



# Connections

Spring 2016

NEWS TO KEEP YOU ENGAGED IN THE PROFESSION YOU LOVE

## 2016 Legislative Session Retiree Recap

The 2016 legislative 'short' session was the second year of the biennium. Here's a review of the 2015 and 2016 sessions, thanks to WEA Lobbyist Julie Salvi

### Recap of 2015 session: No changes for retirees

- While legislation was introduced, there was no action on Plan 1 COLA legislation. (HB 2138 and SB 6017)
- The final budget maintained PEBB subsidy for Medicare-eligible retirees at \$150 per month.
- The pension system was funded according to a phase in plan for new longevity assumptions. This investment is vital for maintaining a well-funded system.

- There was no action on Rule of 85, which would allow K-12 and state employees to retire with full benefits before

proposed by Rep. Ed Orcutt, R-Kalama, and was narrowly targeted to allow TRS retirees to work up to 630 hours as a

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*In a nutshell: No significant changes for retirees from 2016 legislative session in Olympia*

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the normal retirement age of 65 if their years of service and age add to 85. (HB 1542 and SB 5473)

- There was movement in the House to ease the return to work restrictions for those who retire using the 2008 early retirement factors (ERFs), but the bill stalled in the Senate. The proposal that moved (HB 1737) was

substitute teacher. There was no action on legislation that we had helped to propose, which would move all retirees to the same return to work rules – allowing all PERS, TRS, and SERS retirees to work up to 867 hours per year in any role. (HB 1615 and SB 5545)

*See Legislature, page 3*

# The President's Corner



WEA has had a campaign going on this year called “Membership Matters”

because, quite simply, membership does matter. During the recent WEA Representative Assembly, I, along with the help of three other WEA-Retired members, was given some time on the RA agenda to talk to delegates about why WEA-Retired membership matters. We began with some quotes from before we had a union ...

*In the 1960s, female teachers were often forced to quit if they got pregnant even though they were married. We had to wear dresses or skirts. And we were paid less than our male counterparts.*

*Back then, we didn't get planning time, and we had to work during lunch and take on other work without additional pay.*

*We didn't have real collective bargaining until 1975. Until then, educators had to settle for whatever their school boards*

*were willing to offer — and it wasn't much.*

The point was not to show how difficult things were before unions but rather to show how powerful being part of a union can be. Because we had a strong WEA and strong local unions, and because we collectively stood strong together, we were able to improve our working conditions. Things improved because we had a strong union.

We also know that while many things are better today, educators and public education now face a new set of challenges.

We want WEA members to know that, as retired educators, we're still working to improve the lives of our students, their families and the educators who serve them. We're proud to be WEA members, and we're proud to continue our advocacy for quality public schools. And WEA-Retired membership matters.

And we encouraged the delegates to join us, letting them know that regardless of how long they have until retirement, they can join WEA-Retired. Most importantly, we reminded them that no other retired educator organization in Washington is affiliated with WEA and enables them to maintain a lifetime commitment as a union member.



*WEA-Retired members share stories — and red licorice — with delegates at the 2016 WEA Rep Assembly.*

Being a union member throughout our career gave us a strong voice in our profession and in public education. We are not letting that that voice go quiet in retirement.

*Kit Raney*  
*WEA-Retired President*

## 2016 session for retirees was more of the same

- Plan 1 COLA and Rule of 85 were still active bills in the system, but did not gain traction in a supplemental budget year.
- A COLA for Plan 1 did not move forward and no study was funded to document the lost purchasing power in Plan 1 since the UCOLA was suspended.
- The Medicare subsidy remains at \$150 per month in the budget (no increase / no decrease).
- A study on retirement security for all Washingtonians was included in the final budget. The Department of Commerce will contract for a study of retirement preparedness of Washington residents based on region, age, race, type of employment, and income. The report must include estimates on impact on the state and local communities of any shortfalls in retirement savings or income, including on public budgets from a loss of economic activity by seniors.

The study is due by June 30, 2017.

- The change to allow early retirees who retired using the 2008 early retirement factors (ERFs) to work as substitutes for up to 867 hours per year passed as part of an omnibus teacher shortage bill (ESSB 6455). This change will not become effective until June 2016, and will expire by the end of the 2019-20 school year. *(See details in related article on page 4.)*
- A bill to change the pension plan default choice to Plan 2, instead of Plan 3, moved out of committee, but died on the House Floor.
- The Senate's proposal to merge LEOFF and TRS plans 1 was not enacted. But, the conference budget requires the Select Committee on Pension Policy to evaluate the proposal this interim and to report back to the Legislature by next January.
- Bills were introduced in the Senate again this year that would have allowed for the forfeiture or the garnishment of DRS covered pensions if

*See Legislature, page 7*

## Welcome, Connections

WEA-Retired leadership has spent much of winter working with experts on redesigning our materials, including our newsletter.

You should notice right away that *Connections* is completely different from our old *WE...* too. For starters, there's more color, photos and new features. And, the font size is larger — a direct change based on input from our members. We hope you will find the updated publication something you look forward to receiving and reading.

