



WE...too

Washington Education
Association – Retired

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Making a Difference!

By Bill Miller, former WEA VP, Board member, NEA Board member, president of the Lake Washington EA

Wisconsin Education Association Council is heavily involved in recall election activities. They know this action is crucial to protecting the rights of their members, both active and retired. This is especially true when it comes to Retirement Funding. In our state, our retirement system was undermined in the 1970s when, year after year, members of both political parties passed state budgets that did not address funding the Plan 1 retirement system. Year after year, both the governor (Evans) and the legislators (both parties) reported out no-new-tax budgets while they failed to pay in their match for collected revenue for the Teachers' Retirement System, and instead used the fund to cover holes in their accounts. This resulted in the shocking news that the Teachers Retirement System was under-funded and needed to be fixed. This is the same kind of shock that Captain Louis Renault (Claude Raines) had in Casablanca when he found out they were gam-

bling at Rick's Club. He was shocked! Shocked!

The shock that our state legislators experienced resulted in the creation of Plan 2 and then Plan 3. These provided less benefit to the retirees and required more years of service, and — most importantly — created disunity between the members in the various retirement plans. Interests that were once focused and unified now had differing perspectives and goals, each that could be realized without — and indeed, at the expense of — the other. This resulted in fewer improvements in all of the retirement plans. Remember the old phrase: work smarter, not harder? After the establishment of the Plan 2 retirement plan, that phrase turned out to really mean: work harder, and longer: who cares about smarter?!

In Wisconsin, they have been experiencing the same kind of attacks to their retirement plans: this has included changing the number of hours it takes to qualify for benefits, changing health insurance premium contributions, and prohibiting employers from bargaining cost-of-living adjustments.

These are only some of the changes the education employees of Wisconsin are facing. The collaborative actions of the WEAC (Wisconsin Education Association Council) with other unions in Wisconsin are a model the retired public school employees of Washington should be watching and replicating in our state and local communities.

As Wisconsin recall election results come in, we see a mixed picture. In the eight elections already held, two of the six incumbents who voted to take away union rights were recalled and both of the incumbents who walked out to protect union rights were retained. So 'union rights' is batting .500. While this is a gain for those intent on protecting the right to negotiate, there are hard fights ahead in Wisconsin and elsewhere, including Washington state.

Elections matter!
Volunteering makes a difference!
Supporting the public school employees means supporting a stronger America.

For background on this article, go to the Wisconsin Education Association Council website: www.weac.org.

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President's Message

I regularly hear from WEA-Retired members about different issues via e-mail, letters or phone messages. Sometimes these members will have questions about what is happening in the Legislature. Sometimes they will have comments about what WEA-Retired should or shouldn't be doing. Sometimes they'll even have a compliment of some sort. In all cases I appreciate hearing from



Kit Raney, WEA-Retired president

members and try to respond back in a timely manner.

Every once in a while I'll receive a letter with no return address or member name so, while I'd like to respond personally to the writer, I can't.

Such was the situation last month when I received a hand-written letter with no name or return address. The letter started out with this sentence: "WEA-Retired is for all, not just Plan 1."

It went on to say: "The emphasis of your group of which I am a member seems to give the major priority to the Plan 1 recipients who receive(d) a much richer plan than those of us in Plan 2 or Plan 3."

It ended with: "Be fair to all. Please do not concentrate just on Plan 1 or at least clearly state in your newsletter the difference between the plans."

First of all, if it has seemed that we've spent a lot of time talking about Plan 1 in the newsletter lately, it is because of the major attacks by the Governor and Legislature on Plan 1 during the last legislative session. The elimination of the Uniform COLA for Plan 1 members was a loss to

Plan 1. Allowing that elimination to go unchallenged would open the door for the Legislature to reduce benefits in the other plans. Fighting this Legislative take away is fighting for the integrity of all plans.

Secondly, I would also like to remind the writer that this newsletter has had numerous articles about the loss of gain sharing and the lawsuit challenging that loss. The loss of gain sharing would affect more than just Plan 1 members. And WEA, along with other like-minded groups, is considering a challenge to the legality of the elimination of the Uniform COLA.

I do appreciate your idea to feature an article about how the plans differ and we will do that. And I appreciate that you took the time to write.

