



Legislative work team update

by *Lee Ann Prielipp*

Pension issues are the main focus this year of the Legislative Work Team. Each meeting we spend time learning more about our state retiree pension plans and other pension issues so that we are knowledgeable when talking with law makers and our own members.

Our retirement plans are better funded than similar plans in other states. Two WA State plans are fully funded and Plan 1 is 80% funded. While the Legislature has made their actuarially recommended pension payments the past three sessions, it is important for all of us to make certain these payments continue. We all made our required contributions throughout our careers and believe that the Legislature should pay its portion. This year we have had a number of visits by legislators, both Democrats and Republicans, current and those out of office. We asked each one to discuss the issues that will be prevalent this session, how each would approach these issues and how we could be better lobbyists. Most of the issue responses were related to the McCleary Decision, I-1351, taxes and mental health. Hints about lobbying included: meet with legislators prior to the session; stay in touch with legislators through email on regular intervals; during appointments in Olympia bring only one or two visitors at a time; ask specifically how that legislator will vote on an issue and write down the responses.

Communications with our membership is also an emphasis this year. Each member of the Work Team is assigned to a member(s) of the WEA-Retired Board. Following our meetings a summary is sent to the Board members with follow-up contact to answer questions and promote contact with local retirees. Legislators remind us that retirees are the best contacts on retiree issues. We need to increase these efforts to achieve our goals.

On March 17 we will have our annual Lobby Day. All WEA-Retired members are invited to join us. We do not cover expenses for members but do hold a briefing session with a WEA Governmental Relations lobbyist and have materials for dispensing to all legislators. We recommend that each retiree make appointments with his/her local legislator for after 11 a.m. that day which allows for the briefing and getting to the Hill. We can also have a Work Team member available to accompany anyone who would like that support. Our regular March meeting will be held at 9 a.m. at Chinook UniServ Council followed by the briefing at 9:30 am.

Additional legislative concerns are: reinstating the Cost of Living Increase for Plan 1; protecting/increasing health care benefits; retaining defined benefit pensions; and removing the restrictions for people who retired under the Early Retirement Reduction Factors. We also support our active WEA issues.

Our Work Team usually meets the first Wednesday of each month (except this March) at the WEA headquarters building at 10 a.m. and all WEA-Retired members are welcome. If you are interested in joining us for either our meetings or lobby day please contact Lee Ann Prielipp at leeannwa@comcast.net or 253-839-9753.

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From the president's desk

by *WEA-Retired President, Kit Raney*

I often get phone calls and emails with questions and/or comments and I attempt to respond to them the best that I can. The email below came after our last emailed newsletter. I responded to the member but thought maybe some others might be wondering the same thing. The email I received is below.

"I am curious. Just what does WEA -Retired do? Since the gain sharing court case was lost I have seen nothing regarding a move for a cola. The governor has proposed teacher salary increases but nothing for retirees. I am getting the same benefit I got when I retired in 1998. I wish WEA Retired would spend more time on issues that affect retirees rather than delegates to a convention that really has no benefit for retirees. Once retired the WEA is through with us so why continue to advocate for their causes on salary issues."

Since the writer mentions the COLA and the Governor's proposed budget, I will start with what we are doing regarding the current Legislative session. Both WEA and WEA-Retired are part of a coalition of other public employee unions which work together on retirement issues. There will be a bill to provide a COLA for Plan 1 members. There is already a bill to remove the return to work restrictions of those who retired using the Early Retirement Reduction Factors. We expect a bill to protect the Medicare subsidy for our health insurance and one about a study of our loss in purchasing power. There will undoubtedly be some negative legislation that will have to be stopped.

Our WEA lobbyists continually monitor what is happening in Olympia, get legislation

introduced, testify for or against legislation and keep members informed about what is happening and what we can do to help. One of the bullets under "Competitive Professional Compensation" in the WEA 2015 Legislative Priorities adopted by the WEA Board of Directors is "Increase funding for active and retired educators' health and pension benefits".

WEA-Retired has a very active Legislative Work Team that meets monthly to work on Legislative issues, hear from Legislators and lobby. We have a

Lobby Day scheduled for March 17. If you are interested in more information about the Lobby Day, or think you would like to participate, contact Lee Ann Prielipp at leeannwa@comcast.net.

As for our (WEA-Retired) attendance at the WEA Representative Assembly (RA), we are an affiliate of WEA, just like Seattle EA, Skykomish EA and all of the other affiliates of WEA. We vote, submit New Business Items (NBIs) and are active participants on the floor of the RA. In fact, over the last 10 years or so, the WEA RA has approved over 30 NBIs which directly impact our retired members. The issues in



WEA-Retired President, Kit Raney

these pension and retiree NBIs included protecting Social Security, COLAs, increasing subsidies for medical insurance, etc. Since the actions taken by the RA provide the direction for WEA, it is very important to have WEA-Retired members as a part of this important meeting.