*Connections* will be mailed to members four times a year. Our electronic newsletter, eConnections, will arrive in your inbox each month between issues of our mailed newsletter.

We'd love to hear what you think, so please send any comments you have about the "new" newsletter to [WEARetired@WashingtonEA.org](mailto:WEARetired@WashingtonEA.org).





## 2008 ERFs and Substituting

By Sandy Kokko

Details of the change to allow early retirees who retired using the 2008 early retirement factors (ERFs) to work as substitutes for up to 867 hours per year that was passed as part of an omnibus teacher shortage bill (ESSB 6455):

1. The law covers only Plan 2 and Plan 3 teachers with 30 or more service credit years who retire using the 2008 ERFs.
2. The law removes the penalty of losing the monthly benefit.
3. Retirees will be able to substitute only. That means no retire/rehire, consulting, etc.
4. Retirees must be retired at least one calendar month before taking the first substituting job.
5. Retirees will be able to work

a maximum of 867 hours during a calendar year.

6. The law goes into effect in June (June 8 or 9) and sunsets on Aug. 1, 2020.
7. There are other provisions in the law that are directed at school districts. They concern such things as how much substitutes are paid as well as what and when districts must file reports with the state.

### How bad is the problem?

The state Superintendent of Public Instruction's Office conducted a school principal survey during fall of 2015 to collect data on the shortage of teachers and substitutes. Of those who responded: more than 90% said they were "in crisis" or "struggling" to find qualified educators for their classrooms.

## Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act

Since 1963 May has been Older Americans Month, a time to celebrate seniors and the anniversary of the Older Americans Act, which helps millions of people every year. This year's theme is "Blaze a Trail," which acknowledges the important contributions seniors have made to our community by daring to break the mold. To commemorate the occasion, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is focusing on wellness, securing your finances, reinvention, and civic engagement.

On April 19, President Obama signed into law the Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act, which funds Meals on Wheels, support for family caregivers, and transportation assistance.

"Signing the Older Americans Act reauthorization was a great

*See OMA, page 5*

# Prime time

## Retired educator Lee Ann Prielipp takes charge of life outside classroom

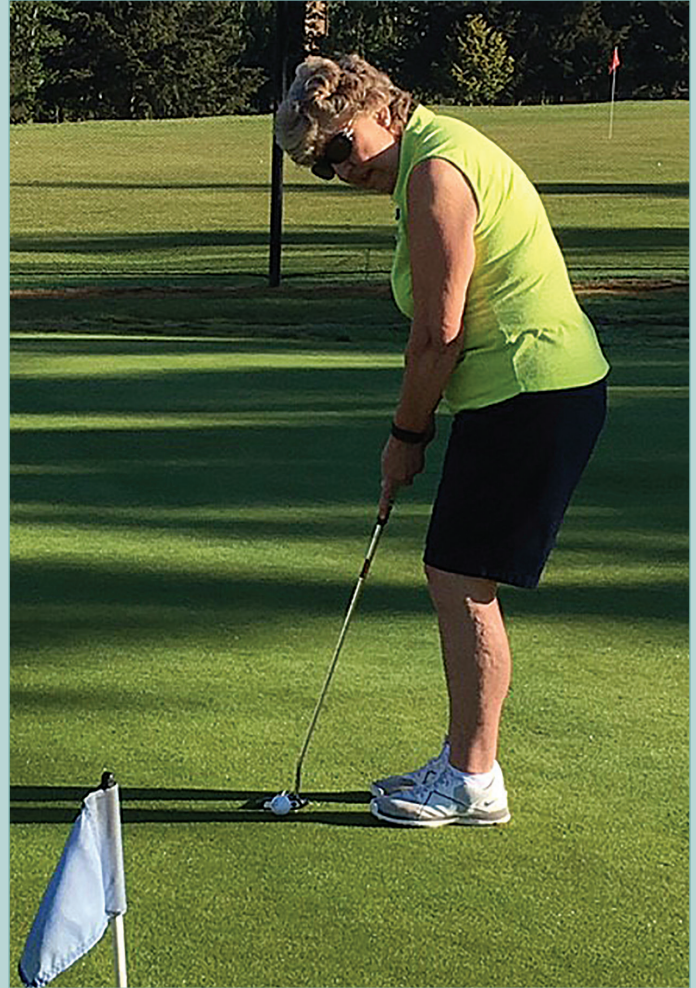
What does a person do after spending 27 years as a Federal Way teacher and union activist (and then eight years as WEA vice president and president)? If you are Lee Ann Prielipp, you continue your union involvement in WEA-Retired as chair of the Legislative Work Team.

But that's not all!

Since Lee Ann retired in 2001, she has represented retired educators on the Public Employees Benefit Board (PEBB) and is still serving as a member of the Harborview Board of Trustees.

Just so you don't think Lee Ann is all work and no play in retirement, you should know that she is an avid golfer playing in two weekly leagues

and two monthly leagues, recently returned from a trip to South America and is a Seahawks fan and season ticket holder and attended the Super Bowl.



