



# WE...too

Washington Education Association – Retired

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## “Je ne regrette rien.”

by Nancy Miller, WEA-Retired,  
Editor, We. . .Too

“Je ne regrette rien,” croons Edith Piaf, the smoky-throated singer whose sultry tones are the template for every chanteuse in a Nazi-filled bar, waiting for Humphrey Bogart.

What a sentence – “I regret nothing!” According to Susan Steiner (*The Guardian*, 1 Feb 2012), the five most common regrets of her dying patients are: 1) I wish I’d lived a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me; 2) I wish I hadn’t worked so hard; 3) I wish I had expressed my feelings; 4) I wish I’d stayed in touch with my friends; 5) I wish I had let myself be happier.

Wouldn’t it be something to cast a Piaf-like glance at the road behind?

**Regret #1:** What life do you wish you’d lived? “I wish I’d taken that job on ski patrol at Vail, instead of that safe job ...” “I wish there’d been less conflict in my life.” Go ski: you may not make the Olympics, but even the disabled can ski. What would life without conflict feel like? Are you looking for novelty? Serenity? Distance? How can you get that now, for a moment or a week? Repeat as desired. You have time to find a new way.

**Regret #2:** Not work so hard? Retirement! Don’t like gardening? Don’t do it! Hire a landscaper to put it in rocks, or move to a condo. Ditto for reading, volunteering, your second cousin or anything else eating your energy.

**Regret #3:** Courage to express feelings? If you hated your job, retirement has solved that. Try these, or dream up your own. Speaking kindly, say, “I really don’t like that sport; why don’t you go with a couple of your buddies?” or “It distresses me when your mom and sister fight; why don’t you gals take a weekend together and I’ll skip this one?” or “I feel bad about not getting that project done; I’ll call a handy-person to take care of it.”

**Regret #4:** In touch with friends? Hey, you’re retired! The present gives you the internet, FaceBook, MilitaryBrats.com, reunion pages, and all sorts of clues to track down the lost. When you find them, you’ll have years to catch up on. (Hint: offer to meet for lunch — you

can do anything for an hour — and only call back the ones where the heart is still warm.)

**Regret #5:** Too inhibited, or tired, to be happy? Recently, at an outdoor concert, my sister-in-law jumped up laughing and danced alone to the music. She said she was pretending like she was young again. What an inspiration she is! What did you do with your kids that no adult would do unescorted by child? Aquarium, cartoon movie, a coloring book? What made you happy when you were beginning? Recapture that!

“Je ne regrette rien.” Do you know that phrase?



Edith Piaf (photo borrowed from [freecodesource.com](http://freecodesource.com))

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# President's Message

## Elections with no regrets

Reviews of the book *The Plots Against the President* by Sally Denton intrigued me. The subtitle reads "FDR, A Nation in Crisis, and the Rise of the American Right". It sounded very similar to when President Obama took office three and a half years ago.



*Kit Raney, WEA-Retired president*

The book covers a lot but what truly amazed me was how much FDR managed to accomplish in a very short time frame. Times were very bleak and he had to move quickly. Five days after the inauguration, Congress convened and passed the Emergency Banking Act **in one day**. That was day one of the famous "Hundred Days" – the exact length of the special session. "Those first charmed one hundred days in the White House were exhilarating and buoyant, as Roosevelt sent measure after measure to Congress and each was met with swift passage." When Congress adjourned after 100 days, in addition to passing the Emergency Banking Act, it had enacted

all fifteen New Deal economic policies, set the stage for the repeal of prohibition, the CCC legislation and the Glass-Steagall banking reform legislation.

I was amazed at these accomplishments because they are the antitheses of politics today. I think that almost everyone gets frustrated by how little can get done now in Congress. Similar to when FDR took office, things were bleak and something needed to be done quickly when President Obama took office. Unfortunately, even before he took the oath of office, Republican leaders, conservative think-tanks and right-wing pundits were calling for total obstruction of the new president's agenda. No charmed hundred days of Congressional cooperation for President Obama!

