

Voices of Experience

Newsletter for OEA-Retired

Omaha Education Association–Retired is an affiliate of NSEA-Retired and NEA-Retired
Roger Rea, Editor – email: rrea68154@yahoo.com www.OEAretired.org March 2023

Benefits of Membership and Legislative Update topics at March 16 meeting

OEA-Retired members have full access to all NEA Member Benefits products. NEA Member Benefits, NEA MB, is an independent corporation established by the NEA in 1967. It partners with brands that believe in and value public education. NEA MB helps make the lives of NEA members better by leveraging NEA's group purchasing power to lower the cost of goods and services that you use every day. There is no additional charge or subscription fee to use NEA MB – all you need to do is log onto their website, www.neamb.com, to find which deals are currently available.

To explain what NEA MB offers, and how to access the services it provides, NEA MB Affiliate Relations Specialist Susan Estes will be the guest speaker at the Thursday, March 16th meeting of OEA Retired. Susan serves the Colorado, Kansas and Nebraska NEA affiliates. She will be on hand via Zoom to discuss the benefits and resources that come with being an NEA member. The topics she will address

include personal finance; personal finance with an emphasis on retirees; insurance; NEA-sponsored discount opportunities; and travel.

The Nebraska Legislature is currently in its 90-day session, debating and voting on bills that will affect every Nebraskan. A representative from the NSEA Government Relations staff will also be at the March 16th meeting to discuss and answer your questions about bills that NSEA is following that will impact education and our lives.

Please join us to learn about the wide variety of savings, products and services that can deliver exclusive deals to stretch your dollars and protect your family, and to get the latest updates from the Legislature. The Thursday, March 16th meeting will begin at 10 a.m. at the OEA Office, 4202 S. 57th Street. Following CDC guidelines, facemasks are optional for this meeting. If you need driving directions, call the OEA office at 402-346-0400. See you there!

President's Message

By: Walta Sue Dodd, OEA-Retired President

The Dark Ages were marked by economic, intellectual, and cultural decline.

As I read the paper and look at what is going on in the world today, I wonder where we are going. Here are some questions that I ponder:

- Are we moving to a new dark age? Dark Age 2.0?
- Are we in the period of unenlightened people wondering around in the dark?
- Are we going back to the age where we have no public schools, where only the rich learn at home with tutors, and where most schools are run by the church?
- Are we in a major crisis where our demographics

are collapsing, where we have political instability, and religious upheavals?

- Are we moving backward in time in our human history, where science and cultural advancement is questioned, and where famine and disease are common, and warfare is a part of our everyday life?
- Or are we addressing the real needs of our nation, where public education is the cornerstone of our democracy, which will bring us out of our darkness. As Benjamin Franklin stated, "Tell me and I forget, Teach me and I remember, Involve me and I learn." Public Education is going through challenging times right now, and this may be our darkest hour. But there is hope! As Aristotle said, "**It is during our darkest moments that we must focus to see the light**". Don't get dismayed by the naysayers in our midst – stay positive!

LB 753 would set a dangerous precedent for tax policy

By: Roger Rea, NSEA-Retired Vice President

Public tax dollars should be reserved for use for public projects. The State Constitution has language that affirms that position regarding the funding of public

education. Article VII, section 11 of the Nebraska Constitution states: "*Notwithstanding any other provision in this Constitution, appropriation of public*

funds shall not be made to any school or institution of learning not owned or exclusively controlled by the state or a political subdivision thereof."

LB 753, introduced by Senator Lou Ann Linehan at the request of the governor, attempts to do an "end run" on this constitutional provision. Simply put, LB 753 would allow any Nebraskan to send up to 50% of his/her Nebraska income tax liability to a nongovernmental, privately operated elementary or secondary school located in this state. That would potentially deprive the state of half of its income tax income (up to \$25 million the first year), while funding private school scholarships in violation of the constitution.

LB 753 would provide a non-refundable, 5-year carry-over tax credit for donations to qualifying scholarship-providing organizations. To qualify, the scholarship organization must provide qualifying education scholarships. Those qualifying education scholarships must be used to pay tuition and fees at a qualifying school. Qualifying schools are "any nongovernmental, privately operated elementary or secondary school located in this state." The state

administers the issuance of the tax credits through a program that keeps the budgeted caps in place. The program starts with a \$25 million cap that gradually expands to \$100 million if people take advantage of the program. This legislation is part of a national effort to enhance school choice by extending public tax money to private schools.

Former State Senator Curt Friesen of Henderson opposes the bill. In an opinion piece, he said this: *LB 753, a bill to send \$25 million to private schools through the guise of excessive tax credits for donations to scholarship granting organizations, will do next to nothing for rural Nebraska and our kids. Over the eight years I was in the Legislature and on the Revenue Committee, I worked hard to ensure rural Nebraska had a strong voice to protect the interests of property owners while still ensuring our students could access a great education. That's why I'm opposed to LB 753.*

I encourage you to follow LB 753 closely, and subscribe to the NSEA Unicameral Update to get updates on this and other bills. NSEA opposes LB 753.