The bottom line is that WEA and WEA-Retired work hand in hand to protect and improve our retiree benefits.

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I hope the member who sent me that email will write his Legislators and tell them the story about his loss of buying power and the impact of not receiving any increase in his pension since 1998. Those stories make a big difference.

Please stay informed about the Legislation that can impact us either positively or negatively. Go to www.OurVoiceWashington.org for information and to easily contact your Legislators.

Pictures worth sharing

Picture of WEA-Retired leaders from Olympic, Riverside, Spokane and Eastern who were honored at the January WEA-Retired Board Meeting for the organizing efforts in their chapters.

Included below: Corinne Thompson, Evelyn Horne, Joe Ramos, Donna Raymond and Dan Brown.



Pictured to the right: Maureen Ramos giving a WEA-PAC report at the February Legislative Work Team Meeting.



What's going on?

Spokane happenings: WEA Eastern Washington and Spokane Education Retired are beginning their third year of gatherings for retired members. The monthly luncheon meetings are held at the Councils' offices the first Monday of each month, October through April. We are lucky to have the Spokane School District's catering service provide us with incredible catered lunches at a cost of only \$6. During our 1 1/2 hours together we have speakers and presentations, stay up to date on what the actives are dealing with in their classrooms and take time to visit and share experiences.

Retirees attending, both certificated and classified, come from many places in the Spokane area: Colville, Newport, Deer Park, Cheney, Spokane Valley, Mead, and Spokane, just to name a few. We range in attendance from a high of about 40 to around 15. Come; see friends and meet new ones!

This month our presenter will share a variety of ways to remain strong and flexible and discover opportunities for healthy lifestyles. One just never knows who will pop in during our get togethers! For more information, contact Maureen Ramos, jramos1850@aol.com or call 509-473-9048.

What's going on in your WEA-Retired chapter? Visit www.washingtonea.org/retired for updated information about meetings and events in your area.

Ring, Ring ... WSSRA Calling

by WEA-Retired President, Kit Raney

Every year WEA-Retired members get phone calls from WSSRA and WEA-Retired gets calls and emails asking why they are being called and how did WSSRA get their phone number.

The WSSRA phone call usually starts with some version of "I'd like to make an appointment to come talk with you about the newly bargained medical benefits that WSSRA has negotiated for you". People often get confused and think that the caller is from WEA-Retired and that they are missing out on something if they do not make the appointment. The first thing that happens when the WSSRA person arrives for the appointment is a pitch to join WSSRA in order to receive these benefits.

We know why they are calling ... it is to sign up new WSSRA members. The question is, and has been, "How are they getting our names and phone numbers?"

A couple of weeks ago, one of our members got the call and, after telling George that she was a member of WEA-Retired and quite happy with her benefits, got his phone number off of her phone, and gave it to me. I called George, told him I was the President of WEA-Retired and that my members wondered how he got their phone numbers. He said that these were the numbers he was given to call and he didn't know how WSSRA got them. I told him that I was going to contact the Department of Retirement Systems to see if there was any way that DRS knew how WSSRA was getting this information.

A very short time later (less than 5 minutes), I got a phone call from Jake, one of the VP's for the company (AMBA) that WSSRA contracts with for membership recruitment. He told me that WSSRA gets the phone numbers by doing a public records request to school districts for recent retirees. According to the VP, the districts are "happy to give them this information". And that it is all "totally legal". However the RCW for the release of public records, RCW 42.56.250, exempts employee or volunteer "residential addresses, residential telephone numbers, personal wireless telephone numbers, personal electronic mail addresses", so if the school districts are indeed giving out this information, there is a problem.

So this is not the end of the story. I, along with the local Association President, will be visiting some school districts and finding out what information they are releasing. Stay tuned ...

Back in the day ...

taken by Nancy M. Miller, from a WEA historical pamphlet, Legacy

Today's newbies join the teaching corps in a Washington State where the WEA is an old and established organization, where collective bargaining is the norm, where injustice and discrimination can be appealed – in other words, a whole different world from the experience of our oldest retired teachers. In fact, a whole different world of teaching in part created by the hard work and organizing of today's retirees.

What did the newbies miss? A WEA pamphlet called "Legacy" printed in 1996 gives us the basic skeleton of information:

Before 1965, each new hire signed an individual contract with the district, one which specified their salary, the number of days to be worked, and perhaps a teaching assignment. A supplementary contract might specify a stipend for a coach. Any circumstantial extras were conditions at the discretion of the district, which could be altered or eliminated without notice.

