



Fall 2022

Connections

NEWS TO KEEP YOU ENGAGED IN THE PROFESSION YOU LOVE

We are now accepting self-nominations to serve as a WEA-Retired Delegate to the WEA Representative Assembly!

The WEA Representative Assembly (WEA RA) will be in person at the Spokane Convention Center, April 13-15, 2023. Register online at <https://wea.mobi/Retired2023WEARA>. Nominations will be open until Jan. 17, 2023.

- Nominees for WEA-Retired delegates must be classified as retired and may not hold a contract with a public school district.
- Nominees must agree to attend all sessions.
- Delegates are elected annually to serve for one year.
- Delegate nominations will be presented to the WEA-Retired Board of Directors on Jan. 19, 2023.
- If you need help to complete the online form or have questions, please contact Diane Kanda (Nominations & Elections Chair) at mdkanda@yahoo.com or 360-201-5653, or contact Mary Lindsey at WEARetired@WashingtonEA.org.

Never been a delegate? No problem! Been a delegate for decades? Come again! Everyone is welcome to self-nominate. The Spokane Convention Center is a large venue and will hold hundreds of delegates from throughout the state. This representative assembly will discuss/debate New Business Items (NBIs) and Resolutions. It is also an election year for the WEA president and vice president, as well as an NEA director. There will be awards, motivational speakers, and much more! Please join us!

Don't forget to register online - <https://wea.mobi/Retired2023WEARA> - by Jan. 17!

The President's Corner

By Mary Lindsey, 2019-23 WEA-Retired President



As we end one year and welcome the next, one thing that is always constant is the needs of our membership. They are at the center of everything we do. Focusing on improving (and maintaining) our retirement security, especially in the areas of health care and pensions, will always need our attention. After spending our working life dedicated to advancing public education opportunities for students and staff, that goal remains; it just has taken a different form.

The focus on quality and affordable health care as well as member choice came to the forefront in early June when the Health Care Authority's PEBB program announced their plan to eliminate the Uniform Medical Plan-Classic Medicare as a choice. At that time, there were more than 100,000 people on a PEBB plan, with 53,000 on UMP-Classic Medicare. **Due to a ground swell of activism, the**

HCA is continuing to offer the UMP-Classic Medicare as an option for our health care. A coalition of senior organizations now meets once or twice a month with PEBB leadership to ensure member choice with comprehensive offerings which are of high quality and affordable. One of the outcomes of these meetings is that there will be a series of listening sessions to receive feedback from subscribers of the UMP-Classic Medicare as well as other plans. **The first listening session pilot will be held by Zoom on Feb. 23 from 10-11:30 a.m. If you are interested in participating, please send your name and your 2023 PEBB plan choice to WEARetired@WashingtonEA.org.** Additional listening sessions and forums will be held in the months ahead.

Of course, pensions are extremely important to all WEA-Retired members. As approved at the October WEA-Retired board meeting, our overarching goal for 2023 is to: Ensure retirement security for all WEA-Retired members. This includes: establish a true annual COLA for all retirement plans, increase Medicare subsidy and state contribution to health care coverage, allow cash out of all accumulated sick leave without restrictions, and support return to work without limitations on annual hours. To see our 2022-23 legislative goals, go to www.WashingtonEA.org/retired.

The Select Committee on Pension Policy had their last meeting of 2022 on Dec. 13. **At their November meeting, they passed a recommendation to the Legislature that an Ad Hoc one-time 3% COLA for Plan 1 TRS/PERS for the first \$44,000 of pension payment be paid on July 1, 2023, and during the 2023-25 biennium, for the SCPP to study and recommend an ongoing Plan 1 COLA.**

As you probably already know from reading WEA-Retired emails, the annual **WEA-Retired & RPEC Legislative Day will take place on Monday, Jan. 30, in Olympia.** There will be training in the morning, followed by lunch and a bus ride to the capitol to lobby in groups according to your legislative district. After lobbying, there will be an informal "Meet & Greet" with legislators, WEA-Retired, and RPEC members. Please register by Jan. 11 at <https://wea.mobi/2023RetiredLegislativeDay>.

