



Summer 2017

# Connections

NEWS TO KEEP YOU ENGAGED IN THE PROFESSION YOU LOVE

## (Gloomy) Update from Olympia

By Julie Salvi, WEA Lobbyist

Things are moving at a snail's pace in Olympia. We are in the middle of the 2nd special session, which must end on or before June 21. The House met for one day to move some bills over to the Senate, including House Bill 1046 — which would delink the test from graduation requirements. The Senate held committee hearings June 12 and 13, with floor action also scheduled those days. Similar to earlier action, the Senate is expected to move bills to the House as a statement of the Senate Republican's priorities.

Other than these occasional appearances in Olympia, most legislators are at home in their districts. Most of the work in

Olympia is being done by small groups of legislators behind closed doors. There is a group negotiating the education plan and another negotiating the budget. We also continue to hear groups of legislators who continue to work on a variety of issues — ranging from school siting to land use/water rights.

There are two elements in the budget negotiations that we are watching for retirees. The House budget includes an increase in the Medicare subsidy for those who are in PEBB — raising it from \$150 per month to \$166 per month in 2018 and to \$183 per month in 2019. The Senate did not change the PEBB subsidy, but included

funding to implement SB 5833, which provided a 1.5% increase to TRS Plan 1 members who receive the minimum benefit. While we have appreciated the 1.5% increase for those who would receive it, we have also noted that the bill is too narrowly crafted — excluding paraprofessionals, bus drivers, and other school employees who are in PERS Plan 1 and excluding the vast majority of Plan 1 members who have not had a cost of living adjustment since 2010.

If the Legislature has not completed its work on an education funding plan and the budget by June 21, we expect the Governor will call

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# The President's Corner



**By Kit  
Raney,  
WEA-Retired  
President**

I was  
attending  
an awards

banquet this spring and, before presenting an award, the speaker talked about two kinds of people ... the thermometers and the thermostats. As you can probably surmise, the thermometer people just announce what is wrong (or right) in a situation while the thermostat people try to facilitate change. As I end my seven years as the president of WEA-Retired, this distinction rings true.

As president, I have tried to do more than just inform or announce what is happening around us and to us; be it about attacks on our pensions, on public education, on collective bargaining rights or on human and civil rights. I have also tried to give members the tools, information and impetuous to take action to protect what is important to our well-being. I tried to be a thermostat.

While the end results have not been what I would have liked, as we have not been successful in

reinstating a COLA for Plan 1 or restoring the PEBB Medicare Eligible Subsidy, we were successful in getting the Early Retirement Reduction Factors (ERFs) passed, allowing Plan 2 members to retire a little sooner without a negative effect on their pensions. And we were finally able to get rid of some of the negative rules around the ERFs, allowing retired teachers to substitute. We also kept other negative legislation from gaining traction.

Please don't think that I am implying that, because I tried to be a thermostat for WEA-Retired members, I was responsible for the above. I had a lot of help from other thermostats. Our retired board directors took to heart that it was important to have meetings/gatherings for retired members in their local uniserv councils and almost all chapters are now holding regular meetings. These meetings provide a connection to the uniserv council, to WEA-Retired, and provide information and opportunities to be involved. Our board directors are all thermostats.

We had a record number of WEA-Retired members participate in our lobby day this year. We also

had one of our highest number of WEA-PAC members. They are all thermostats.

Our lobbyists, especially Julie Salvi who handles retiree issues, kept me and our legislative work team updated so that we could share that information. And Brooke Mattox-Ball in WEA Communications helped me get the printed and mailed newsletter and our emailed eConnections newsletter out in a timely manner. They are also thermostats.

WEA-Retired joined with other thermostats like the members of Retired Public Employees Council (RPEC), the Washington State Alliance for Retired Americans and the Senior Lobby as nothing turns the heat up better than a whole bunch of coordinated thermostats!

I may be giving up my title as WEA-Retired President but I will always be a thermostat. I hope you will choose that title too.

# 2017 WEA-Retired Annual Meeting

By Sandy Kokko

WEA-Retired held its annual meeting in Federal Way on June 7-8. Sixty-six delegates from across the state attended. New board directors were elected from WEA-Sammamish, Seattle, Soundview, Summit, WEA-Eastern Washington, and WEA-Southeast. North Central and WEA-Lower Columbia are the only councils without board directors. Neva Luke and Mary Lindsey were elected president and vice president respectively. The 2017-18 at-large members to the executive committee are Sam Hayes, Shirley Hickey and Evelyn Horne.

A change to the constitution was approved. This change defines when membership in WEA-Retired/NEA-Retired begins for those who elect the monthly dues option through the Washington State Department of Retirement approved at last year's annual meeting.

