/December 2015 edition of WE ... too.

I nominate the following RETIRED member to be a delegate to the 2016 and 2017 NEA-Retired Annual Meetings/NEA Representative Assemblies.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip Phone (_____) _____

Email Address if available _____

UniServ Council Retirement Date _____

CHANGE IN DELEGATE FUNDING

WEA-Retired Board of Directors approved a new policy June 8, 2011, regarding the funding of delegates to the NEA-Retired Annual Meetings/NEA Representative Assemblies. In accord with that policy, WEA-Retired leadership has determined that WEA-Retired can afford to fully fund five delegates to the NEA-Retired Annual Meetings/NEA Representative Assemblies. If there are more than 5 nominees, then delegates will have some out-of-pocket expenses. Please check one of the following statements:

I understand I could have some out of pocket expenses and I am willing to cover those expenses.

I understand I could have some out of pocket expenses and I would prefer my name be removed if that is the case.

Return WEA Representative Assembly nomination forms to: Jan Curtis, 718 Russell Road, Snohomish, WA 98290-5617

DEADLINE: Forms must be postmarked no later than Oct. 15, 2015.

Do you need a lawyer? Learn more about the WEA Attorney Referral Program

We have received several inquiries about the Attorney Referral Program this summer. Below is information from the WEA website.

If you need a lawyer, the NEA provides WEA/NEA members with the services of an attorney at a discounted hourly rate. The Attorney Referral Program (ARP) is a service provided to NEA members (active, life, educational support or retired, their spouses and dependent children) who need services of an attorney on personal legal matters, i.e., not employment-related.

Participating ARP attorneys provide each member with two free 30-minute consultation sessions during each year of the program (Sept. 1 through Aug. 31). These two free consultations are taken separately and deal with two different questions. This benefit allows you to discuss your problem with an attorney to determine whether you need additional legal services. Do not expect the attorney to draft or review documents during a consultation. It is important to discuss any fee arrangements at your initial meeting.

If your problem falls within any of the areas listed below, the attorney's fees are discounted 30%:

- wills and estates;
- domestic relations;
- consumer protection; or
- traffic violations (includes DWI citations).

You may discuss almost any subject during one of your 30-minute conferences, although certain matters are excluded: member's business dealings; preparation of income tax returns; bankruptcies, or defense of criminal violations (other than traffic). The participating attorney will not represent a member in a suit against another member, the WEA, NEA affiliate, or a UniServ Council. The exception to this would be in a separation or dissolution of marriage if your spouse is also a NEA member. Court costs, attorney out-of-pocket expenses, filing and service fees are not covered. If you obtain your own attorney, you will not receive the discounted rate.

Upon your initial visit to the attorney's office, you must present some evidence of NEA membership. Payment for all legal fees is the responsibility of the member. The participating law firms can be found at www.washingtonea.org.

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