



Fall 2023

Connections

NEWS TO KEEP YOU ENGAGED IN THE PROFESSION YOU LOVE

Three opportunities for your voice to be heard in 2024!

1. WEA-Retired/RPEC Joint Legislative Day

Olympia - Jan. 22, 10 a.m. to 4:15 p.m.

Visit <https://wea.mobi/2024RetiredWEALobbyDay> for more information and to register for this event by Jan. 3, if you have not done so already.

2. WEA RA

We are accepting self-nominations to serve as a WEA-Retired delegate to the WEA Representative Assembly in Spokane - April 11-13.

- 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. 18.
- 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.

To submit a self-nomination online, go to <https://wea.mobi/2024WEARARetired> by Jan. 17.

3. Official notice that WEA-Retired will run nominations and elections for delegates to the NEA RA & NEA-Retired Annual Meeting (2-year terms; 2024 Philadelphia, 2025 Portland, OR)

Nominations will be open from Jan. 15-31. You may access the online nomination form by going to www.WashingtonEA.org/retired. Self-nominations are accepted. The nomination form includes a 75-word statement by the candidate and a digital headshot photo for publication. An election will only be held if there are more than 8 candidates for the 8 delegate spots.

Ballots will be mailed to WEA-Retired members (not pre-retired) to home addresses on Feb. 5 and must be received back by March 4. Mail ballots to Diane Kanda, Nominations/Election Chair, 4595 Wynn Road, Bellingham, WA 98226. The WEA-Retired Board will receive the election results at the March 13-14 board meeting. WEA will receive the results by March 26. Contact Diane Kanda if you have any questions at mdkanda@yahoo.com.

The President's Corner

By Mary Lindsey, 2019-25 WEA-Retired President



As we finish another calendar year, we can look forward to 2024 as a year when we will continue to collectively put forward our voices. As stated on page one, there are three upcoming opportunities for your voice to be heard.

Our 8th Annual 2024 WEA-Retired/RPEC Joint Legislative Day in Olympia is on Jan. 22. The agenda for the day starts at 9:30 a.m. at the Olympia Hotel at Capitol Lake. The legislative training session is from 10 a.m. to noon. A number of speakers will prepare you for your group appointments with your legislators. From noon-1 p.m., you will have a working lunch (box lunches are provided) with the other WEA-Retired and RPEC (Retired Public Employee Council) members from your LD. Legislator meetings on the Hill will take place any time between 1:30-4:15 p.m. Bus transportation to and from the hotel to the Hill is provided. Note: There will NOT be a Legislative Reception at the hotel this year. I encourage you to participate regardless of your level of experience lobbying legislators. Most of the meetings will be 15 minutes. You will be well supported!

The 2024 WEA Representative Assembly will take place in Spokane on April 11-13. WEA-Retired qualifies for 115 delegates. You may self-nominate by following a link on the WEA RA email sent to all WEA-Retired members, or access the link on page 1. Everyone is welcome to self-nominate, whether this will be your first time or you have been a delegate for decades. 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, share reports/events, and celebrate our wins as well as discuss our needs. WEA-Retired and the Aspiring Educator delegates will have a provided group lunch during the RA! One opportunity you may not be aware of is to participate in WEA Caucuses, either at the RA (they have tables with information about their caucus) or when back at home. Please look at the list below. If you would like to help start another WEA Caucus, that is also encouraged. WEA-Retired members have a lot of experience to share!

The 2024 NEA-Retired Annual Meeting (June 29-30) and the NEA Representative Assembly (July 2-7) will be held this year in Philadelphia and the next year in Portland, OR. We are currently eligible for eight WEA-Retired delegates. The election timeline and procedures are printed on page 1. The NEA RA is very similar to the WEA RA, except it has thousands of delegates instead of hundreds. There are also many caucuses at the NEA level that may interest you. If you have any questions, please let me know by emailing me at WEARetired@WashingtonEA.org.

Wishing you all good health, peace, and happiness in the New Year! Mary

WEA members have formed groups to represent the interests and issues of specific communities within WEA. To learn more about these groups and the work they do, please reach out to the WEA members listed below.