The following Nov. 3, 2022 letter was written and signed by the Plan 1 COLA Coalition Organizations.



**The Honorable Steve Conway Chair
Select Committee on Pension Policy
P.O. Box 40429
Olympia, WA 98504**

Dear Chair Conway:

On behalf of the Retired Public Employees Council of Washington, Washington Education Association-Retired and Washington State School Retirees' Association, we are writing to urge your support for a legislative path to a permanent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) and ad hoc COLAs to provide relief from staggering inflation for Plan 1 retirees.

Thank you for being responsive to the letters, verbal testimony and PRO positions cited by our collective 32,000 public sector retirees. We stand unified in our pursuit of both priorities.

Please ensure the proposed bill you will review at the November SCPP meeting includes specific trigger language that articulates the nexus of the pay down of the unfunded liability with sustained employer contribution rates to fund a permanent COLA for Plan 1 retirees. This legislative pathway is necessary and more than a decade overdue. Only a permanent COLA will provide long-term fiscal stability to our state's oldest public sector retirees.

We also urge your support for two back-to-back ad hoc COLAs in fiscal years 2023 and 2024 to address today's rampant inflation, which now tops 9% in Washington state. Regardless of whether there is legislative precedence for such a proposal, the reality of the situation dictates bold action. Our Plan 1 retirees, who earn among the lowest pensions in the state, are suffering. Long before the recent escalation of inflationary rates, most Plan 1 retirees were struggling to make ends meet on their pension income, which has not kept pace with inflation, with a few exceptions, since the removal of the permanent COLA in 2011. Now, due to the direness of their situations, even more are unable to afford their homes, opting out of medically necessary medications and procedures, skipping meals, returning to work in their 70s and 80s, accessing food banks and tapping other community resources to survive.

You can stop this vicious cycle of escalating need by advancing legislation that includes specific language to restore a permanent COLA for long-term financial stability and predictability, and funds back-to-back ad hoc COLAs for immediate inflationary relief. Both paths are necessary to ensure financial, food and housing security in retirement for our state's most fragile and vulnerable public sector retirees.

We would be happy to meet with you and SCPP members, as a Coalition, in support of a permanent COLA and back-to-back ad hoc COLAs for Plan 1 retirees.

Washington State Department of Retirement Systems Committee

By Kim Mead, WEA-Retired representative to the DRS Advisory Committee

The Department of Retirement Systems (DRS) Advisory Committee is composed of members from associations and organizations representing active and retired members of public pension plans administered by DRS. The group meets twice a year to receive and relay information around client service issues, share legislative objectives, develop and recommend ways to improve communication, as well as share information provided by the director with constituents.

The Advisory Committee met on Nov. 10, 2022. The agenda included a report from the Washington State Investment Board (WSIB), an actuarial update for the State Retirement Plans and an update from the director of the DRS, Tracy Guerin.

The WSIB began their report with an overview of how they work to manage one of the largest and most diversified public employee investment funds in the United States. They are comprised of 15 members, five of which represents public employee pension systems. The WEA is fortunate to be represented by Tacoma educator, Sara Ketelsen. The report continued with an overview of how the trust fund investments performed over the last year. Washington continues to be in the top five of the United States in pension investment performance. Adjustments are made when needed to accommodate for market trends. Each year, an annual plan is developed as well as an analysis of performance and advance risk management. This year, WSIB has also been working on developing a partner assessment of their Environmental, Social and Governance. This has become increasingly important for companies and investors and is part of the consideration for partner due diligence and monitoring. The strategy tools developed will help define and advance the WSIB's ability to address climate change and diversity as integral factors within the investments.

Office of the State Actuary (OSA) representatives provided an update on Washington state retirement plans. The plans continue to be healthy, and contribution rates remain stable. They will continue to monitor the state of the economy and will provide updated analysis in the summer. OSA provides a wealth of information on their website: leg.wa.gov/osa.