Several speakers addressed the delegates:

- The NEA Center for Advocacy houses the departments of Government Relations, Campaigns and Elections, and Collective Bargaining. Mary Kusler, senior director of the Center, was a special guest this year. She reviewed the current political climate in the country, both hopeful and depressing. In order to create dramatic changes the focus for the next few years should be on state legislatures and governor's seats.
- Kim Mead, WEA president, shared with the delegates the organizing efforts that are taking place across the state. She indicated it was imperative that locals and councils continue with their one-on-one conversations with the goal being to connect members with the union. During Kim's visit with the delegates, Karle Warren presented Mead with the WEA-Retired Pre-Retired Member of the Year.
- Julie Salvi, a WEA lobbyist, shared news on the special legislative session. At this time there does not seem to be a resolution to the revenue plan.
- Aimee Iverson, WEA legal counsel, talked about the current situation with the McCleary decision. She also indicated there is another court case pending before the US Supreme Court dealing with Right to Work and Fair Share.
- Stephen Miller, WEA vice president, and Yona Makowski serve on the Washington State Investment Board. Makowski is a newly appointed member of the board and represents retirees. They explained the fiduciary responsibilities of the investment board and how they must sometimes suspend their personal views for the greater good.

# WEA-Retired Awards

By Sam Hayes, Awards Committee Chair

WEA-Retired is able to support public education staff and students in our state only through the hard work and dedication of people who believe in WEA-Retired's goals and objectives. It is the practice of WEA-Retired to acknowledge these supporters each year during its annual meeting. This year WEA-Retired is honoring three people whose endeavors contribute to the success of our organization.

The Retired Member of the Year award is presented to someone who works tirelessly to promote the organization. The 2017 recipient is Kit Raney. Kit has served as president of WEA-Retired for the past seven years. During her tenure she has changed the face of the organization.

- Seven years ago very few chapters held regular meetings; today the majority of our chapters hold gatherings on a regular basis.
- The WEA-Retired newsletter has a new name and now has two formats, print and electronic. The print edition, Connections, is mailed to members four times a year. In between the print editions, members receive the electronic edition, e-Connections.
- Then WEA-Retired president Kathy Wallentine began talks with Washington State Department of Retirement System personnel that would allow WEA-Retired to offer membership to WEA retirees through a deduction from their state monthly benefit check. In 2016 Kit finalized negotiations and the first 100 WEA retirees using this option were enrolled that September.

The Pre-Retired Member of the Year award is presented to a WEA member who actively promotes WEA-Retired and its programs. The 2017 recipient is Kim Mead, WEA president. Not all NEA-Retired state organizations have the level of support from the state active organization as WEA-Retired has. The nomination form for Kim stated, "WEA-Retired is part of the WEA family. When the support and encouragement comes from the top of an organization, it permeates through the rest." From its inception thirty years ago, WEA-Retired has been fortunate to have the support of WEA leadership and staff. Kim carries on this tradition. She "takes every opportunity to promote pre-retired membership in WEA-Retired and to recognize what we have accomplished."

The Advocate of the Year award is given to someone who, although he/she does not qualify for WEA-Retired membership, provides invaluable help to the organization over time by providing support in a variety of ways. The 2017 recipient is Michael Maria, district vice president for Valic Financial Advisors. Michael has worked closely with WEA-Retired for many years. He makes Valic representatives available for financial planning presentations at WEA-Retired pre-retirement seminars. The nomination form for Michael stated, "The assistance from Michael and Valic has allowed WEA-Retired to do the work of preparing active members for a successful retirement and to further our goals in additional areas."

*Continued from page 1.*

legislators back immediately for a third special session. There will be increasing pressure to complete a deal this month, but we are also hearing rumors about possibilities for government shutdown or temporary spending authority for July. This update was written on June 9 and there is always a “lag time” before our printed mailed newsletter gets to members. Please check [www.washingtonea.org/ourvoice](http://www.washingtonea.org/ourvoice) and our July emailed newsletter, eConnections, for more updates. If you do not receive our emailed newsletter, please send your email address to [WEARetired@washingtonea.org](mailto:WEARetired@washingtonea.org).

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During lunch June 8, delegates celebrated the 30th anniversary of WEA-Retired. Seven founding members were invited to the luncheon: Jean Savidge, Gail Kirk, Linda Lease, Jeff Walquist, Stan Jeffers, Allen Johnson and Jim Seibert.

- In 1984 Savidge and Kirk approached WEA about forming a retired organization.
- Lease and Walquist were two of the WEA members who served on the organizing task force set up in 1986.
- Jeffers served as the organization’s first treasurer.
- Johnson was the first WEA staff member assigned to work with the new organization.
- Seibert, then WEA executive director, worked with WEA and NEA to ensure that WEA-Retired would have support on its path to self-sufficiency.

WEA-Retired President Kit Raney shared some of the early history of WEA-Retired. Savidge and Lease, the only founding members in attendance, shared what their roles were and why they had felt it was important to support the formation of the new organization. All invitees received a pen engraved “WEA-Retired Founding Member”. Two other award winners were revealed. Sandy Kokko announced that Michael Maria, district vice president for Valic Financial Advisors, was the recipient of the WEA-Retired Advocate of the Year award. Maureen Ramos announced Kit Raney, outgoing WEA-Retired president, had been given the WEA-Retired Member of the Year award. Delegates expressed their appreciation to Raney for her service to the organization.

