



Spring 2017

Connections

NEWS TO KEEP YOU ENGAGED IN THE PROFESSION YOU LOVE

Legislative update on retirement issues

By Julie Salvi, WEA lobbyist

House Bill 1484 was heard in the House Appropriations Committee on January 26. The bill would provide an additional \$2 per service credit per month for all PERS and TRS Plan 1 members starting July 1, 2017. For someone with 30 years of service, this would raise her pension by \$60 a month or \$720 per year. There was a fabulous turnout at the hearing from retired state employees and school employees. The WEA-Retired members who we know testified at the hearing are Lee Ann Prielipp, Ken Mortland, Gery Gerst and Eleanor Wotton. The companion bill in the Senate is SB 5556. As we go to print, HB 1484 has not yet been voted out of Appropriations.

When lobbyists are talking with legislators regarding HB 1484, some legislators are clearly interested in doing something to address the lost purchasing power of Plan 1 members. They are debating whether or not to invest in a one-time Plan 1 increase or an increase of health care support through the Medicare match in the PEBB system (the Medicare eligible subsidy). We will watch both measures when full budget proposals are released later this spring.

Please let your legislators know that you support HB 1484/SB 5556 and expect them to support these, too. Tell the story about your loss of buying power and how that

impacts your life. Go to <http://leg.wa.gov/> to find your legislator and how to email or call him/her.

On Thursday, February 2, the House Appropriations Committee heard House Bill 1560 which will make Plan 2 the default plan rather than Plan 3 for new employees. WEA and WEA-Retired support this bill along with other labor allies. This bill would actually save the state money. Let your legislators know that you support this bill, too.

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The President's Corner



**By Kit
Raney,
WEA-Retired
President**

I am a sports fan and sometimes

sports remind me how much things have changed. This latest “aha” moment happened while I was sitting by the pool in Maui watching a live Husky women’s basketball game on my iPad. I couldn’t help remembering back in the late 80’s and early 90’s when the only way to even find out the score of an away WBB game was to wait up until after the MBB game finished on the radio and then listen to the tape-delayed WBB game. In those days the men and women’s teams played on the same day and at the same time... one played at home and the other played away. The WBB delayed radio broadcast would begin about 9:30 or 10:00, which meant I would find out the outcome of the WBB game at close to midnight. It was a good thing that I was much younger then!

Fast forward to the constant stream of news (and scores of games) that most of us have access to today. As Dorothy said to Toto, “We’re not

in Kansas anymore!” Rather than finding out what has happened by reading a “mere daily” newspaper and watching the televised nightly news, we have instantaneous access to almost everything that is happening everywhere. For instance, we can watch a game or a news report, can sign on for 24/7 news updates and traffic alerts, and can peruse any newspaper or magazine online – all on our cell phones. In real time, we can follow the president’s tweets and their responses. C-span affords us the opportunity to witness real-time Congressional votes, and TV channels dedicated breaking news take us right to the public demonstrations that follow.

So, is this better? While I love keeping up to date on what’s happening, I wonder if I really know more. Is spending an hour of Facebook reading numerous posts, articles, and people’s comments a better way to understand things than reading the newspaper and the old, weekly newsmagazines? I am definitely exposed to more, and, if this is even possible, have more opinions. And I do know that one needs to be careful sorting the actual news from the fake news (alternative facts...).

I wonder if people had issues transitioning from the newspaper to the radio to the TV for their news? Did they need to take a break from the news on television because of a news overload, as some people have had to do on Facebook?

For me, the bottom line is to make sure that whatever news I am choosing to believe as accurate, IS accurate, and with the things happening in our country right now, it isn’t always the easiest thing.

Maybe the best way to end my column is by offering these two thoughts:

It is a very sad thing that nowadays there is so little useless information. – Oscar Wilde

Everyone gets so much information all day long that they lose their common sense. – Gertrude Stein

Continued from page 1.

There are several bills that, if passed, would reduce the ERF return to work restrictions. SB 5310 would allow retirees to work as coaches; SB 5487 would allow retirees to work as mentors; and SB 5601 would allow retirees to work as substitutes in areas other than just substitute teaching (substitute counselors, nurses, etc.).