Conflict between teachers and school boards over negotiations led to the 1965 Professional Negotiations Act, which obligated school boards K-12 and community colleges to "meet, confer, and negotiate" with elected teacher representatives in order to hear their "considered professional judgment ... prior to final adoption by the board of proposed school policies ..." Locals surveyed their memberships and put together their first proposals for negotiation.

Lots of teachers hesitated over terms like "collective bargaining", preferring the term "professional negotiation" – but whichever term was used didn't seem to reduce the resistance of many districts, where "management rights" became the catch-phrase. In the first year, Northshore Education had to declare an impasse and an outside team came in to help bring the parties to resolution.

Washington's law had the word "negotiate" in it, but most of the hallmarks of a bargaining law were missing: no contract as a final product, no definition of unfair labor practices, no mediation or arbitration. And the bargaining units contained administrators, an increasingly unhealthy circumstance as the possibilities for conflict of interest made themselves evident.

In 1968, Tacoma won the first collective bargaining contract, followed by Seattle in 1969. In 1971, Edmonds EA went to Superior Court to have the school calendar declared a negotiable item. In contrast to WEA's struggles, in 1967, a real collective bargaining law had been passed for classified staff. Discussion rose within WEA concerning the advisability of continuing the 'meet and confer' model without any enforceable commitment to outcomes, or put in the additional work to try to get a meaningful bargaining law for teachers. Two events helped in the move toward collective bargaining: the adoption of the Uniserv program, which provided trained staff to support the locals, and the withdrawal of administrators from WEA.

With a less divided membership, professional staff, focused leadership, the enticing word "negotiate" and the path-setting of the classified contracts, WEA faced the task of establishing meaningful, mutually binding bargaining. (read part two of this story in the next issue of WEA-Too).

I-1351 explained

by *Gloria Smith*

I-1351 was modeled after the requirements in the prototypical schools model developed by the Legislature. So, when legislators tell you they aren't funding I-1351, because they are working on funding McCleary, let them know that I-1351 funds class sizes exactly the way McCleary has mandated them to be funded!

The initiative calls for the classroom numbers to be reached by September of 2018, which also follows McCleary. For schools with 50% or more of their students on the free lunch program, the goals are as follows:

Grades K-3.....15 students

Grade 4.....22 students

Grades 5-12.....23 students

For all other schools, the goals are as follows:

Grades K-3.....17 students (currently funded at 25.23 students)

Grades 4-6.....25 students (currently funded at 27 students)

Grades 7-8.....25 students (currently funded at 28.53 students)

Grades 9-12.....25 students (currently funded at 28.54 students)

Career and Technical Education (middle school and high school)....19 students (currently 26.57)

Skills Center Programs.....16 (currently funded at 22.76 students)

In addition, I-1351 calls for minimum staff allocations for Principals, Associate Principals, and other building level administrators. Also, included are guidelines for nurses, counselors, social workers, psychologists, teaching assistants, office support, custodians, other classified staff, technology staff, warehouse staff, and maintenance staff.

If facilities are not available to add classrooms, districts may use funds to place two teachers in one classroom.

We will need to watch the legislature to see how they propose funding this initiative. There has already been speculation about getting 2/3 of the legislature to vote to suspend I-1351 before they even begin to fund it!

Google "I-1351 full text" if you would like to see the complete bill.

WEA-Retired member awards

by WEA-Retired Awards Committee Chairperson, Ken Mortland

WEA-Retired has three annual awards, given to members who have contributed greatly to the organization's productivity and outreach to members. The awards include: Retired Member of the Year, Pre-Retired Member of the Year, and Media recognition. The award forms can be found online at the WEA-Retired webpage on WEA's website, www.washingtonea.org/retired.

Scroll down to awards and click on the link to nomination forms. Each form contains directions about how to submit a nomination.

The Awards Committee reviews nominations, can make nominations, and selects the award recipients. Our deadline for nominations in April 1.

What is the difference between http and https?

The main difference between the two is keeping you secure. HTTP means hyper text transfer protocol. The "S" stands for secure! If you visit a website or web page, look at the address in the web browser. It will likely begin with <http://>. This means the website is talking to your browser using the regular "unsecured" language. In other words, it is possible someone could "eavesdrop" on your computer's conversation with the website. If you fill out a form through that website, someone might see that information.

That is why you NEVER, EVER enter credit card information, or other confidential information with an http website. If you are asked to enter credit card information, or your social security number, ALWAYS check to see if the website is an https site. If it isn't a secure site, do not enter confidential information!

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