Asian, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern (APIM) Caucus

Terry Addison (addipang1@msn.com)

Black Caucus

DaZanne Davis Porter (dazanneporter@gmail.com) and Elizabeth Ward-Robertson (eward-robertson@washingtonea.org)

Latinx Caucus

Pamela Sepulveda Wilson (pamela.wilson@washingtonea.org)

LGBTQ+ Caucus

Anna Blankinship (annatastic8@gmail.com) and Joe Bento (joe.bento@washingtonea.org)

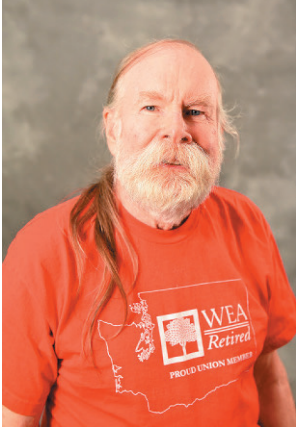
WA BATs (Washington Badass Teacher Caucus)

Becca Ritchie (becca.ritchie@washingtonea.org)

WEA Caucus of Native American, Alaskan Native and First Nations Educators

Shawn Brehm (shawn.brehm@washingtonea.org)

Introducing our new WEA-Retired vice president!



Greetings, everyone! I am Mike Ragan, your WEA-Retired 2023-2025 vice president.

Since I am the newly elected WEA-Retired vice president, Mary asked me to write a short introductory message for you to get to know me.

I spent almost half of my adult working life as an engineer. After my son was born, I began thinking about the world I wanted him to grow up in. If I wanted a good world, I felt I should be doing something to help make it happen, so I started volunteering. I surprised myself by discovering that I really enjoyed working with young people. I had this huge background in math and science, so I went back to college and became a teacher.

I enjoyed all ages of young folk, so I took extra methods classes and ended up with endorsements in K-8, physics, math, and psychology. My student teaching was in a 5th grade classroom, and my first job was teaching physical science in a middle school.

Curious about how the education union worked, I joined and investigated immediately. All of the building rep. positions were full at my school, but I attended all of the union meetings in order to learn about my association. A new high school opened in my district, and they needed a physics teacher. I liked physics and was interested in what it was like at the high school level, so I transferred. It was a new school, so the building rep. positions were open, and I volunteered.

After some Rep Council meetings and some advocacy, I guess I made a good impression. I was asked to run for the Executive Board of my local, and then, a few years later, for vice president. When the position of vice president for my council became vacant, I was selected to fill it, which led to me becoming council president and a WEA board director. After spending time on the WEA Executive Committee, I was persuaded to run for WEA vice president.

Some of you may remember my time as WEA VP. Part of the WEA vice president's job description is to also act as the treasurer of the organization. We fought and won the McCleary lawsuit and forced the state of Washington to substantially increase education funding. In that role, I feel my most significant accomplishment was that we were able to pay for the McCleary lawsuit, and we avoided going into NEA trusteeship, even though we had to endure the Great Recession.

Now, I am embarking on a new adventure. After my wife died, I began taking ballroom dancing lessons. After retiring, I became active in WEA-Retired. Thank you for expressing your confidence in me by electing me as your vice president.

A Day of Action in D.C. to lobby for NEA- Retired

By Debby Nissen, WEA-Retired Rep to the NEA-Retired Legislative Committee



Along with thousands of tourists and D.C. denizens, I walked purposely across the street toward the south side of the scaffolded U.S. Capitol and hoped I was going in the right direction for the Rayburn Building across the Mall. My destination was an appointment with a legislative assistant for Rep. Pramila Jayapal. The building didn't look that far away on my Capitol Hill map, but this government complex was built on a monumental scale, pun intended!

May 16, 2023 was springtime beautiful, sunny and quite warm. It was rather easy to tell those who work on Capitol Hill - coordinated shirts, ties, slacks, dresses, jackets, and heels - from the tourists in shorts and tour t-shirts. I was dressed to look business-like in a sleeveless shift and a linen jacket, but I was a bit too warm and wondered when I last tried to walk over 100

feet in heels! I spotted many middle school and high school tours being herded down the walks from one "must see" to the next.

Lucky me! I was one of dozens of NEA retired members from all over the country who fanned out across the office buildings for a Day of Action to lobby on behalf of the Social Security Fairness Act. This bi-partisan bill would fix long-standing problems with some Social Security benefits caused by the Pension Offset Program (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP).

Briefly, the WEP reduces the Social Security benefits of people who work in jobs covered by Social Security and jobs NOT covered by Social Security over the course of their working life. The GPO reduces or eliminates the Social Security spousal or survivor benefits of people who also get a pension based on government employment NOT covered by Social Security. In fifteen states, educators get a pension but do NOT pay into Social Security from their salaries. You may have met teachers transferring in from California, Alaska, or Colorado who might be affected by these laws.