Senate Ways and Means Committee passed SB 5833 on February 22. It would provide a 1.5% additional COLA only for those who are receiving one of the minimum benefits and only for TRS 1 members. WEA indicated our appreciation of a COLA for this group, but noted concerns with the bill because it did not include K-12 (and other state/local) members who are in the PERS system and because it ignored the need for all TRS 1 members to (finally) receive a COLA. All Plan 1 members have been losing pace with inflation and need a COLA.

Please note: Things can happen very quickly during the Legislative Session. Although material put together for a print newsletter is most likely out of date by the time you receive it, it is still important to report it. For more timely information, please make sure that we have your email and that you

have not “unsubscribed” to WEA or WEA-Retired emails. Then you will receive updated information in our emailed newsletter and emailed alerts when action is needed.

Meet our new editor – Barbara Galler

Hi, fellow retirees!

I’m happy to join you at this long-earned-for stage of life! Reading until all hours, watching Sunday night PBS Masterpiece Theatre without guilt for not doing the school work I should have done during the weekend, sleeping in until all hours, napping at will, shopping when it’s not busy, and advocating for WA State public education through WEA-Retired are very fulfilling activities. This old gray mare ain’t dead yet! And I’m lucky in having had a very fulfilling public education career, too. I started teaching 6-8th grades in Toms River, N.J., my hometown, in 1978. Ten Junes later, I drove my Ford out to Seattle and lassoed a job at Issaquah Middle School, where I taught language arts and social studies for most of 28 years. I got in involved with WEA simply by being a building rep in the early

1990s. Then I became a middle school rep on the Issaquah Education Association’s Executive Board for most of a decade and represented the IEA at several state and national educator conventions. After the IEA strike in 2002, I represented the IEA on a local coalition of parents, educators, administrators, and business people called the Olympian Coalition, which lobbied our state legislature for fuller, fairer education funding. This group cultivated strong bonds with local state senators and representatives, and we felt gratified to have urged and witnessed the signing of a simple majority for passing school bonds as one of our first activist issues.

I credit both my local and the WEA for educating me and encouraging my advocacy for public education, and I’m thrilled to be part of this publication’s presence!



What happens to Medicare and seniors if the ACA is repealed?

From a fact sheet by the Alliance for Retired Americans

- End to free annual wellness exams

Prior to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), Medicare allowed for a one-time free check-up when seniors first joined the Medicare program. The ACA has provided free annual wellness exams for seniors since 2011.

- End to free preventive screenings

Thanks to the ACA, Medicare beneficiaries have not been required to pay for any portion of Medicare-covered preventive services recommended by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force and rated A or B. The ACA also waived the Medicare deductible for colorectal cancer screening tests.

- End of prescription drug discounts

Prior to the ACA, when beneficiaries fell into the doughnut hole, they had to pay 100% of the costs of their medications. The ACA provides drug discounts and subsidies to help fill in the doughnut hole. In 2017, the doughnut hole will be between \$3,700 and \$4,950. Under the ACA, seniors and disabled beneficiaries who fall in the Part D drug doughnut hole will receive a 60% discount on the price of their brand name drugs and a 49% subsidy toward the purchase of generic drugs. By 2020, the doughnut hole gap will be closed. However, if the ACA is repealed seniors will lose these discounts and subsidies.

- No protections against discrimination for pre-existing conditions

The ACA prohibits insurance companies from discriminating against people with pre-existing conditions.

- No protections against rising insurance prices

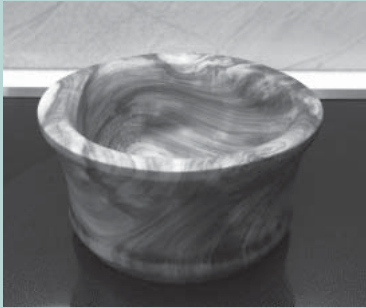
Prior to the ACA, insurers often charged seniors five times more than they charged a young person for their health care. The ACA limited what insurers could charge to no more than three times they charge a young individual for comparable coverage.

