

WE ...*too*

Washington Education
Association – Retired

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Battleground states in spotlight

by Nancy Miller
Editor, We...too
Lake Washington EA

Have you heard that new candidates are “preparing to launch an offensive” in the “battleground states”? that several candidates have “joined the ranks” to “blockade” the opposing party? that “the blitz will be on” as some candidates are “besieged” by critics? that both political parties will be “launching salvos” and the media has “created a firestorm” and that some issues have become a “no-man’s land”?

Apparently, politics has become a war zone. Are you tired of military metaphors? Maybe we should all just settle down and look at 2014, rather than trying to frame the next quip.

For most statewide and national issues, Washington State and the West Coast are not part of the battleground.

We’re pretty consistently blue. Washington’s governorship has been in Democratic hands for 26 years; both our senators are Democrats, and have been since the 2000 election; and our congressional delegation is split 4 R and 6 D, largely reflective of the east-west geography of the state.

We Washingtonians have to “study up” to find out where the battle is, and why it’s there. There are some advantages to this: the national parties minimize their spending here, so our television shows aren’t constantly interrupted by political advertising. On the other hand, turning-point issues aren’t delivered to us on a platter: we have to search for them.

If we want to influence the political outcome of 2014, we need to know where the fight is being fought, over what, and who needs our help. Otherwise, our fate is

in the hands of others.

The U.S. Senate is regarded as “up for grabs” this election, but not all open seats (offices where there is not a current office-holder running for re-election) are in battleground states. This is because many states vote consistently Democratic or Republican, and the new nominee from the dominant party has a considerable advantage. Georgia’s Sen. Saxby Chambliss (R) is retiring and Georgia could usually be counted on to replace him with a Republican, but his likely opponent is Michelle Nunn, daughter of former Senator Sam Nunn (D), a long-time and popular officeholder, and the family connection may deliver Georgia into the battleground category.

Currently, Max Baucus (D-MT), Tom Harkin (D-IA), Mike Johanns (R-NE), Tim Johnson (D-SD), Carl Levin

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President's Message

Milestones

September always seems to be a time for milestones. When we were going to school or going teaching, September was the start of a new grade or a new year. It was always a new beginning and, for me, a big deal.

This August and September there have been some milestones not related to the beginning of the school year, but important to us as citizens of the United States.



Kit Raney, WEA-Retired president

September 17th is the 225th anniversary of the signing of the United States Constitution. On Sept. 17, 1787, the delegates to the Constitutional Convention met for the last time to sign the document they had created.

September 17 of every year is Constitution Day, commemorating the formation and signing of the U.S. Constitution by 39 brave men, setting the path for our nation and its citizens.

I am acknowledging this milestone because no matter how annoyed I sometimes get with the actions (or inactions) of Congress and our government, I feel so lucky to live in a country where I am free to express my annoyance without fear of government retribution.

Our Constitution has evolved over time. On August 26, 1920, the 19th Amendment was signed granting all women the right to vote. I can't imagine what it was like for those women fighting for the right to vote but I so appreciate what they did for us. That was a huge milestone for women in the United States.

August 23rd was the 50th anniversary of

the 1963 Civil Rights March on Washington. Some 250,000 people marched and it was the largest demonstration ever seen in the nation's capital, and one of the first to have extensive television coverage.

The stated demands of the march were the passage of meaningful civil rights legislation; the elimination of racial segregation in public schools; protection for demonstrators against police brutality; a major public-works program to provide jobs; the passage of a law prohibiting racial discrimination in public and private hiring; a \$2 an hour minimum wage; and self-government for the District of Columbia, which had a black majority.

Fifty years after the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. offered his stirring vision of racial harmony for America's future with his "I Have a Dream" speech, tens of thousands gathered again in Washington D.C. to hear leaders tell them that while much has been attained, much remains unfinished.

Since 1882, the first Monday of September has been celebrated as Labor Day, a celebration of the American Labor Movement. Labor Day recognizes the contributions that trade and labor organizations and their workers have made to the strength, prosperity and well-being on our country. This September 1st was the 131st Labor Day.

The definition of a milestone is a stone marker set up

on a roadside to indicate the distance in miles from a given point or an important event, as in a person's career or the history of a nation. I like to think of a milestone as

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Nominations

WEA-Retired Delegate Nomination Form for the 2014 WEA-RA

WEA Representative Assembly will be held in Spokane, WA, April 3-5, 2014.

- 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 31, 2013**.
- 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.
- 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 2014 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 31, 2013**.

National Teacher of the Year

Jeff Charbonneau of Zillah

by Bruce Williamson, Board of Directors, WEA- Retired Lower Columbia EA

Jeff Charbonneau, the National Teacher of the Year, spoke to WEA-Retired members at a retreat held in Yakima in Tuesday, August 14.

We have a great representative for teachers in this young man. He spoke to the assembly about meeting with President Obama. The President went out of his way to make him feel comfortable.