* * * * *

Switching gears a bit, *WE...too* was honored at the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting in July by receiving First Place in the category of Established Newsletters. Congratulations to Nancy Miller, editor, for the fantastic job she does on our newsletter. I know I'm probably biased in thinking that we have a great newsletter. It was nice to receive national confirmation in the form of this award!

Contact Information for WEA-Retired

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Mailing address:

P.O. Box 9100

Federal Way, Wa 98063-9100

Annual Meetings

2011 NEA-Retired Annual Meeting & NEA Rep. Assembly

While most people spend their 4th of July at the beach or at family picnics or grilling a favorite summer delicacy, a large group of NEA and NEA-Retired members spend this holiday away from home in a meeting...every year. And this isn't just any meeting. The NEA Representative Assembly (RA) is the largest democratically run meeting in the world with a regular attendance of over 9,000 elected delegates. WEA-Retired had five delegates attending this year's NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA RA in Chicago from June 25 through July 5. Our five delegates were Kit Raney, Sandy Kokko, Sharon White, Judy Wooten and Eleanor Gilmore. Karle Warren was not a delegate but attended as a member of the NEA Credentials Committee.

Highlights of the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting, held prior to the NEA RA, included the election of a new NEA-Retired President and Vice President. Barbara Matteson had concluded her term as President, and Vice President Tom Curran was elected President. WEA-Retired was fortunate to have Tom visit us during our June Annual Meeting and were thrilled that he was elected NEA-Retired President. John Jensen from Connecticut is the newly elected NEA-Retired Vice President and we were happy about John's election, too.

Several New Business Items (NBIs) adopted at the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting were presented and adopted at the NEA RA. These NBIs directed that NEA members be informed of the recent position taken by AARP on Social Security, that NEA will work with state affiliates to develop systems and/or procedures to effectively identify potential NEA-Retired members, and that NEA work with state affiliates to identify NEA-Retired members who retain governance rights in the state from which they retired but are legal residents in another state.

Outreach to Teach, a joint activity with Student NEA and NEA-Retired members, is like Extreme Makeover, NEA style. Here is Sharon White's description of the experience:

Each year, NEA coordinates a school makeover in the city where the Representative Assembly is being held. This year's school was Dawes Elementary in Evanston, IL. Up at 5:00 a.m. and off to work with swarms of Student, Retired and Higher Ed members. We, along with PTAs, the school staff and commercial partners, went in to paint, put up bulletin boards, put together bookcases and other furniture, landscape the grounds and totally change the school. The teachers' lounge was refurbished and the library was redone. Bathrooms were painted and wall murals done. At the end of the day the whole school was transformed. This is the third year I have participated and although I ended up sunburned, tired and sore, the change was amazing. I would highly recommend participating if you have the chance.

Sandy Kokko writes about her experience attending workshops at the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting:

During the NEA-Retired annual meeting there are five or six workshop offerings and we have to choose two. I have enjoyed every one I have ever attended. This year there was one I would have attended if we had had three opportunities, "The Teacher Wisdom Project." During the desegregation process some 30,000 black teachers lost their jobs since many school districts would hire only a small number of black teachers for majority white schools. The project is working to preserve the stories of as many of this "lost generation" of teachers as they can. It reminded me as to why it is important that WEA-Retired members stay connected with the current and future generations of educators. We have knowledge and experience that can help them understand how we got where we are today and why it is so important to be vigilant.

The NEA RA was full of passionate debate around many important issues. Among those many issues was the adoption of the first comprehensive statement on teacher evaluation and accountability, adoption of changes NEA will seek in the reauthorization of ESEA, and adoption of an NBI which detailed 13 practices of Secretary of Education Arne Duncan which NEA strongly disagrees with. Delegates debated and voted on 21 Legislative Amendments, 100 NBIs, proposed amendments to the Constitution, Bylaws and Standing Rules, and Resolutions. We voted by secret ballot to early endorse President Obama and to re-elect NEA President Dennis Van Roekel and Vice President Lily Eskelsen.

For more information on what happened during the NEA RA, press releases on major events and video clips, make sure to visit the website at www.nea.org/grants/1357.htm.