Find more information at www.retiredamericans.org.

Take action at www.edadvocacy.nea.org/healthcare.

And so Stephen Lalonde retired ... sort of...

When Steve Lalonde retired, it was not to leave educating students. He loved doing that. He retired so that he could finally dedicate more time and energy to several other pursuits that he loves but for which he couldn't make the time when teaching. He clearly stated to others that he was going to have four main activities; writing, woodworking, amateur radioing, and swimming. He has been true to his intentions in the two and a half years since.



He has been writing for many years on a very limited basis, making a little extra money writing a web page for NASA/Wednet, some magazine articles, the anchor chapter for the book *TEACHING WITH TECHNOLOG* put out by the NEA professional library, and a few other projects. But upon retirement he was able to focus on larger projects. He published his first book of poetry in March of 2016. *A Palette of Verse* is available in print at Auntie's Bookstore in Spokane and as an ebook from Amazon.com. He is nearing completion of the first draft of a novel, *The Phoenix Gift*, which has been outlined for years. He belongs to some writers' groups, including one which has two of his former students!

Woodworking has been a passion of Steve's since high school, and over the years he has created a great shop full of wonderful "toys." Now he spends glorious hours making all kinds of things. At the request of his oldest son, he made a couple of rocking chairs of his own design before he retired. Since retiring he has made eight more. He built three of them simultaneously in the process of producing an instructional video on how to make them (he taught video production as a large part of his teaching career.)

His youngest son is a craft brewer and got Steve started making beer tap handles. Those turned out to be so much fun to make that he has done over a hundred of them. Some of them are in use in local tap houses and many more in residences in Spokane and Seattle. He uses a variety of woods including cherry, walnut, beech, birch, aspen, locust, spruce, maple, and more. Most are from trees on his property.

Steve has made a couple of outdoor tables. One is made from a volunteer locust tree and features legs created by splitting the yoke of the tree. The other was made from cedar posts from a 40-year-old fence that he replaced. Both are finished with coats of marine spar varnish.

For a craft show in November, he stocked up several smaller items such as bird houses, oven rack push-pull squirrels, and boxes. His wife does the upholstery on the chairs and many sewing projects as well, so he included a table for some of her items.

Recently Steve has been turning small bowls, again using wood from trees on his property. He says the wood lathe is the oldest piece of equipment he owns and he hopes to replace it with a new one before too long. There have been a host of other projects, including cabinetry in his home, spoon racks for a friend, picture frames, a couple of folding oak podiums, and signs. Since 1970 Steve has been an amateur radio operator (ham). He enjoys working 'traffic nets,' handling message traffic coming into and out of Spokane. He has also been involved in supporting community events such as Bloomsday for which many hams provide communication support.

Facts - or “Alternative Facts”?

In this day and age of “Alternative Facts,” it is important to know if the source of your news is a legitimate. This list was part of an article at www.stephenslighthouse.com/2016/11/15/false-misleading-clickbait-y-and-satirical-news-sources/ and is printed with the permission of the author, Melissa Zimbars, Ph D. Melissa is an assistant professor of communication & media, and this list started as a resource for her students, who are learning about journalism, social media, and media literacy.

Tips for analyzing news sources:

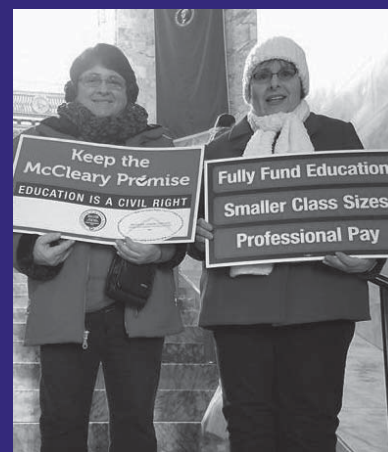
- Avoid websites that end in “lo” ex: Newslo (above). These sites specialize in taking a piece of accurate information and then packaging that information with other false or misleading “facts.”
- Watch out for websites that end in “.com.co” as they are often fake versions of real news sources.
- Watch out if known/reputable news sites are not also reporting

on the story. Sometimes lack of coverage is the result of corporate media bias and other factors, but there should typically be more than one source reporting on a topic or event.

