



Pension Plan ‘Progress’ — Olympia Style

By Bruce Williamson
WEA-Retired Board of Directors
WEA-Lower Columbia

In an article in the *Seattle Times* titled, “Bill would phase out pensions for public employees in the state,” Senator Doug Erickson (R-Ferndale) is introducing a bill on Monday (Jan 13) that would offer a \$10,000 incentive for PERS employees who agree to move from a state pension system to a 401k retirement package. “If it’s good enough for Boeing it should be good enough for the employees of Washington state,” said Erickson.

While it is unlikely to pass in the 60-day session that began on the 13th, top Democrats say the state pen-

sions are in good shape, and they will oppose any move to end the pensions.

The way the bill is written it would be more of a pilot project that would allow only 2,000 employees



to switch over and get the \$10,000. It is important to note that the bill is only targeting PERS employees and

not teachers or state patrol officers. We should not be complacent, though. This is just the type of foot in the door some legislators want to make the entire system become a 401(k) plan.

I fear for the poor employee who is ready to retire and another stock market crash happens like we had in 2008. Forget retirement then.

A spokesman for the Washington Federation of State Employees stated that there was no need to end the public pensions. House majority leader Pat Sullivan said that the state had a healthy pension system.

I personally feel the old saying applies here. If it’s not broke, don’t fix it.

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President's Message

Getting 'curiouser and curiouser'

Happy New Year! As we begin 2014, pensions are on my mind. And when I think of pensions, this quote by Lewis Carroll, in *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, keeps running through my head:

"Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If



Kit Raney, WEA-Retired president

you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!"

Washington State has a strong labor heritage. The Washington Education Association was started in 1889. Public pensions in Washington have been around for a long time. The

Teachers Retirement System was started in 1938. It has always been my expectation that organized labor works to make things better for its members. Using my logic, we should be able to put our energy, organizing power and resources into improving pensions for our members, those already retired and those looking forward to a financially secure retirement.

Well, logic has turned into running as fast as we can in order to stay in the same place. And I fear that the race is turning into an ultra-marathon. Since at least 1977, when what started as pension "reform" with the closing of Plan 1 and the creation of Plan 2, retirement benefits have been under attack. In recent years we have had to take the State to court in order to prevent the elimination of gainsharing and the Uniform COLA. And

last year's legislative session saw the introduction of two Senate bills (by Sen. Rodney Tom and Sen. Barbara Bailey) which, if passed, would have established a new, defined contribution, 401(k)-type pension plan.

Now I fear that the attacks on our pensions will intensify, emboldened by the "Boeing effect." When a company is allowed to hold the state hostage for billions of tax breaks, "diss" the collective bargaining process for a "best and final offer" vote that will end the defined benefit pension plan for Boeing machinists, and our elected officials add pressure to the workers to approve this offer, the race to the bottom is on.

Danny Westneat of the *Seattle Times* summarized it best when he wrote, "If doing away with pensions was so crucial for the health of a private company making record profits, then why not for a cash-strapped state?" (Read his excellent column "Boeing puts all pensions at risk" at http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2022617234_westneat08x.html)

The 2014 Legislative session is under way, and it's time to lace up our sneakers and get ready to run. Please go to www.OurVoiceWashington.org to read about what is happening in Olympia and sign up to receive updates.

To paraphrase Alice, who said in Lewis Carroll's *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, things are getting "curiouser and curiouser."

Contact Information for WEA-Retired

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Website: www.washingtonea.org/retired

Mailing address: P.O. Box 9100, Federal Way, WA 98063-9100

Nominations

WEA-Retired elections for officers, board directors and annual meeting delegates

WEA-Retired will convene its **Annual Meeting, June 4-5, 2014**. This year delegates will elect non-chapter board directors, president and vice president.

Non-chapter units: **Kent (1), North Central (2), Rainier (3)**, Sammamish (8), Soundview (1), **Spokane (3)**, Summit (2), **Vancouver (3), WEA-Cascade (4)**, WEA-Eastern Washington (5), WEA-Lower Columbia (3), **WEA MidState (5), WEA Olympic (7), WEA-Riverside (3)**, and WEA-South-east (5). New board directors will be elected for the units in **bold print**. The number in parenthesis is the number of delegates the chapter is allowed in addition to the board director.