## WEA-Retired Scholarships

**By Bev Wentz, Scholarship Chair**

At the WEA-Retired Annual Meeting scholarship banquet I thanked those who got the word out about our scholarship — like WEA staffer Shanda Tryon, the WEA newsletter, Auburn EA office newsletter, district emails, union reps, WEA representatives, union newsletters, a colleague, union meeting, KAP (Kent Association of Paraeducators), Facebook post and Kit. This is our first year of being able to give up to eight scholarships largely due to a generous donation from the estate of Laura McVicker to the scholarship fund. Here are the names of our seven scholarship recipients:

Stacy Traylor - Marisol Lara - Nardos Hablemical - LeAnne Rodeback - Aaron Hanseney - Tammy Pantoj  
- Tim Bov. Congratulations to all of our scholarship recipients!



# Thoughts from President-Elect Neva Luke

Thank you to all those who attended the annual meeting June 7 and 8. Your time, commitment and hard work is greatly appreciated. I am honored and humbled to be the president-elect for WEA-Retired and look forward to working with everyone over the next two years.

At the annual meeting we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the founding of WEA-Retired. I want to give a huge shout out to all those who have worked diligently to make our organization what it is today. What vision and foresight they had! Some of our early members, such as Jean Savidge, are still actively participating and keeping us on the straight and narrow.

I want to also recognize our outgoing President, Kit Raney. Over the last seven years (yes 7!!), Kit has pushed, pulled, tugged, and cajoled our organization to a whole new level that shows her vision and the courage to get us there. One of the main areas Kit addressed was organizing and membership. WEA-Retired has grown a lot in

members partly due to the fact that members have the option to pay dues through DRS pension deduction and partly due to the awesome recruiting job the seminar committee does in their presentation. Thanks to all of you who have made this happen. We need to continue to do this and as we move forward, we need to find ways to both identify and contact actives who are retiring so we can get them to join WEA-Retired — the earlier the better!!

Thanks to an NEA grant that Kit wrote and received, gatherings in the chapters have grown from four out of 21 chapters seven years ago, to all but a few of our chapters offering activities in their regions. In the coming year we need to provide support to those chapters whose members are not yet benefitting from regular gatherings in their region.

Mary Lindsey, your vice president-elect, and I had the good fortune to be able to join in several of the chapter gatherings. It was truly amazing to see what was going on across the state. There is something magical that happens when educators meet together. The bonds of the common experience we have had is always evident in the camaraderie. Thank you to all those that we visited, you made us feel right at home.

I want to continue these visits, as we found it was very valuable to visit folks on their home turf. This affords leadership the opportunity to better understand the context of your experiences, and to continue to forge strong relationships across the state.

As Mary and I talked to folks at the gatherings, we heard many ideas of what might be helpful to our organization. Many felt an increased use of social media and technology would allow us to share ideas, speakers, and what is going on so more people get plugged in. We also need to continue to work with our locals and uniservs so we can support our active members during this tumultuous era.

The opportunities ahead of us are limited only by our imagination and motivation. I invite each of you to contact me with whatever questions, comments, and ideas you might have.

Thank you so much for your support! I look forward to working with you!

# In honor of WEA-Retired turning 30

## Thoughts from two of our founding members

Linda Lease, WEA-Retired board director for WEA-Fourth Corner, was a member of the task force which put together the guidelines, constitution and bylaws. Here is what Linda has to say about that beginning.

*I was just 35 years old. I knew that someday I too would retire but at the time it felt like it was a million years away.*

*At a Fourth Corner council meeting Jean asked if there was anyone interested in working on forming a retirement organization with her. I volunteered to be on the committee. I had no idea what a wonderful organization would result from that work!*

*I thought then as I do now that retired educators could be valuable members of the Washington Education Association. The knowledge and experience that they acquired during their active years would make them great mentors ... and a retired member might have more time to assist the association ... I strongly believed that there was a need for a retired group and at the time we were not utilizing this valuable resource of retired persons. (Except for Jean — and I was awestruck at how valuable she was to our council.)*

*On a personal note ... I also tried to imagine myself as a retired person and wondered if I would find a way to continue my passion for working with children. I saw this as a possible way to stay involved in my later years.*

*I was also an early pre retired member. I got my coupon book and sent in my \$17.50 a month.*

*Looking at all that WEA-Retired has accomplished in these thirty years, I am honored to have helped get this organization started.*

Jean Savidge was asked why she worked so hard to get WEA-Retired started. Here is what she had to say:

I feel there is strength in numbers. The more retirees we have as members the stronger our state and national unions. As retirees we need to stay connected with our active members. Most of us spent at least 30 years in our chosen profession and it shouldn't be something we walk away from. One of our members penned our motto — retire from your position, not your profession. Today I have children, grandchildren and great grandchildren who have attended or are attending public schools and I want to stand strong for quality public education.





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## HEADS UP!

Watch for the September mailed newsletter for the nomination form to be a delegate for the 2018 and 2019 NEA-Retired Annual Meeting/NEA Representative Assembly.

## MEET MARY LINDSEY WEA- RETIRED VICE PRESIDENT



## **Connections**

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*Connections* is published by Washington Education Association-Retired four times a year. We invite your comments and contributions.

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