



Winter 2018



Connections

NEWS TO KEEP YOU ENGAGED IN THE PROFESSION YOU LOVE

Who we are and why we're here

Editorial by Barbara Galler

American labor unions' rise out of the excesses of the 19th century's Gilded Age had their strongest years in the middle of the 20th century. However with the 1980s' banking consolidations, the reduction of defined benefit pensions, and the subsequent rise of dramatic income inequality, union membership declined in the first two decades of the 21st century. The recent Supreme Court 5-4 Janus decision continues to threaten the demise of union membership even more.

Unions, including our own WEA, are standing tall in the face of big billionaire-backed PACs and anti-union think tanks that influence state legislators. Our local and state union leaders are reiterating to their membership what have probably become — especially to the younger workforce — ubiquitous benefits and rights, such as medical leave and 40-hour work weeks. Do today's members realize that even into the late 1960s and early 1970s, pregnant teachers had to leave their jobs when they "showed?"

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The President's Corner

By Neva Luke

WEA-Retired President

Election Day, Nov. 6, 2018, will go down in the history books for the largest turnout for a midterm election as well as the high number of women and educators who were elected. Once again, we were shown how important it is to vote. So many races were decided by a small number of votes! Indeed, as I write this, many races were still too close to call. I hope by the time you read this we know the outcome of all the ballot counts and recounts across the country.

Nevertheless, we do know that one key result in this election was that Democrats took control of the House of Representatives. With this shift, there will be one chamber of Congress which will work as a check on President Trump's agenda. National measures such as changes to Social Security or Medicare will not gain any traction with divided government in Washington, D.C. In addition, we should expect to see the House hold Education Secretary Betsy DeVos accountable for enforcing civil rights protections and to hold back budget authority for some of her other priorities.

We are lucky to have Maureen Ramos on a newly formed NEA-Retired Committee monitoring and keeping us informed about what is happening with these programs that are crucial to the well-being of retirees.

Here at home, the Washington House and Senate will start the 2019 legislative session with larger Democrat majorities. In the 2018 session, both chambers had razor-thin margins with essentially one-vote, Democrat majorities in each chamber. While Democrats passed major legislative priorities and made significant budget investments last year, the thin margins meant that every voice mattered, and any individual legislator could hold up a bill.

So what might this mean for the 2019 legislative session? We retirees want and need legislation to address our issues that have made little or no progress for years. There will also be high expectations from all democratic interests for positive actions to address issues in health care, homelessness, the opioid epidemic, mental health, tax structure, foster care, special education, school levies and the environment. Democrats will also be expected to protect union rights and support labor interests. With larger majorities, some bills will have an easier time passing when there no longer needs to be unanimity among the democratic caucuses. But even though it may be easier to pass bills, the state budget remains tight and will limit what can be passed in total.

This means that if we want our issues addressed we have to be very visible, very vocal, and very active to compete with the many groups that will be demanding time and attention from the legislators. Please do your part to push for legislation that will address what retired educators deserve and have spent a lifetime earning.

Legislative Work Team

By Lee Ann Prielipp

Each year the WEA-Retired President appoints a Legislative Work Team and Chairperson. As a group we work on fulfilling our assigned charges, including reviewing legislation that could impact retired members and then communicating our position to legislators, other elected officials and our retired members.

Key to achieving successful legislation includes involving all WEA-Retired members in the pursuit of our goals. Your continued contact with legislators through emails, attending Town Hall meetings and local visits to share your concerns and stories help to keep retiree issues in the forefront of their very busy agendas. Many of you actively worked to make this happen last session which certainly accounted for the eventual passage of a much-needed COLA for Plan 1 and an increase in the Medicare subsidy for all retirees in the PEBB program.

The Legislative Work Team is also charged with keeping our Board of Directors and other WEA-Retired members informed of issues affecting retirees which basically include pensions and healthcare. Our monthly meetings include legislator visits, on-going education about pension systems and pension issues and contacting state committees that influence pension policies. We also revise and update the WEA-Retired Legislative Goals for adoption by the WEA-Retired Board.

This coming legislative session will again provide challenges for us. With the McCleary Case settled, legislators are being bombarded from many, many groups who believe any available monies should be provided to their causes. As retirees we need to be there, too. Healthcare costs continue to consume much of our fixed retirement income and the Plan 1 COLA was passed only for one year. There are many other important issues including having new hires' default to Plan 2 instead of 3 and the ability of Plans 2 and 3 who retire early to be able to work in the public sector without penalty.