In the hall outside Rep. Jayapal's office, I met with an earnest, 20-year-old assistant who didn't know much about this issue, but was happy to listen. I explained the unfairness of these laws. He talked about his grandmother and aunt who were educators. Rep. Jayapal is already a co-sponsor, so I asked him to relay our thanks to her for supporting this issue.

I got so turned around in the marble halls and many staircases of the Hart Building, which is a hike to the opposite side of the Mall, trying to locate Sen. Cantwell's office. Once I arrived, I huddled with the legislative assistant assigned to pensions in a corner of the main room where at least two other constituent meetings were taking place. He knew about this issue, so I pushed to persuade him that Sen. Cantwell should sign on as a co-sponsor of this bill. I related the story of a classified employee I encountered in a pre-retirement seminar.

She had worked as a para in Seattle for 20 years after her kids were grown and had earned a small pension and paid into Social Security. Her husband, who had high earnings with a pension but did not pay into Social Security, died suddenly before he retired. This lovely woman wasn't eligible for most of what should have been her spousal benefit from his pension. She was desperately trying to figure out what she would live on and distraught that she would have to sell her home. Sen. Cantwell is the only Washington Democrat who is not a co-sponsor. She still is not, so I wasn't very persuasive.

I had enough sense to ask for directions several times while searching for Sen. Murray's office in the Rayburn Building. This time, I met with the Pension and Social Security staff members in a room in Patty's office. Clearly, her seniority qualifies her for a much swankier office! Sen. Murray is a co-sponsor, so I thanked her for her support, told my story, and urged the senator to convince more senators to sign on.



I was not about to waste a plane ticket to D.C.! A dear friend from my early years in Seattle and her husband live and work on the Hill and graciously let me stay with them so we could catch up and I could be a tourist. Their vintage brick semi-attached house is about a 25-minute walk or a 10-minute train ride to the National Mall. My first priority was the new African American Museum. I spent an entire day there and still had to skip some of it because my legs were tired. I taught American History and was just blown away by the interactive exhibits and the details that I learned.

I was impressed with all the museums and art exhibits I managed to tour. My friend took a day off to take me to the Portrait Hall and an amazing mansion and garden. On my last full day, we drove out to Mt. Vernon. Besides the tour of the mansion, we signed up for a tour based on the filming of the National Treasure films. I am a big fan! This included a walk through the otherwise off-limits stone basement, which was so evocative of the 18th century, and the lawn where the president's birthday party was shot at night. It had to be at night because the park stayed open.

This trip was a wonderful opportunity to work for our retired members and become reacquainted with the Capitol. This was possible because I said yes when our esteemed president, Mary Lindsey, recommended me to the NEA-Retired president for appointment to the NEA-Retired Legislative Committee.

To learn more about this issue, see the October *Actively Retired* bulletin emailed from WEA-Retired. Also, here is a link to the information on the NEA website, <https://www.nea.org/resource-library/about-gpo-and-wep>. If you have been affected by the GPO and/or WEP, please contact me at debbynw89@comcast.net and I will help you share your personal story with our representatives in an effort to help pass the Social Security Fairness Act.



Department of Retirement Systems Advisory Committee- November Meeting

By Kim Mead, WEA-Retired Representative, DRS Advisory Committee

The recent DRS Advisory meeting took place on Nov. 30. Investment performance, actuary updates, pension comparisons, legislative updates and department project updates provided detailed information to the committee members who represent all the groups in the state retirement system.

The Washington State Investment Board reported on the quarter ending in September 2023. The global market, U.S. market, non-U.S. developed markets, emerging markets and bond markets performances were shown, providing a look at this year and the long-term performance projections. Indicators they call shifts, shocks and fragilities were examples shown to help the committee better understand how the Investment Board monitors outside impacts. Examples of shifts given were interest rates, global integration, demographics as well as technology. Examples of shocks were wars and pandemics. Fragilities can occur when systems are tightly integrated and may cause a domino effect if a portion fails. Another example of fragilities is when government sovereign debt goes up and refinancing for it is at a higher rate of interest. The last example of fragility was a lack of action around a linear issue such as climate change. No action may have long-term effects economically.

The changes in the plan market values are a result of what's happening in the market and changes in contributions through movement and/or withdrawal. A quarterly look provides a moment in time, but looking further out at the one, three and five year returns smooths some of the volatility. Members who continue to do the best with their investments are those who ride out the dramatic changes and allow the smoothing out of dramatic ups and downs to stabilize funds.