Needless to say, today's political reality is far different than that of FDR's time.

What hasn't changed is the importance of elections. It matters who gets elected. I know that everything I care about is impacted by politicians and political decisions - from public education to social security to healthcare to civil rights to clean air and water – everything.

The delegates at last year's NEA Representative Assembly, in a secret ballot vote, voted overwhelmingly to endorse President Obama. The WEA Board recommends Jay Inslee for Governor. It is important that we do all we can to make sure President Obama is re-

elected and Jay Inslee becomes our next Governor. It matters who gets elected. Go to [www.OurVoiceWashingtonEA.org](http://www.OurVoiceWashingtonEA.org) for a list of all of our recommended candidates.

I believe we can make a difference. I know that WEA and WEA-Retired members are doing everything they can to make sure that we have no regrets come November. We are making the phone calls, knocking on doors and talking to our friends and neighbors about the importance of this election. We may not be FDR but we have credibility and we are in every community in our state.

If you would like to join with your WEA and WEA-Retired colleagues to donate some time to make sure that we are not disappointed in November, please email me at [kraney@washingtonea.org](mailto:kraney@washingtonea.org) and I will help match you with volunteer opportunities in your area. No regrets!

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# Member Activities

## USA: Unions Supporting All

by Karle Warren, WEA-Retired Executive Committee

Once I retired I was wondering what I could do with my union experience. I was pleased to learn that my experiences were known in the southeast corner of Washington, and I was invited to participate with a newly formed *Unions Supporting All* group.

The organizing skills that WEA has provided us with throughout our public education and association careers carry on into our communities. This need for solidarity among unions is apparent as the misconceptions circulated by individual groups, newspapers, radio, television, internet, corporate bullies and politicians show the need for positive values and strong united voices.

It would help our communities to remember that unions support not only a living wage for their members, but bring up the wages of all in the industry. Take a moment to view a short video on the WEA website (in the upper right corner) under the headline, "Union gains do help students learn". Unions have fought for child labor laws, overtime, clean air and water, safe working conditions, and all of the values of daily life that most citizens take

for granted as American values. Pensions, medical insurance, parental leave and annual vacations are all benefits that unions negotiated for their members that have become part of ordinary American life.

Communities and politicians need to

remember that without unions there is no countervailing power to corporations in our American checks-and-balances system. The Gilded Age of robber barons shows the result of that void.

Once again grassroots efforts is the key! The 2012

legislative battle over educators' health care and contract bargaining revealed that an organized attack has begun on workers' rights in Washington. In Clarkston, school employees are working with other unions to preserve family wages, jobs, middle class values and to preserve workers' rights. Their coalition is called USA: Unions Supporting All. All our middle class needs to remember who the unions are: those nice folks who brought you the weekend! Who can you approach in your community to start an effort like this one?



*Christy Simons (Clarkston EA, second from left), Angie Gustafson (Clarkston Classified, second from right) and Karle Warren (WEA-Retired, right) joined other union members in the Unions Supporting All members march during the Asotin County Fair parade on April 28, 2012.*



# National Conventions

## NEA-Retired & NEA Rep Assembly

*compiled from material by Kit Raney, Sandy Kokko and Karla Kragelund, delegates to NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA Representative Assembly.*

NEA-Retired elected and sent five delegates to the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and the NEA Representative Assembly held in Washington, D.C. this summer. Our five elected delegates were Kit Raney, Judy Wooten, Stacia Bilsland, Sandy Kokko and Karla Kragelund. Since any member can attend these meetings as guests (not voting delegates), Jean and Jim Savidge and Lee Ann Prielipp also attended the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting.

Below are some reflections on the meetings from our delegates.