Following the advice to use the Medicare website saves money!

By: Roger Rea, OEA-Retired Newsletter editor

The December issue of *Voices of Experience* had an article about using the Medicare website, www.medicare.gov, to find a low-cost provider for Medicare Part D, the prescription drug benefit. The article indicated that this is the only objective way to get the lowest-cost provider for the drugs that you actually take, and encouraged members to use the website every year.

After the newsletter was mailed, a member contacted me asking for additional help with the website. He had used the website, and was having

trouble believing the savings it revealed! With quick action, the member was able to change Part D providers for 2023 prior to the December 7, 2022 deadline for changing carriers.

I received a follow-up email from the member, stating, "So...for \$7,887 less ...I'm signed up with xxx Thank you so much for helping another old teacher wandering around in the wilderness of insurance and Medicare!"

Membership does not cost, it PAYS!

LB 641 speeds removal of Nebraska tax on Social Security income

By: Roger Rea, NSEA-Retired Vice President

Getting rid of the Nebraska income tax on Social Security benefits has been a priority of NSEA-Retired and other organizations representing seniors for about 20 years. Over time, we've gradually reduced the state income tax burden on the Social Security benefit. Three years ago a bill was passed that would eliminate the tax completely over ten years. Last year that process was accelerated to eliminate the tax in five years. LB 641, introduced by Senator Kathleen Kauth, at the request of the governor, would move elimination of the tax up by one year.

If LB 641 passes, 70% (instead of 60%) of your Social Security benefit would be exempt from state income tax for your 2023 tax filing, and 100% (instead

of 80%) would be exempt for your 2024 tax filing. You can learn more about LB 641 on the Unicameral website, www.nebraskalegislature.gov.

Get updates on legislation

The new boundaries for Legislative Districts may have provided you a new senator in the Unicameral. You can find the name of your senator, and the contact information for him/her, by going to the Unicameral website, www.nebraskalegislature.gov. Click on the "Senators" link on the left side of the page to get a drop-down menu that allows you to enter your address and find the senator for your legislative district.

Do you want to keep current on what is happening in the Nebraska Legislature? NSEA prepares weekly updates on pending legislation and provides background detail on bills that have been

referred to the various Legislative Committees for hearing and action in its weekly email, *Capitol Update*. You will also receive “alerts” when voting on important bills is about to take place, and “calls to action” to let you know when NSEA needs you to contact your senator. Contact information for your senator is always included in the alerts and calls to action, as well as some common “talking points” and background on the bills.

OEA-Retired members can receive the weekly

Capitol Update email by signing up at: www.nsea.org/subscriber. NSEA recently changed the server that sends the *Capitol Update* to members. If you are no longer getting your *Capitol Update*, it may be going into your email spam folder as a result of having a different server send the email – check your spam folder if that has happened to you. Keep yourself “in the know,” be active, and subscribe to *Capitol Update* today!

Pre-retired lifetime membership promotion

About 95% of OEA-Retired members are lifetime members (the rest are annual members). Most became life members before they retired. You don’t have to be retired to join the retired organizations! Lifetime members pay dues only once.

Active teachers can join NEA-Retired, NSEA-Retired, and OEA-Retired as pre-retired lifetime subscribers any time during their careers. Since lifetime dues have a tendency to go up over time, the sooner you become a lifetime member, the cheaper it will be! Current combined lifetime dues for all three organizations is \$600 (combined NEA-Retired and NSEA-Retired dues = \$500; OEA-Retired = \$100). The dues can be paid either in one lump sum, or in monthly deductions from your checking account.

The OEA-Retired Board has approved a lifetime membership campaign for this spring. The best way to get new members is for current members to ask their friends to join! Any current OEA member who is also a lifetime member of OEA-Retired will receive

information on the membership promotion soon. As an incentive to sign up new lifetime members, any current pre-retired lifetime member who recruits five new lifetime members will get a check for \$50! If you get ten or more new lifetime members, you get \$100.

Each OEA pre-retired subscriber for whom we have an email address will receive a blank membership form and recruitment information about OEA-Retired, NSEA-Retired, and NEA-Retired lifetime membership and a form to record the names of individuals that have been signed-up. The completed form should be sent to the OEA Office or emailed to WSDodd@aol.com. Your check will be sent when the new memberships have been verified.

If you have questions on this campaign, or to get more information about the organization, contact OEA-Retired President Walta Sue Dodd at WSDodd@aol.com, or call her at 402-659-1564. The campaign ends on June 1, 2023.