A DRS director provided a report that included current workload, which has grown at the same time as employee turnover. The belief is lower pay has caused a loss of close to twenty-five percent of their workforce. People are leaving for higher paying jobs, and the loss of personnel will affect the ability to respond to employee inquiries. A request for an increase in funding was provided to the governor with the hope that it will be included in his budget proposal. The next meeting will occur in April.

Working together for the common good!

The following nine senior organizations (PEBB Stakeholders' Medicare Coalition) are meeting one or two times a month with Public Employees Benefit Board (PEBB) leadership of the Washington State Health Care Authority.

UNDERSTANDINGS: The Uniform Medical Plan (UMP) Classic Medicare is not closing as an option in PEBB. PEBB leadership and the coalition will work together to promote a series of listening sessions and forums to demonstrate

that Health Care

Authority listens and respects

the voices of PEBB

members. If you would like to be a part of these

sessions, please send an

email to Mary

Lindsey at [WEARetired@](mailto:WEARetired@WashingtonEA.org)

[WashingtonEA.org](mailto:WEARetired@WashingtonEA.org).



Washington State Alliance for Retired Americans Convention

By Pam Fuelling, WEA-Retired Secretary, Pilchuck Chapter

The Washington State Alliance for Retired Americans (WSARA) held its annual convention virtually on Nov. 16, 2022. Nine WEA-Retired members attended the convention. Jackie Boschok, WSARA president, was elected for another three-year term. She shared the highlights of WSARA's Year in Review, which included events such as presenting Rep. Kathy McMorris Rodgers with the ARA Zero Award for her votes on critical retirement security issues, presenting Congresswoman Dr. Kim Schrier with the 2022 ARA Hero Award for her 100% 2021 pro-retiree voting record, and packing a Mountlake Terrace coffee shop with "Seniors for Patty" to chat with Senator Murray and hear from Rep. Suzan Del Bene prior to the mid-term election.

Executive Director at the Alliance for Retired Americans, Rich Fiesta, was the keynote speaker. He spoke about the role of seniors in the 2022 election, the importance of young voters as a possible key to democratic success, and the threats to Social Security and Medicare. WA Fair Trade Coalition Executive Director, Julie Bouanna, explained that although trade rules have acted as a barrier to seniors' access to COVID testing, treatment, and vaccines, the World Trade Organization passed a resolution that eliminated some of the barriers. The convention ended with a discussion of age-friendly healthcare by an intergenerational panel that was moderated by WA State Labor Council, AFL-CIO Secretary Treasurer-elect, Cherika Carter.

Thank you to Bev Wentz & Nancy Baldwin for decades of service

Bev Wentz, 23 years as the lead in the selection of WEA-Retired Scholarships

By Sandy Kokko, WEA-Retired-Vancouver

Who knows what Bev Wentz had planned when she retired from teaching in 1995. Little did she know that WEA-Retired Chinook members were waiting in the wings to involve her in the organization.

It started that first year when Helen Carlstrom tapped her for the pre-retirement seminar program. Over the years, Bev's role in the program grew, and at the time of her "retirement" from the program, she was the team lead. Judy Berg held off a bit longer, but then she approached Bev about becoming chair of the WEA-Retired scholarship committee. Bev saw the scholarship program through its growing years. From 1999 to 2022, she served as the lead in the selection of scholarship recipients. She oversaw the distribution and collection of the applications and, with her team of readers, the selection of the recipients. From 2004 to the present, Bev also served on the scholarship board as secretary and is currently vice president. During this time, she also represented the scholarship board on the WEA-Retired board.

As if she did not have enough to do, along with other outside activities, Bev also served as the WEA-Retired board director for Chinook from 1999 to 2003. In 2010, she was recognized as the WEA-Retired Member of the Year. WEA-Retired thanks her for all of her years of service in all of these capacities.