The Actuarial Directors briefed the committee on the Actuarial Valuation Report for 2022. This is the normal process because it takes a full year to compile. Along with the 2022 Actuarial Report, the DRS Advisory Committee also received a legislative impact report and a report on the financial conditions of the retirement plans.

TRS 1 is 80% funded as of 2022. The projected funding for 2027 is 97%. TRS 2/3 is 92% funded as of 2022 and projected to be 101% funded in 2027. SERS 2/3 is 92% funded as of 2022 and will be 103% funded in 2027. Fully funded plans still rely on continued contributions. Legislative impact to the retirement plans is taken into account.

Legislative action to provide a COLA for TRS Plan 1 occurred as a one-year fix last year. New legislation will be introduced again this year. This means it will be important to continue to advocate, with the goal of a permanent fix. Legislative updates will be provided again post session.

The DRS provided the Advisory Committee with an update on their ongoing projects.

For those who would love to dig further, much of the information from WSIB and OSA is available on the state site.

The next DRS Advisory Committee meeting will take place in April 2024.

Fall WEA-Retired activities throughout the state

Our Fourth Annual Virtual 2-day WEA-Retired September Conference-Safety. Justice. Travel. Books.

On the afternoon of day one, conference attendees participated in an online AirBNB experience in real time. Pictured right: Neva Luke, Sammamish WEA-Retired, chose to participate in a baguette cooking activity which took place in France.



WEA-Retired Puget Sound Chapter Meeting in October

By Michael McSweeney, WEA-Retired Puget Sound Co-Director



On Oct. 23, Puget Sound Chapter enjoyed their first meeting in a few years at WEA Headquarters in Federal Way. Twenty members attended and enjoyed a delicious lunch, discussed current WEA issues, had time for some much-needed socializing, and heard a remarkable guest speaker.

Mr. Leo Randolph recently retired from a 35-year-long career driving a public bus for Pierce County Transit. He was known as a kind and welcoming driver who treated his passengers like honored guests. He's an active volunteer in various youth programs across Pierce County, and he volunteers to cut hair and listen to and counsel the teenage boys locked up at the Remann Hall Juvenile Detention Center. But that's not all that makes Leo a remarkable Tacoma native son. He just happened to win a Gold Medal for boxing in the 1976 Olympics in Montreal, and in 1980 he was crowned Featherweight Champion of the World. This

Tacoma hero and boxing champion was the

Puget Sound Chapter's first guest speaker ... and yes, he did let our members hold his Olympic medal!

WEA-Retired Fourth Corner November Work Parties & Chapter Meeting at council office

Two productive work parties were held in November. One was a stand-alone event and the other was a pre-event before a lunch provided to chapter members at the council office. The volunteers prepared 1,680 trail mix bags by tying the appreciation notes to each treat and preparing each basket for individual schools throughout the council at the stand-alone work party. The guest speaker at the lunch meeting was Cameron Munroe, council president.





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Does WEA-Retired have your current email and phone numbers? If not, please update at <https://forms.WashingtonEA.org/forms/memberupdate>

Important dates

Jan. 3: Last day to register for Legislative Day
Jan. 17: Last day to self-nominate for WEA RA
Jan. 18: WEA-Retired Board Meeting (virtual)
Jan. 22: WEA-Retired/RPEC Legislative Day in Olympia
Jan. 15-31: Time to self-nominate for NEA RA/NEA-Retired Annual Meeting
Feb. 5: Ballots mailed to WEA-Retired members for NEA RA/NEA-Retired Annual Meeting
March 4: Last day mail-in NEA RA ballots are accepted
Mar. 3-5: NEA-Retired Conference in Chicago
March 13-14: WEA-Retired Board Meeting/Retreat
April 11-13: WEA RA in Spokane
June 5-6: WEA-Retired Annual Meeting in Federal Way
June 29-30: NEA-Retired Annual Meeting in Philadelphia
July 2-7: NEA RA in Philadelphia

Help wanted: WEA-Retired has an opening for two board directors

1. Lower Columbia 2. Eastern Washington
If you are interested or would like to recommend someone else (with their permission), please contact Mary Lindsey at WEARetired@WashingtonEA.org.

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

Connections

NEWS TO KEEP YOU ENGAGED IN THE PROFESSION YOU LOVE

Our Connections magazine is published three to four times a year. Our Actively Retired legislative bulletin is emailed approximately nine times yearly. Additional topical emails are sent throughout the year. If you're not receiving those, please send an email to WEARetired@WashingtonEA.org.

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