Jeff told the meeting that he was overwhelmed with the experience and got to touch the President's desk in the Oval Office.

During the speech, he emphasized the need for teachers to contact their local state representatives to discuss their concerns on education and retirement issues. He said that the state senators and representatives are just as nervous talking to teachers as we are to talk to them. They need to hear from us, and we should invite them into the classrooms, so they can see for themselves what is really going on.

Jeff said he has traveled to 10 states since being made Teacher of the Year earlier this year. He will be traveling

to China. The Chinese want to learn more of what they call the "creative education" model in the United States.

It is interesting to note that the Chinese want more creativity in their education while the United States is going more to the way China teaches their students, with more testing and rigid curriculum, and data-driven teacher evaluation.

Jeff told of the push for pre-school education for all students, and wasn't sure this was a good idea. He commented, "When are we going to give kids the time just to be kids?" He felt that pre-school education should be a local decision to fit the needs of communities better.

Jeff was told he had the right to speak out on any issue and take any stand on

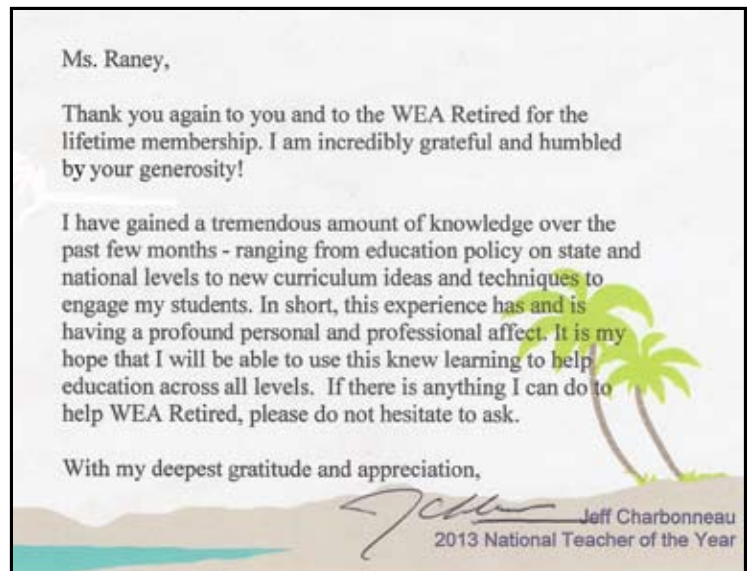
issues that he wanted to, but to understand that, if he took a stand on a "controversial" issue or group that he would not be asked to speak at certain venues. He understood this, but came out strongly

for the NEA, and as such, certain conservative groups refuse to have him speak at their meetings. He said he doesn't care, that there are things you must stand for regardless of the consequences.

Everyone was very impressed with Jeff's speech and we are all proud to have a Washington State teacher of his caliber chosen as National Teacher of the Year.



Jeff Charbonneau, from Zillah EA, 2013 National Teacher of the Year



Member Activities

Five scholarships awarded

by Bev Wentz, Scholarship Chair, WEA-Shelton

At the WEA-Retired Annual Delegate meeting, five \$1,000 scholarships were awarded to the following:

- ◆ Catherine (Katie) Bailey, first-grade teacher at Cougar Ridge Elementary in Issaquah, who will be using her scholarship towards tuition at Northwest University where she is pursuing a Master's degree;
- ◆ Josh Everson, currently teaching Digital Media at Black Hills High in Tumwater, who will use his scholarship to complete the National Board Certification for Teachers;
- ◆ Shelby Johnson, a college and career specialist paraprofessional at River Ridge High in Lacey (North Thurston), who is pursuing her education to become a Career and Technology Teacher;
- ◆ Natalya Kubrakov, a part time first-grade teacher for the Evergreen School District (Vancouver), who will use her scholarship to take classes toward a Master's in Education with an endorsement in English Language Learning, and
- ◆ Stephanie Parson, from McCleary School District, teacher of an Intervention Support class, beginning Spanish, Art, PE and Language Arts to 7th, 8th, and 9th graders, who will use her scholarship for classes such as Strategies for Building Home-School Partnerships.

One of the fund raisers for the scholarship fund is a cash prize drawing. The names of the winners are drawn and announced during the WEA Representative Assembly. Joe Ramos (WEA-Retired) was the lucky \$300 winner. Heather Van Dyne (Vancouver) and Susan Lindsay (Everett) won \$200 and \$100, respectively.

Bev Wentz, WEA-Retired Scholarship Chair, praised the well-written applications received by the committee and said that the high quality made for difficult decision-making. She encouraged all who didn't receive a scholarship to apply again next year. "The only future we have is our children," she said, "and there are very talented, dedicated and creative educators in our state."



Three WEA-Retired members helped 10th District Congressman Denny Heck celebrate his 61st birthday, an event which was partially sponsored by the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education. Left to right: Lee Ann Prielipp, Congressman Heck, Beverly Werschkul, and Teri Murphy.