Chapter units: **Pilchuck (6), Puget Sound (5)**, Seattle (6), Tacoma (4), WEA Chinook (10), and WEA Fourth Corner (7). The units in **bold print** will be electing new board directors this year. The number in parenthesis is the number of delegates the chapter is allowed in addition to the board director. Chapter units should **elect their delegates before March 15, 2014**.

All nominees must be WEA-Retired members. More than one name can be submitted to be a non-chapter delegate. The same person can be nominated for more than one position. You can nominate yourself or another retired member. If you nominate someone other than yourself, you must have the consent of the nominee.

This form can be used for nominating delegates from ALL councils, board directors, president and vice president. Nominees for chapter units will be forwarded to the council leader to be included when the council elects its delegates. Non-chapter delegates will be elected during a conference call meeting of WEA-Retired Board of Directors in late March.

Your Name _____

Date of Retirement _____

Your e-mail _____

Phone Number _____

I nominate the following retired members for:

Delegate:

WEA-Retired Board Director:

Name

Name

UniServ Council

UniServ Council

WEA-Retired President:

WEA-Retired Vice President:

Name

Name

Mail the nomination form to: **Jan Curtis**, 718 Russell Road, Snohomish, WA 98290.
Nomination forms must be **postmarked no later than March 7, 2014**.

Chapter Activities

WEA-Chinook Retired

By Stacia Bilsland

Chinook Retired's November speaker was former Governor Christine Gregoire, who graciously came to speak to us on Election Day 2013. She shared with the group that the practical matters that consumed her time as governor were the crumbling infrastructure, funding for education, transportation and its crucial link to economic growth, and a growing concern with our regressive tax system which made addressing these issues almost impossible because all require enormous amounts of money to make an impact. When asked what was most difficult, she spoke about the days that both she and husband Mike had to attend different funerals for fallen soldiers or others who had died from manmade catastrophes. She spoke of the heartbreak of the recession which forced her to agree to cut funding for programs close to her heart such as early childhood education. During her talk she also mentioned a book she co-authored, *Governing in Good Times and Bad*, which those present who had read it highly recommended.

And her egress from the meeting was to be with her daughter in Seattle who was running for port commissioner.

December saw a presentation from two librarians from Tumwater Timberland Library. Among all the other services, they spoke about subscription to a new data base, now probably available via

most library systems, which accesses Microsoft's online training opportunities for software in the Office suite.

January's speaker was Jerry Apple from Shelton, who is active at all levels of Students Against Destructive Decisions, as well as being deeply involved with a program that is a review of driving skills for seniors called *Getting There Safely*.

Pilchuck Retired

By Kit Raney

Pilchuck Retired is a very active group that holds monthly meetings from September through June. The meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month, 11:30, at the Pilchuck UniServ Council. Every meeting includes lunch and a report on what is happening with WEA and WEA-Retired and then a program on some topic of interest. So far this year the meetings have included a field trip to Barca Gardens on Whidbey Island (September), Keeping Healthy – a talk by a local chiropractor (October), PEBB/Healthcare Updates (November), and Representative Mike Sells (December).

Pilchuck's January 14th meeting had a presentation by Pilchuck Retired member Karen Shoaf-Mitchell about WAmend. WAmend is a coalition committed to passing an amendment to the U.S. Constitution clarifying that "Corporations are not people and money is not free speech". The

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intent is to negate the Supreme Court decision known as “Citizens United.” This interesting and informative presentation was very well received by the audience.

Pilchuck Retired’s next meeting is February 11 and the program will be a Legislative Update. If you are interested in attending a Pilchuck Retired meeting, please contact Jan Curtis jc_curtis@comcast.net.

WEA-Riverside Retired By Carla Gish

On a gray and rainy January day, WEA-Riverside Retired gathered at the Grant House in Vancouver for a wonderful lunch and guest speaker, Rep. Monica Stonier, our local representative from the 17th district.

Monica, a first-time legislator, gave us a window into her life as a legislator. She admitted being on a high learning curve, but she is full of enthusiasm and excitement, and determined to represent her district (as well as educators and kids) well. Prior to the 2012 election, Monica was a 7th grade teacher and instructional coach at Pacific Middle School in Vancouver. She is currently still an instructional coach, but misses being in the classroom.