Our goal is to encourage you to be an influence with your legislators. Once again, WEA-Retired will join with RPEC (Retired Public Employees Council) for Lobby Day on Feb. 4, 2019. Members will visit their legislators from their legislative district as a team, along with their RPEC counterparts. WEA/WEA-Retired will be covering the costs of the first 50 members who send in the Lobby Day registration form, which must be postmarked by Jan. 11, 2019. To access the registration form and for more details, talk to your board director, go to the WEA-Retired webpage, or contact Neva Luke or Mary Lindsey. While you are on the Retired webpage, you can also join WEA-PAC.

The Legislative Work Team will continue its work and communicate positions to all involved. Whether you decide to email, visit, join in Lobby Days or attend local Town Hall meetings, your participation will be a necessity in helping pass recommended legislation.

2019 WEA-Retired Annual Meeting, Officers, and Board Directors Nomination Form

WEA-Retired will convene its annual meeting June 5-6, 2019, in Federal Way. This year, delegates will elect a president and vice president as well as board directors. There will also be an amendment to the constitution regarding membership.

Non-chapter units are: Kent (2), North Central (3), Puget Sound (7), Rainier (4), **Seattle (6), Soundview (2),** Spokane (3), **Summit (3),** Vancouver (4), WEA Cascade (5), **WEA Eastern Washington (6), WEA Lower Columbia (4),** WEA MidState (6), WEA Olympic (8), WEA Riverside (5), **WEA Sammamish (10) and WEA Southeast (7).** Board directors will be elected for the units in bold print. The number in parenthesis is the number of delegates the chapter is allowed in addition to the board director.

Chapter units are: Pilchuck (9), WEA Chinook (12), WEA Fourth Corner (9) and WEA Tacoma (4). The units in bold print will be electing a board director this year. The number in parenthesis is the number of delegates the chapter is allowed in addition to the board director. Chapter units should elect their delegates by **March 15, 2019.**

This form can be used for nominating delegates from ALL councils, board directors, president and vice president. Nominees for chapter units will be forwarded to the chapter leader to be included when the chapter elects its delegates. Non-chapter delegates will be elected during a meeting of WEA-Retired Board of Directors in January.

All nominees must be WEA-Retired members. More than one name can be submitted for each position. You can nominate yourself and/or another retired member. If you nominate someone other than yourself, you must have the consent of the nominee.

Mail the nomination form to: Diane Kanda, 4595 Wynn Rd., Bellingham, WA 98226. Nomination forms must be postmarked no later than Jan. 11, 2019.

2019 WEA-Retired Annual Meeting Nomination Form—Multiple Positions

Your Name _____ Retirement/Separation Date _____
Your email _____ Phone number _____

I nominate the following retired members for:

	Delegate to Annual Meeting	Chapter	Board Director	Chapter
1)				
2)				
3)				
4)				
	President	Chapter	Vice President	Chapter
1)				
2)				

WEA-Retired Delegate Nomination Form for the 2019 WEA RA

WEA Representative Assembly will be held April 25-27, 2019, in Spokane.

- Nominees for WEA-Retired delegate must be retired members and not hold a contract with a public school district.
- Nomination forms must be postmarked by Jan. 11, 2019.
- Nominees must agree to attend all sessions.
- All nominations must have the consent of the nominee. Self-nomination is acceptable.
- Delegates are elected annually to serve one year.

Your Name _____ Retirement/Separation Date _____

Your email _____ Phone number _____

I nominate the following RETIRED member(s) to be a delegate to the 2019 WEA Representative Assembly.

	Nominee	Chapter	Email
1)			
2)			
3)			

DELEGATE FUNDING

- WEA-Retired Board of Directors approved a policy change on June 6, 2018, regarding the funding of WEA-Retired delegates to the WEA Representative Assembly. The result of the change is that a delegate who needs lodging may have to cover a portion of the cost of the room.
- If this policy had been in effect for the 2018 WEA Representative Assembly, each of the 33 delegates who stayed at the delegate hotel would have been responsible for approximately \$18 per night based on double occupancy.
- Using 2018 hotel prices, WEA-Retired can afford to cover full hotel costs for 26 delegates for the 2019 WEA Representative Assembly.

o If there are more than 26 delegates who need hotel rooms, then delegates who need lodging will have to cover some of the costs.

o How much the out-of-pocket expense will be will depend on 1) the number of delegates who need lodging and 2) the cost of the room.

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.

Delegates will be given an approximate out-of-pocket amount as soon as hotel costs are known. At that time delegates will be asked again to confirm if they want to stay on the delegate list.