Battleground, cont.

(continued from page 1)

(D-MI), and Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) are retiring from the Senate in 2014, and the seat of the late Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) will be filled in an oddly timed Wednesday, October 16, election. As you can see, there is a lot of potential ground to be won by the Republicans and lost by the Democrats, up to and including control of the Senate and potentially the control of Congress.

Several battlegrounds have already revealed themselves. In Kentucky, Mitch McConnell (R) is a target of the Democrats and is being “primaried” from the right in his own party; it’s unusual for a floor leader to be in such electoral jeopardy. McConnell brought himself to the nation’s attention in 2009 by announcing that his primary goal in governing was to make Pres. Obama a one-term president, and lots of the paralysis of the Congress is laid at his doorstep. In Maine, Susan Collins (R) is an experienced and popular senator, but she is being primaried from the right because she has shown willingness to reach across the aisle on issues she perceives as bipartisan. In Minnesota, freshman Sen. Al Franken (D), Harvard grad and former “Saturday Night

Live” writer/performer, won his last election by 312 votes; the narrowness of the margin and the controversies within his state have made Franken a target for Republican efforts to unseat him.

In Massachusetts, a state that in recent years has elected both Scott Brown (R) and Elizabeth Warren (D) to the Senate, Sen. Ed Markey (D) won a special election to fill the rest of Secretary of State John Kerry’s term, and will stand for re-election in 2014. A few weeks ago, Markey voted “present” at a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing concerning Syria. North Carolina is currently notorious for the most draconian voter suppression laws. Sen. Kay Hagan (D-NC) is seen as vulnerable due to the state’s swing to the right. Alaska’s Mark Begich (D) won his seat from Sen. Ted Stevens, due largely to Stevens’ felony conviction during the campaign; the conviction was later set aside due to prosecutorial misconduct and Begich is regarded as vulnerable in the largely red state.

Arkansas, Louisiana, New Hampshire, and South Dakota all promise to deliver Senate races into the battleground category.

The internet is a

wonderful way to inform ourselves about distant politics: sign into the website of the local newspapers and read away. Better yet: do you have friends or family in one of these states? Someone you can talk politics with? Call them up and ask some leading questions, then listen. Are education issues and perspective important to you? Federal decisions influence student loan availability and interest rates, money to libraries and to staff, lunches for students whose families are unable to send them to school with lunches. They declare “no child left behind” and define the “common core”. Go to the state association website and look for their candidate endorsements.

Listening isn’t enough. If you have an opinion about how the USA should face the next few years and the next batch of crises, then you have a stake in how these Senate races come out, whether they are next door or far away. Find out who the candidates are, and send money to your choice: there’s no other way to carry your candidate’s voice to the people ... unless you get in your car, put yourself up with the in-laws, and volunteer your time in a battleground state.

President's Message, cont.

President's message, continued from page 2

a marker, but definitely not an endpoint.

We have come a long way in our country as far as voting rights and civil rights and the right to belong to a union and to collectively bargain, but many of those rights are being eroded. And here in Washington, in spite of a victory in Court, the right for all students to attend a public school that is fully funded as per our state's "Paramount Duty" is not even close to being a reality.

So, as we celebrate these milestones we must remember that our journey is not finished and we must avoid

taking steps backward. Celebrate how far we've come, but don't forget the work still left to be done.

On a lighter note, the Lava Lamp turned 50 years old in September. Now that's a milestone to celebrate!



Remember the good old days, when teachers taught the class and split the firewood that kept the classroom warm?
Me either, thanks to collective bargaining and the strength of our voices, united.

Gainsharing update

The State Supreme Court will be hearing both the Gainsharing lawsuit and the Uniform COLA lawsuit on October 24. If you or someone you know is planning to retire using the Early Retirement Reduction Factors, please read important information about how the Supreme Court's impending decision could impact you. A detailed article is on the WEA website at www.washingtonea.org. On the home page, type "gain-sharing" in the search box and you will go directly to the article.

Don't delay ... read this today.

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Congress can be
considered
a word from
the wise.

The only retired organization affiliated with WEA and NEA

A Golden Opportunity *by Karle Warren, WEA-Retired Executive Committee, WEA-Southeast*

Remember those days when the kick off for the new school year began with the district's benefit fair? Colleagues greeted each other with voices rising while vendors in the gym or cafeteria looked for individuals with whom to share their valuable services.

Well, why shouldn't WEA-Retired be joining the excitement?!

This is my second year of participating as a vendor at benefit fairs. It is surprising which district, whether rural, suburban or urban, offers benefit fairs for their employees. You meet new and veteran school employees looking for ways to improve their year. What a great way to provide information to active WEA members about pre-retired seminars and continuing benefits into retirement.

If you think you might be interested in attending a benefit fair in your area next fall to help spread the word about how membership in WEA-Retired continues NEA and WEA benefits into retirement, send an email to WEARetired@washingtonea.org.