Top: WEA-Retired delegates. Bottom: Sharon and Eleanor at the Navy Pier.

NEA Member Benefits

Something for you:

Many of you are probably aware of NEA Member Benefits, a benefit we have as an NEA or NEA-Retired member. You may think these benefits are limited to insurance and credit cards, but the [NEA Member Benefits](#) program is much, much more than that and it would be worth your time to visit the website www.neamb.com.

Once there, you will find links to the variety of products and services offered by NEA Member Benefits – Insurance, Credit Cards, Loans, Discounts, Investments, and Professional Products. You will also find a lot of information and tools to help you deal with different issues. There is a “Featured Library” with helpful articles about Money, Everyday Living, Health and Wellness, Professional Resource, and Travel and Leisure. Some of the articles include:

- [Fair Debt Collection: Protections for Consumers](#) – You do have rights when it comes to debt collection.
- [5 Tips for Safe Online Shopping](#) – Who doesn’t love online shopping? While it’s convenient, failure to exercise due diligence before shopping could result in some real headaches down the road.
- [6 Ways to Dine out on a Dime](#) – With a little research and some savvy scheduling, you can get some great restaurant deals.
- [Best Ways to Pay When Abroad](#) – Learn about the best ways to pay when travelling abroad and where to exchange currency to be sure you’re getting the best rates.

In the “Tools” section you’ll find tools such as:

- [Am I better off renting?](#) – Calculate whether buying a home is a better deal than renting.
- [How much of an effect can inflation have?](#) – This calculator helps you answer key questions related to achieving your retirement goals.

- [How much will it cost to raise a child?](#) – Estimate the total cost of raising a child, based on the beginning and ending years of age and amounts that you enter.

There are also a variety of “Guides” on the topics of Money, Health and Wellness, Everyday Living, and Travel and Leisure. Some of the specific guide topics include:

- Homeowners Insurance Guide
- Understanding Medicare and Medicare Supplement Insurance
- Physical Activity and Your Heart
- Energy Saving
- Backyard Conservation
- Travel Safe: Stay Safe in the Air and on the Road

Some of the most popular features on the NEA Member Benefits site are the NEA Auto Purchase Plan Advantage and NEA Click & Save. The NEA Auto Purchase Advantage Program offers members low, upfront pricing that’s guaranteed in writing and amazing customer service. Members save over \$4,300 on average using the NEA Auto Purchase Advantage.

NEA Click & Save is the most popular discount program for NEA members and their families. This exclusive shopping service offers savings on brand name merchandise from hundreds of top retailers, online stores and local merchants. Save on clothing, electronics, restaurants, jewelry, movie tickets and more.

Take a few minutes and visit www.neamb.com. Those of you into social media can keep up with all of the latest deals and discounts just for NEA members on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn. Find the latest deals on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NEADeals, follow on Twitter at [@NEADeals](https://twitter.com/NEADeals) or join the [NEA Deals and Discount Group](#) on LinkedIn.

Use your NEA membership to inform you and save money!



Nominations

WEA-Retired Delegate Nomination Form for the 2012 WEA-RA

WEA Representative Assembly will be held in Spokane, WA, May 17-19, 2012.

- Nominees for WEA-Retired Delegate must be retired and not hold a contract with a public school district.
- Nomination forms must be postmarked by **October 15, 2011**.
- Nominees must agree to attend all sessions of the RA.
- All nominations must have the consent of the nominee. Self-nomination is acceptable.
- Delegates are elected annually to serve one year.
- Biography of 50 words or less is optional and will be used only if a run-off election is necessary.

I nominate the following RETIRED member to be a delegate to the 2012 WEA Representative Assembly.

Name _____ Address _____

City/State/Zip _____ Phone (_____) _____

E-Mail Address if available _____

UniServ Council: _____ Soc. Sec. or ID# _____
(Soc. Sec. number or ID number listed on your membership card are needed by WEA for verification of membership)

Retirement Month _____ Year _____

DELEGATE FUNDING

WEA-Retired Board of Directors approved a policy June 9, 2010, regarding the funding of delegates to the WEA Representative Assembly. In accord with that policy, WEA-Retired leadership has determined that WEA-Retired can afford to fully fund 20 delegates to the WEA Representative Assembly. If there are more than 20 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 October 15, 2011.