Nancy Baldwin, 31 years on the DRS Advisory Committee representing WEA-Retired

By Mary Lindsey, WEA-Retired-Fourth Corner

Nancy Baldwin recently announced that she was retiring after serving as the retiree representative on the Department of Retirement Advisory Committee for more than 30 years and before that, for two years as a working educator. Nancy served as the committee chair for the past ten years. One task of this committee is to overview our pension investments. When compared with other states of our size, Washington has consistently performed in the top five. She also praised our Deferred Compensation program, which started during her time on the committee.

I met Nancy many years ago shortly after I started teaching, as she was the Bellingham EA president for six years starting in the late 70s. She retired in 1989. It was nice to chat with her for this article. Nancy shared with me that she has really enjoyed her involvement in WEA union work over the years, as she always learned something. She spoke of other committee members in high regard. Nancy also served for eight years on a board that worked on the development of retirement Plan 3. WEA-Retired is very appreciative of her many years of service to WEA and WEA-Retired members. We wish her well as she retires from her retirement commitments! Thank you, Nancy!

Recognizing long-time member, Mike Sells

By Marj Njaa, WEA-Retired Pilchuck

WEA-Retired-Pilchuck thanked Mike Sells for his many years of service to public education at our October chapter meeting. He was an elementary and secondary educator in the Everett School District, he served as president of the Everett Education Association, and he was an elected Secretary-Treasurer of the Snohomish County Labor Council, AFL/CIO from 1976 to 2014. This labor council represents 65 unions, with over 42,000 working people in Snohomish County. Mike is a long-time member of WEA-Retired.



After retiring from the Everett School District, he launched a second career as a member of the Washington State House of Representatives for the 38th Legislative District. Mike has worked tirelessly to support labor and public education. He continues his support and efforts into this new stage. He shared some comments with us, and we celebrated him with cake and a small gift. Thank you, Mike! You continue to make a difference in our lives. Welcome to retirement!

Tea, scones and camaraderie

By Quincy Cook, WEA-Retired Soundview

It's always a good time for tea and scones! Last May, for the first time in two years, the Soundview chapter held its annual Tea and Scones event in person. It was so good to be able to be together. Sixteen future retirees attended and enjoyed delicious scones and fruit as well as their choice of tea, coffee or lemonade. While they enjoyed their treats, Erica Reich from California Casualty provided information on retirement planning, and Nicole Reif, from NEA Member Benefits, discussed the type of benefits available to pre-WEA-Retired members upon retirement. At the end of the question-and-answer period, Nicole held a drawing for a coffee gift basket. Lois Perkins, our WEA-Retired seminar team leader for Soundview, was also on hand to share her expertise on navigating the WEA-Retired website, showing everyone how to sign up for a WEA-Retired/NEA-Retired life membership.





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Important dates

Jan. 18: Virtual Executive Committee
Jan. 19: Virtual WEA-Retired Board Meeting
Jan. 30: WEA-Retired/RPEC Legislative Day, Olympia
(register by Jan. 11)
March 12-14: NEA-Retired Conference, San Francisco
March 21: Executive Committee, Federal Way
March 22-23: WEA-Retired Board Meeting/Retreat, Federal Way
April 13-15: WEA Representative Assembly, Spokane
(register by Jan. 17)
May 16: Virtual Executive Committee
June 6: Executive Committee, Federal Way
June 7: WEA-Retired Board Meeting, Federal Way
June 7-8: WEA-Retired Annual Meeting, Federal Way (*save the date)
June 29-30: NEA-Retired Annual Meeting, Orlando
July 2-6: NEA Representative Assembly, Orlando

Do we have your current mailing address, email, and phone number?
If not, please send it to <https://forms.washingtonea.org/forms/memberupdate>.

Did you know that our members also belong to a WEA-Retired chapter within the UniServ Councils? You belong to the chapter where you retired or where you live. If you would like to make a change, please send an email to WEARetired@WashingtonEA.org.

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Connections is published by Washington Education Association-Retired four times a year. We invite your comments and contributions. During other months, a newsletter is sent to your email address. If you're not receiving those, please send an email to WEARetired@WashingtonEA.org.

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