*In addition to her volunteer roles, Lee Ann Prielipp also works on her new "career" on the greens.*

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*"At first retirement was almost scary. However, I have decided that retirement is totally what one makes of it and I'm loving all of it!"*

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Competing for her free time is her boat in which she enjoys speeding around Puget Sound on glorious days. Oh, and Lee Ann knows a thing or two about fine wine.

How are you spending your retirement? If you'd like to share and perhaps be featured in *Connections*, send an article about what you're doing to [WEARetired@WashingtonEA.org](mailto:WEARetired@WashingtonEA.org).

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*From OMA, page 4*

way to remind us of all the contributions retirees have made to our country," said Robert Roach Jr., president of the Alliance for Retired Americans.

"Increasing funding levels for the OAA programs by 6 percent over the next three years was even better."

For Older Americans Month

Resources, go to <http://oam.acl.gov/resources.html>

*Source: Alliance for Retired Americans Friday Alert*



# News from the *other* Washington

Educators in Washington state pay into Social Security and most are not impacted by the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP).

NEA supports repealing two Social Security Act amendments that negatively impact thousands of public employees, including many teachers and education support professionals. The GPO and WEP unfairly reduce or eliminate benefits that public employees or their spouses have earned and are expecting in retirement. They impact anyone who works in a public sector job and does not pay into Social Security for that job, but anticipates the Social Security benefits from another job they or their spouse held.

The GPO reduces public employees' Social Security spousal or survivor benefits by two-thirds of their public pension. The WEP reduces the earned Social Security benefits of an individual who also receives a public pension from a job not covered by

Social Security. NEA supported the 2015 Social Security Fairness Act, which would have completely repealed both the GPO and the WEP.

A measure that could save public servants thousands over the life of retirement, H.R. 711, did get a hearing this month but faces an uncertain future in Congress despite bipartisan support. (It is an election year.) If passed, H.R. 711 would start in 2017 and would not benefit those that never paid into Social Security.

U.S. Rep. Kevin Brady, R-The Woodlands, is the chair of the House Ways and Means Committee and sponsor of H.R. 711 that would repeal and replace the Windfall Elimination Provision, which Brady calls "wrong and unfair."

To find out more about this bill and GPO and WEP, go to [www.ssfairness.com/current-action/](http://www.ssfairness.com/current-action/). To find out more information



from NEA go to [www.nea.org/home/16491.htm](http://www.nea.org/home/16491.htm).

## Did you know?

***Social Security is the major source of income for most of the elderly.***

- Nearly 9 out of 10 individuals age 65 and older receive SS benefits.
- Social Security benefits represent about 39% of the income of the elderly.

***Social Security provides more than just retirement benefits.***

- Retired workers and their dependents account for 72% of total benefits paid in June 2015. Disabled workers and their dependents account for 15%.

# More changes ...



From the beginning of WEA-Retired, there have been two options for becoming a member. One could join as a Lifetime Member or an Annual Member. Lifetime Membership was available to both pre-retired members and retired members while an Annual Membership was only available for retired members. WEA-Retired has never had a monthly dues option for membership.

Beginning this September, retirees receiving a pension through the Washington State Department of Retirement Systems (DRS) may join WEA-Retired by having \$6.50 deducted monthly from their DRS pension. WEA-Retired members who are currently Annual Members will have the option of continuing to pay dues annually or having the monthly dues deducted from their DRS pension.

A lifetime membership will still be available for \$450 and an annual membership will be \$78. But, beginning in September 2016, there will also be the monthly dues option of having \$6.50

per month deducted from your pension check. Please note that if you are currently having \$6 or \$7 a month deducted from your pension for a retiree membership, that is for an organization that is not affiliated with WEA/NEA.

Annual members will be receiving a letter about the monthly dues option this summer. If you want more information, email [WEARetired@WashingtonEA.org](mailto:WEARetired@WashingtonEA.org).

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*From Legislature, page 3*

individuals were convicted of a felony related to their public service. These bills did not receive hearings and died in committee.

The important thing to get out of this is that legislation is getting introduced that would help us and our WEA lobbyists are working hard to make things better for us. Bills

that would have a negative impact are being stopped.



Please continue to tell your

stories to legislators.

To find out what happened this session for our active members, go to [www.OurVoiceWashingtonEA.org](http://www.OurVoiceWashingtonEA.org).



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## NEA MEMBER BENEFITS PERKS

Many of you probably use NEA Member Benefits for getting a good price on a rental car or maybe for financing or refinancing your home. Did you know that NEAMB has a whole Retirement Center with help for both those trying to save and get ready for retirement and those already retired?

Retirees can find information about a host of topics, including a primer on the IRS-mandated Required Minimum Distributions from retirement plans, “7 good reasons to change your will,” “How to score the best senior discounts,” “6 powerful ways exercise can help you thrive,” and much, much more.

Visit [www.neamb.com/retirement-center.htm](http://www.neamb.com/retirement-center.htm) and take advantage of this member benefit!



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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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