### **Sandy Kokko:**

Although I have only attended NEA-Retired Annual Meeting in recent years, I have been to NEA Representative Assembly off and on for more than 20 years. The tenor of both meetings this year was different. Political talk has always been on the agenda. This year it permeated the conversation. Although this is a presidential election year and you might expect it, this year was different ... because there is a different tone in politics across the country. We, the educators of past, present and future generations, must step forward and let our voices be heard.

NEA President Dennis Van Roekel asked us if we were willing to do this because, "if we are not ready to lead, I know there are many others ready, willing, and waiting to do it for us." Many elected officials and self-proclaimed reformers "have an opinion on everything — the who, the what, the when, the where and the how — about public education." The

problem is few of these people ask the why of public education ... "access and equity." Many of the solutions others are attempting to impose do not create educational equity. "Let's use our power to make public education stronger ... not just for a fortunate few, but for every single child."

### **Karla Kragelund:**

This year's NEA Representative Assembly was memorable. As I was thinking about the RA several things stuck in my mind. The business of the meeting focused on several areas: defending member's rights to collective bargaining; equal opportunity for all students, including those in special education; basic education should include more than reading and writing, but also arts education; class size; and building coalitions to support public education. The speeches this year were focused on public education. Some highlights were the phone call from President Obama when he said, "You can't help the American people without helping education." We also heard from Jill and Joe Biden, Rebecca

*continued on next page*



*From left: Kit Raney, Judy Wooten, Jean Savidge, Karla Kragelund, Stacia Bilsland, Jim Savidge, Lee Ann Prielipp and Sandy Kokko.*

## Social Security is solid

by Eddie Westerman

WEA Communications Specialist

Nine digits. Three then two then four. The vast majority of us have those nine digits memorized. They are a part of who we are. We can be issued a [social security card](#) immediately after being born and many parents do apply for a social security card for their infants. It makes us official. We are told to guard our number carefully and we use it for all kinds of official documents. A social security card validates our existence as well as our sense of “belonging” in this country.

It seems current rhetoric is trying to position Social Security as a “handout” or as a program that is bankrupting our national government. It is important to remind ourselves the origin of the program as well as the fact that we, as workers, invest in social security. We are paying in to the program so that, later, [we can collect on what we saved up](#).

Workers pay into Social Security and Medicare because of a 1935 law that mandates their contribution and that employers (like school districts) must also pay into the pool through the Federal Insurance Contributions Act match. Efforts to cut this program, which has been a cornerstone program for more than 75 years, must be examined. Pay attention to the people who are trying to abolish the program and learn more about it.

The term social security was originally used in our country by Abraham Epstein in connection with his group, the American Association for Social Security. When the Social Security Act first passed, it was actually named the Economic Security Act but it was changed during Congressional consideration of the bill. The cards were originally issued through U.S. post offices. Take a look at [the brochure written in 1953](#).

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## NEA meetings *(continued from page 4)*

Mielwocki, the national teacher of the year, and Executive Director John Stocks. The theme was the same. We must support public education. Educators must take the lead not only in their profession, but in their communities and political campaigns.

Washington state should be proud. The NEA RA elected Marguerite Jones, an ESP member from Seattle, to the

NEA Board of Directors as ESP at Large.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to represent you at this year’s NEA RA. It energized me and reminded me of why supporting public education and supporting active members is so important for our profession. A final word of advice: Get involved. Make those phone calls and help to elect pro-education candidates.

**The nomination  
form for delegates  
to the 2013 WEA  
Representative  
Assembly will  
be in the next  
newsletter.  
Watch for it.**

## Initiative 1240 & charter schools

*From the Washington Education Association web site*

A small group of Seattle-area billionaires and millionaires have spent huge amounts to collect signatures for Initiative 1240, which would create a new system of publicly funded, privately run charter schools. Initiative backers spent about \$2.1 million paying out-of-state workers top dollar for each signature to gather about 350,000 signatures. That means they spent about \$6 a name to get charters on the ballot.

The WEA Board voted to oppose I-1240 because it will divert millions from existing public schools — ignoring the state Supreme Court’s recent ruling that the state is failing to adequately fund schools as mandated by the state Constitution.