OEA-Retired meeting calendar

OEA-Retired will have two more general meetings this year. The meetings will be held either via Zoom or in-person at the OEA office, 4202 South 57th Street, from 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. The type of meeting (Zoom or in-person) will be announced in *Voices of Experience* prior to each meeting. The meeting dates and tentative programs as well as NSEA-Retired meetings of note are:

March 16, Thurs. – NEA Member Benefits; Legislative Update

April 27, Thurs. – NSEA-Retired Spring Conference, Omaha Lauritzen Gardens

April 28-29, Fri. and Sat. – NSEA Delegate Assembly (Lincoln)

May 18, Thurs. – Cybersecurity for Seniors, (Ryan Sothan, Nebraska Attorney General’s Office); OEA-Retired elections

If OPS schools are closed or delayed due to inclement weather on the date of our meeting, the OEA-Retired in-person meeting will be canceled. OEA-Retired will not meet in person if OPS schools are

closed for health reasons. Notice will be sent out if the session is re-scheduled for a later date.

OEA-Retired elections coming in May

OEA-Retired officers serve for three-year terms, with a maximum of two consecutive terms in any one position. The OEA-Retired officers for 2022-2023, and their terms of office, are:

President = Walta Sue Dodd (2022-2025)

Vice President = Cheryl Richardson (2022-2025)

Secretary = Ruby M. Davis (2020-2023)

At-large Directors = Sue Kalina (2020-2023); Doreen Jankovich (2020-2023); Deborah Pauley (2022-2025); Sherry Brodkey (2022-2025)

Bookkeeper and Newsletter = Roger Rea

General elections will be held in May 2023 for the officers whose terms expire in 2023. That includes the offices of Secretary and two At-large Directors. Ruby Davis, the current secretary, and Doreen Jankovich, one of the At-large Directors, are both term-limited and cannot run for re-election to those positions. Sue

Kalina is eligible to run again for At large Director if she chooses to do so.

If you are interested in becoming a candidate for one of those positions, please send an email to Cheryl Richardson, OEA-Retired Vice President, at crichardson.omaha@gmail.com, or call her at 402-681-9788. More information regarding these elections will be printed in the next issue of *Voices of Experience*.

Be sure to vote!

Elections for NSEA-Retired officers and delegates to NEA Representative Assembly (NEA-RA) and NSEA Delegate Assembly (NSEA-DA) are currently underway!

This year NSEA-Retired members will elect a President and Vice President, and Metro District will vote on five delegates to NSEA-DA and one delegate to NEA-RA. Two additional delegates will be elected "at large" to NSEA-DA, and three additional delegates will be elected "at large" to NEA-RA. OEA-Retired Bookkeeper Roger Rea is running for Vice President. There are multiple OEA-Retired candidates for both NSEA-DA and NEA-RA delegate positions.

You can find a complete list of candidates for the various offices, as well as a short biographical

OEA-Retired

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sketch of the candidates for Board Officers and NEA-RA and NSEA-DA delegates on the NSEA-Retired web page, www.nsea.org/retired. Click on the "ELECTIONS" tab on the home page. Clicking on the names of the candidates will bring up a short biographical sketch of each candidate.

Remember, for the NSEA-DA and NEA-RA candidates, you can vote for the same candidate for both the District position and the At large position. Be sure to return your ballots by the deadline printed on the ballot to have your vote counted!

NSEA-Retired Spring Conference comes to Lauritzen Gardens April 27

Every year NSEA-Retired holds two conferences: one in the fall, the second in the spring. The conferences are held in various locations around the state to better serve all members. This year Omaha will again be the site for the spring conference!

Please join us for our NSEA-Retired spring conference Thursday April 27 at Lauritzen Gardens, 100 Bancroft Street in Omaha, located a few blocks north of the 13th Street exit off I-80, and a few blocks east on Bancroft. The morning will include a presentation, "*More Than Just a Pretty Place: The Conservation Vision of Lauritzen Gardens*" by James Locklear. This will be followed by staff tours of the gardens and conservatory. After lunch, the speaker will be Nebraska Center for the Book Award for Fiction winner Karen Gettert Shoemaker. Karen is the author of

"*The Meaning of Names*" and is coming to us through Humanities Nebraska. She will address the stories that have developed from the recent pandemic. We will also be joined by Todd Crenshaw, the NEA staff Director for the NEA-Retired program.

The event begins at 8:30 a.m. with registration and refreshments. Parking at Lauritzen Gardens is free; registration for the conference is required. You may bring a non-member guest if you wish. There is no admission fee for conference attendees.

To register, go to www.nsea.org/retired and select *Calendars, Events & Registrations*. Deadline for registrations is April 17. The event is free for all members and \$10 for guests. Mark April 27 on your calendar now, and let's have a good showing of Omaha members at this event!

NSEA-Retired needs your input!

All OEA-Retired members received a letter from NSEA-Retired last month asking for updates on the contact information we have on file.

If you have not returned the form, please do so NOW! We can only stay in touch with our members if we have current information on file. If you have misplaced the form, you can check the information we have on file and/or make corrections on-line at: www.nsea.org/retired-update. Thank you!