- Odd domain names generally equal odd and rarely truthful news.
- Lack of author attribution may, but not always, signify that the news story is suspect and requires verification.
- Check the “About Us” tab on websites or look up the website on Snopes or Wikipedia for more information about the source.
- If the story makes you REALLY ANGRY, it’s probably a good idea to keep reading about the topic via other sources to make sure the story you read wasn’t purposefully trying to make you angry (with potentially misleading or false information) in order to generate shares and ad revenue.
- It’s always best to read multiple sources of information to get a variety of viewpoints and media frames. Some sources not specifically included in this list (although their practices at times may qualify them for

addition), such as The Daily Kos and Fox News, vacillate between providing legitimate, problematic, and/or hyperbolic news coverage, requiring readers and viewers to verify and contextualize information with other sources.

WEA-Retired members in action!



Over the years as a teacher, Steve helped 96 students earn 116 Federal Communication Commission licenses, including four who earned the highest license possible. In retirement, he continues to enjoy talking to hams all over the world perched at his newly self- built oak station console.

Swimming is generally a seasonal activity. Because Steve does distant swimming, he starts sometime in April and goes until the water gets too cold in October. He doesn't count less than a mile and sometimes does five or six miles at a time. One as yet unrealized goal is to swim Lake Roosevelt from Kettle Falls to Fort Spokane, 58 miles!

Steve's wife is also retired and yes, they do some of the traditional retirement things. They did their first cruise to Alaska last September to celebrate their 46th anniversary. They also spent a week with their travel trailer, visiting lighthouses on the Washington coast.

When not traveling, the Lalondes grow most of their own vegetables in a 30 by 70 foot garden patch. Much of their fruit comes from their little orchard of 25 fruit and nut trees and they have raspberries, black berries, and grapes.

Steve says, "I miss teaching, but I do love retirement." Seems like an understatement! To see more pictures, his website is: www.stephenlalonde.us.

WEA-Retired at the 2017 WEA Representative Assembly

Once again WEA-Retired will be well-represented at the WEA Representative Assembly (RA) in Spokane. WEA-Retired will have 34 delegates at the RA which will be held on April 13-15. The following members were elected as delegates:

Corinne Thompson (WEA Olympic)	Judy Jarvits (WEA-Tacoma)
Kathy Casey (Soundview)	Donna Raymond (WEA Olympic)
Karla Kragelund (WEA-Riverside)	Linda Lease (WEA Fourth Corner)
Eleanor Gilmore (WEA-Sammamish)	Phyllis Farrell (WEA Chinook)
Gayle Hazen (WEA-Tacoma)	Mary Lindsey (WEA Fourth Corner)
Jean Savidge (WEA Fourth Corner)	Lori Smiley (WEA Fourth Corner)
Dan Brown (WEA-Eastern Washington)	Peggy Stewart (WEA Fourth Corner)
Jeanette Marquardt (WEA-Cascade)	Carol Jimeno (WEA Fourth Corner)
Carl Taylor (WEA Fourth Corner)	Terri Inge (WEA Fourth Corner)
Judith Alia (WEA-Tacoma)	Ed Duggan (Kent)
Karen Warren (WEA-Southeast)	Nancy Byrnes (WEA-Sammamish)
Sharon White (WEA Chinook)	Joe Ramos (Spokane)
Evelyn Horne (WEA-Riverside)	Maureen Ramos (Spokane)
Stephen LaLonde (WEA-Eastern Washington)	Betsy Guerra (WEA-Tacoma)
Neva Luke (WEA-Sammamish)	Marian Griffin (WEA-Tacoma)
Pam Fuelling (Pilchuck)	Pat Morrison (WEA-Sammamish)
Suzanne Miller (Puget Sound)	Diane Kanda (WEA Fourth Corner)



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KEY DATES

March 7: Legislative Reception

March 8: Lobby Day

April 13 - 15: WEA Representative Assembly

June 7 and 8: WEA-Retired Annual Meeting

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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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