### Key points about charter schools in Washington

- I-1240 siphons taxpayer funding from existing public school classrooms into a new system of unaccountable, privately managed charter schools.
- Instead of diverting scarce funding from public schools and spending it on a failed concept like charter schools, we should be investing more in the innovative public schools we already have.
- Research done at Stanford University shows nearly 40 percent of charter schools perform worse than local public schools and only 17 percent provide better education opportunities for students.
- Charter schools fail to meet the needs of most students.
- Charter schools discriminate against special-needs students, and the NAACP opposes charter schools because charter schools promote segregation.
- Washington’s teachers and education support professionals care about *all* students in *all* public schools, not just the few who win the charter school lottery.
- I-1240 brings more uncertainty at a time our students need stability. The language in I-1240 is misleading and raises too many questions about who will run charter schools, which students will be served and who is accountable if they fail.
- Washington voters have rejected taxpayer-funded charter schools three times in recent years.
- Charter schools in other states have a record of mismanagement, budget deficits, fraud and other problems.
- I-1240 is a big step toward the privatization of Washington’s public schools and allowing companies to profit off of our children.
- Washington already has hundreds of innovative schools — and Washington’s teachers innovate in the classroom every day.
- I-1240’s wealthy benefactors may mean well, but the teachers and support professionals who actually educate our state’s students know that diverting taxpayer funding into a new system of charter schools is NOT the way to strengthen public education.

# Membership Information

## Structure of WEA-Retired

WEA-Retired Executive Committee: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Financial Director and three Board Directors elected from the Board. These elections take place at the WEA-Retired Annual Meeting. (The Financial Director is appointed.)

WEA-Retired Board of Directors: One member from each UniServ Council which WEA-Retired calls “Chapters”. The Board of Directors meets three or four times a year, including the morning before the start of the Annual Meeting.

There are two kinds of WEA-Retired Chapters – affiliated and non-affiliated.

Affiliated Chapters: These chapters have organized and have Bylaws and officers. They elect their own Board Director to the WEA-Retired Board and their own delegates to the WEA-Retired Annual Meeting. Affiliated Chapters are Pilchuck, Fourth Corner, Seattle, Tacoma, Chinook and Puget Sound.

Non-Affiliated Chapters: These chapters have not organized. Their Board Director and delegates to the WEA-Retired Annual Meeting are elected by the WEA-Retired Board.

If your chapter is a non-affiliated chapter and you are interested in getting help organizing the chapter or in exploring the possibility of becoming an affiliated chapter, assistance is available. Contact WEA-Retired President Kit Raney at [kraney@washingtonea.org](mailto:kraney@washingtonea.org).

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## Dollar\$ for \$cholars

*by Sandy Kokko, WEA-Retired  
Executive Committee*

WEA-Retired Dollars for Scholars provides up to five \$1,000 scholarships for active and student WEA members who are enhancing their skills or earning new endorsements. Two fundraising activities, a cash drawing and an auction, are held each year.

The 2012 cash award winners, announced at WEA Representative Assembly, are Julie Wheeler (Stanwood/WEA Fourth Corner) who received a \$500 cash prize, and Jean Davis (Hoquiam/WEA Chinook) who received a \$200 cash prize. Next year there will be three cash prizes: \$300, \$200 and \$100. The WEA-Retired Dollars Annual Banquet and Fundraiser is held the first night of the WEA-Retired Annual Meeting. It is a silent auction. This year’s events netted Dollars for Scholars almost \$5,500.

Several years ago a member of the Washington State delegation won the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education fundraising quilt. After displaying it in several locations around the state, the quilt was donated to WEA-Retired, who used it to support WEA-Retired Dollars for Scholars. At the 2012 WEA Representative Assembly in Spokane, delegates bought \$1 tickets for a chance to win the quilt. The lucky winner was Carl Taylor (WEA Fourth Corner), past president of WEA-Retired. Carl was ecstatic!





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