*Pilchuck Retired member
Karen Shoaf-Mitchell
presented at the Pilchuck
meeting this month.*

Monica is one of the few educators in the Legislature and brings her firsthand experience in the classroom to education discussions. As a member of the Education Committee, she is able to inform other legislators about classroom realities. She is the voice of reason in sometimes unreasonable education discussions. For example, Monica does not support all the testing, but unfortunately that is part of the federal mandates. She feels that Washington state is going in the right direction. She knows firsthand what teachers and students need to be successful, and she will continue to share her knowledge with other legislators and fight for what is needed. Presently she is working on a bill regarding graduation requirements for students not continuing on to college. On Monday, January 13, 2014, she was one to sign the Education COLA bill!

She sees her role as legislator to listen to her constituents and represent them. During the question and answer part, when responding to how she voted on specific bills, she quickly responded

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that she listens to her constituents and what they want. She does not vote by party, but by her constituents.

Monica is already preparing for the 2014 election. In 2012, she was in a tight race, and this year could be another one. Many of our local members actively campaigned for Monica in 2012 and will again this year! As an educator, Monica is a strong voice in the Olympia, so it is extremely important that we support her in the 2014 election!

Seattle Retired Our Pensions Are Under Attack! By Edith Ruby

All across America legislators are pushing bills to take away public employee pensions. Even though Washington State has one of the most well managed and solvent pensions systems nationwide, Republican senators have introduced bills to substitute 401(k) plans for our defined benefit pensions. On February 18, SEA Retired will be hosting Shawn Lewis, WEA Budget Lobbyist, to tell us about proposed pension changes in this legislative session. He will also update us on the status of the TRS 1 Uniform COLA and retirement gain-sharing lawsuits. We encourage all who are retired or close to retirement to attend this meeting. The meeting is open to all SEA members. Each of you has worked hard over the years in the expectation that you would

receive the benefits promised you during your working years. Knowledge of the threats to these benefits will help us to develop actions to support those legislators who are fighting these destructive changes.

The next SEA Retired Meeting is Tuesday, Feb. 18, 2014 at 10:00-11:30 a.m. (during mid-winter break week) at SEA Office – 5501 4th Ave S. Parking is available behind Subway on the corner of 4th Ave S. and Findlay St. (You are also invited to go with the group to lunch in the International District after the meeting.)

Spokane Retired By Joe Ramos

It is common to hear the phrase, “You can retire from your job, but not your profession,” especially when you are with a group of retired educators. Knowing that sentiment to be true of many retirees, plus building on the experiences of several UniServ Retired groups around the state with the urging of WEA Retired leaders, WEA-Retired members from Spokane and WEA-Eastern Washington have gathered on the first Monday of each month during the school year.

Our first gathering in December 2012 brought together more than 40 retired members who shared experiences, completed surveys of what future luncheons would have as a

focus, set dates, and, of course, enjoyed food! We actually had a pre-gathering in November where we made more than 600 calls for Jay Inslee for Governor.

The number of attendees ranges from 20 – 30. Presenters have included Kit Raney, WEA-Retired President; four legislators, both Republican and Democratic, in the last several months; Shawn Lewis, WEA lobbyist; SHEBA representatives; and a detective from the Spokane Police Department who shared how to keep ourselves and our identities safe. We also have an update on what is going on in classrooms with active members and share ideas on how to support them in their important work.

Connecting with each other both socially and intellectually has been an important part of our luncheons, renewing us in many ways. Please contact Kit Raney if

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you have not heard about a WEA Retired group meeting in your area. Kit's email address is on Page 2 of this issue, at the end of the President's Column.

You will be glad you did!

Action Planned WEA-Retired Lobby Day

Our annual Lobby Day is scheduled for Thursday, February 6, 2014. WEA-Retired members will meet at the WEA Chinook Council Office, 5220 Capitol Blvd. SW, Tumwater, at 9:00 a.m. for a short Legislative Work Team Meeting and a briefing from one of our WEA Lobbyists. Then we will move up to "the hill" to meet with Legislators.

If you are interested in attending our Lobby Day, please contact Lee Ann Prielipp, our Legislative Chair, at leeannwa@comcast.net or leave a message at 1-800-622-3393, ext. 7067.

Gainsharing and Uniform COLA Update

As this goes to press, we are still waiting for the State Supreme Court to release their ruling on gainsharing and the Uniform COLA. This could happen any day or later in the spring. It is hard to predict. When the ruling is released, we will get the information out to you as soon as possible via email. Undoubtedly, it will also be in the news.



WEA-Retired Newsletter
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Nomination form
included for 2014
WEA-Retired
Annual Meeting
delegates and
officers.
Deadline to mail
is March 7.

The only retired organization affiliated with WEA and NEA