Member Activities

Travel tips for older travelers

by Nancy Miller, WEA-Retired
Editor, WE-Too; Lake Washington EA,
retired

Rather than sit on a front porch and watch the world go by, today's retirees are much more travel-likely than generations past. Sight-seeing, international volunteering, grandchild-visiting – all find today's seniors hitting the road. So here are a few tips to make those adventures smoother:

Plan ahead: many travel agents specialize in senior travel, since we are the generation less likely to book online. Call around your town: if there isn't a local travel agent, AAA or AARP almost always has someone ready to help. Consider buying travel insurance in case illness interferes with your plans. At the very least, go to Wikipedia and CIA World Factbook to find out about the place you intend to visit: climate, language, national holidays and political situation can all be factors that impact your comfort. Better yet, get a guidebook and read up. This can help you prepare, and it can also tell you about tourist attractions that you may never have heard of! After all,

this is one of the goals of travel: learning and new experiences.

If you have a medical condition, check with your doctor to be sure travel is safe, and with your destination, to be sure medical care is available should you need it. Get the vaccinations you need: there are health issues abroad that you may not have



encountered in the USA. If you take medications regularly, make sure you have what you need and that what you use is legal at your destination. If you are crossing time zones and the timing of taking your meds is important, check with your doctor about how to alter your routine. Carry what you need, but not much more, in its original packaging, and make sure you have your prescriptions with you (this isn't for a pharmacy, it's for the border check!).

Flying is tough, especially intercontinental flights that last eight or fourteen hours. Get up and walk around the plane if it is at all possible. This will not only make you more comfortable, but it will improve your blood's circulation. If you can't walk around (sure you can!), stand, stretch, and shake your arms and legs. Drink lots of fluids,

but not caffeine or alcohol as these will increase the dehydration problem.

Put everything you need for the flight and at least one day afterward

in your carry-on luggage. This will keep you healthy and tide you over if your luggage is delayed. Include all your medical supplies, plus toiletries, your bedclothes, and a change of clothing (or at least, underwear). In this day and age, there is no reason not to have a suitcase with wheels. If mobility is a concern, ask for a wheelchair or other assistance (you've seen those jitney carts whizzing around airports) – sometimes it is miles from

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one gate to another and you are traveling to enjoy yourself, not win an endurance contest.

There is information you should carry in your pocket: doctor's contact number, travel agent's contact number if you used one, airline's contact number, home number and emergency numbers (family or close friends who would take responsibility should you be unable to), contact numbers at your destination if any, your basic identification (passport?), and a credit card. Being well-prepared to face any obstacle that should develop, usually means none will – but if you don't have the number, you'll be sure to need it!

Enjoy that new digital camera! Remember: you can take thousands of pictures for the same cost as one. Isn't modern travel wonderful?

Published by Washington Education Association-Retired six times per year. We invite your comments and contributions. Send to:

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Public Benefits Board Changes

On July 20, 2011, the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB) members approved premiums, benefit cost-sharing changes, and plans offered to PEBB Program members for 2012. These changes are summarized at <http://www.pebb.hca.wa.gov/announcements/peb-board-approves-new-plans-benefit-changes.html>. Members will also receive more information from the PEBB Program before and during its annual open enrollment (November 1 – 30, 2011), and will be able to find more information on PEBB's website, their [plans' websites](#), and at the benefits fairs during open enrollment.

Consult a FAQ file at <http://www.pebb.hca.wa.gov/announcements/qandas-on-the-peb-board-changes-for.html> to get answers to commonly asked questions, and contacts to question further.

Diane Ravitch

Diane Ravitch will be in Seattle November 17th and 18th. On Thursday, the 17th she will be speaking at Town Hall and on the 18th she will be speaking to the WEA Board. Look for more information on the [WEA website](#) or in the Seattle newspaper.

NEA-Today:

Who's Making Your Pension Fund Decisions?

NEAToday, the electronic newsletter of the National Education Association, has a provocative article about state control of pension funds. Find the article at: www.neatoday.org/2011/06/24/whos-making-your-pension-fund-decisions/.



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NOMINATION
FORM
INCLUDED!!

Check page five.

The only retired organization affiliated with WEA and NEA