Return WEA Representative Assembly Nomination Forms to: **Diane Kanda, 4595 Wynn Rd., Bellingham, WA 98226.** Deadline: Forms must be postmarked no later than **Jan. 11, 2019.**

Member Spotlight: A trip to France

By Marj Njaa



Travel! That is the best advice I can give to anyone who has a curiosity about the world and its people! My husband and I have always loved to vacation, but since we've retired, we have made a commitment to travel. While travel is not always restful and relaxing, it provides us endless opportunities to learn about history, people and cultures. Along the way we have learned some new vocabulary and have tried to adopt some new attitudes.

We love Europe, so that is where most of our adventures take us.

This year we returned to France to spend time primarily in the Eastern region, but we began in Reims, which is a quick train ride from Paris. Reims is a beautiful place to recover from jet lag. Despite my difficulty in learning how to pronounce this city's name, I've found that the French are quite forgiving of my painful attempts to communicate in their language. Initially they may deny their English skills, but they quickly "remember" some English once they find that you're gamely giving the French language a good try.

If you are not a big fan of big cities, Reims is a perfect spot. It is certainly a city, but it has a cozy feel. We were charmed by the many fountains on the pedestrian streets leading to the Cathedral Notre-Dame de Reims, which was restored after World War I. I was especially taken with the museum at the Palais du Tau. Among the myriad of beautiful artifacts related to the city's royal and religious history are the cathedral's gargoyle downspouts spewing lead. These are part of the remains from the bombing of the Cathedral during WW1. The heat from the resulting fires melted the lead roof. The liquid lead ran through the stone gargoyles and solidified, thus creating the spewing lead from monsters' mouths. The result is eerily beautiful. This was just one of many reminders of war that we experienced while visiting this now-serene area of France.

It is not unusual to turn a corner to find a plaque commemorating local soldiers or members of the resistance who lost their lives for France. "Mort pour la France" is a phrase we've encountered many times on plaques, memorials and grave markers. Seeing the pockmarks that were caused by bullets striking homes, churches, and shops somehow made those distant battles seem almost contemporary.

We then went to the Eastern region of France which has "changed hands" several times over the centuries, with Celtic, Roman, and Germanic powers waxing and waning. The resulting blend of influences is delightful. We were surprised by all the wonderful variety of cultural influences, and especially the foods! We enjoyed galettes that originated in Normandy, choucroute which is a French take on sauerkraut, and tarte flambée which is described as a pizza, but is something quite different. Our travels to these parts of France has helped us understand how the French are determined to remember, preserve and learn from their history.

Who we are and why we're here editorial ... continued

Here's a brief refresher on union-negotiated rights' history:

- Starting in the 1870s, workers began using effective united strategies to lower the work week hours that in many jobs added up to 61 hours. By 1937's Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), the 40-hour work week was federally established. Remember the matriarch in "Downton Abbey" asking incredulously: "Weekend? What's a weekend?" Let's just say TGIF to that!
- In the 1940-50s, union-negotiated fair wages established the growth of the middle class and kept a lid on the income gap that is prevalent today.
- By 1938, the FLSA established federally regulated child labor laws.
- In 1942's World War II period, the National War Labor Board capped wage increases. However, a new idea was born: "fringe benefits" in the form of health care. By 1950 half of companies with fewer than 250 employees offered health care benefits and two-thirds of companies with more than 250 employees offered health care.
- And better late than never, in 1993 the Family and Medical Leave Act was established, providing maternity/paternity, adoption, and medical unpaid time-off guarantees to employees in companies that had more than 50 workers.

The last election showed the power of grassroots organization and unity, especially here in Washington state. Unions have had an enormous role in setting up and maintaining a middle class economy and culture.

Let's remember our achievements and continue to work together to keep them.



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Important dates

Nomination forms due	Jan. 11, 2019
Lobby Day registration due	Jan. 11, 2019
WEA-Retired Executive Committee	Jan. 30, 2019 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
WEA-Retired Board Meeting	Jan. 31, 2019 9:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.
WEA-Retired Lobby Day (Olympia)	Feb. 4, 2019
WEA Representative Assembly (Spokane)	April 25-27, 2019
WEA-Retired Annual Meeting	June 5-6, 2019
NEA-Retired Annual Meeting (Houston)	June 30-July 1, 2019
NEA Representative Assembly (Houston)	July 3-7, 2019



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Connections is published by Washington Education Association-Retired four times a year. We invite your comments and contributions.

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