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*** **December 2025**

Tax Tips and OPS update on Dec. 4 agenda

Tax season will soon be upon us. Bridget O'Malley-Tynan and Andrea Thyfault from Tax Help, founded by Pat O'Malley, will be the speakers at the December 4th meeting of OEA-Retired to inform members about how the tax laws will impact their tax filing in 2026.

The age at which you must take distributions from your IRA (called required minimum distributions or RMDs) changed recently. They will discuss some optimum times to start taking your RMD. Thanks to the work of NSEA-Retired (and other retiree organizations) in the past two decades, 100% of your Social Security benefit will be exempt from Nebraska state income tax this year.

Many retirees want to leave a charitable legacy. Bridget will address how you can set up your own charitable trust to distribute your assets as you wish after you die. Tax efficient ways to make charitable contributions from your IRA instead of taking the taxable required minimum distribution (RMD) will be revealed. For the 2025 tax year, there are changes in the standard deduction, a tax credit if you purchased a new car made in the USA, and additional tax credits for individuals 65 and older. They will also give some tips on avoiding identity theft and fraud.

OPS Superintendent Matt Ray will also be at the meeting to give an update on his "moonshot" plan for our district. He will also answer any questions you have about the future of OPS.

The Thursday, December 4th meeting will be held at the OEA office, 4202 S. 57th Street, starting at 10 a.m. If you need driving directions, call the OEA office at 402-346-0400.

See you there!

President's Message

By: Deb Pauley, OEA-Retired President

We welcome all of our newest OEA-Retired members. Thank you for your membership! We look forward to seeing you at our meetings.

We are still working with NPERS to get our members updated information about the retirement system. There will likely be proposed legislation in 2026 to clarify when we should get our annual COLA. We will post additional information on our website, ***www.oearetired.org***, as it becomes available.

We have requested a grant from NSEA-Retired to continue our membership drive to grow the number of pre-retired members in OEA-Retired.

NSEA Delegate Assembly (DA) is next April 24th and 25th in Lincoln. We need OEA-Retired members to run for election as delegates to this meeting. In addition, we are looking for members to volunteer to help our membership drive at NSEA DA. These volunteers will distribute membership information to those who attend DA. Please let us know if you are interested in helping with this task.

If you are on Facebook, please join our OEA-Retired Association page. You must request an invitation to join the group. Currently, we have 80 members on our Facebook page, and we would like to increase this number. This page has relevant information for all our members.

How to follow OEA-Retired on Facebook

By: Walta Sue Dodd, Facebook Administrator

Facebook is a social utility that connects people with friends and others who work, study and live around them. OEA-Retired has a Facebook page with specific content for OEA-Retired members. It is a "private group," where only members can see who is in the group and what content is posted. Joining requires the administrator's approval. This helps ensure that you will not receive contacts from random users trying to access our Facebook page.

How to join the OEA-Retired Association Facebook page:

1. Open the Facebook app
2. Search for *OEA-Retired Association* using the magnifying glass.
3. Once it appears, click "Join Group" to request access.
4. Since OEA-Retired is a private Facebook group, you may need to answer some questions or agree to the group rules before your request to join is approved.

I hope to welcome you to the OEA-Retired Association Facebook page soon!

Thank you to all our board members. Board members are all volunteers, and many hours are spent doing association work. Thank you, also, to Roger Rea for keeping our financial records, and always having current knowledge regarding retirement. We appreciate all you do.

OEA-Retired meeting calendar

OEA-Retired will have three 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:

Dec. 4, Thurs. – Tax Tips (Bridget Tynan and Andrea Thyfault); OPS Supt. Matt Ray
Feb. 17, Tues. – NSEA-Retired Lobby Day (Lincoln)
March 12, Thurs. – Wills and Estate Planning
April 23, Thurs. – NSEA-Retired Spring Conference in Omaha area
April 24-25, Fri. and Sat. – NSEA Delegate Assembly (Lincoln)
May 7, Thurs. – OEA-Retired elections; Omaha Zoo

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 Officers for 2025-26

OEA-Retired officers serve for three-year terms, with a maximum of two consecutive terms in any one position. The OEA-Retired officers for 2025-26, and their terms of office, are:
President = Deb Pauley (2025-28)
Vice President = Cheryl Richardson (2025-28)
Secretary = Doreen Jankovich (2023-26)
At-large Directors = Sue Kalina (2023-26); Ruby Davis (2023-26); Sherry Brodkey (2025-28), Walta Sue Dodd (2025-28)
Bookkeeper, Newsletter & Webmaster = Roger Rea

Elections will be held in May 2026 for those officers whose terms end in 2026.

Update your contact information

We depend on members to let us know when they move or change email addresses. That way we can keep in contact with you with our newsletter and periodic email alerts. If your contact information has changed, please go to ***www.oearetired.org***, click on the "*Contact*" tab, and update your information. You can also just send an email to ***membership@nsea.org***. Thanks for your help in keeping our mailing list current!

Medicare updates for 2026

The Medicare Part B premium for 2026 as well as the 2026 deductible amounts for both Medicare Part A and B were released after the fall Blue Cross Medicare seminars were complete.

The Medicare Part A deductible for 2026 is $1,735 per benefit period. Medicare Part A covers hospital visits. After you pay the deducible, the first 60 days of inpatient stay for each benefit-period have no copay. Days 61-90 cost $434 each day. Days 91-150 cost $868 each day while using your 60 lifetime reserve days. After day 150, you pay all costs.

The standard Medicare Part B premium for 2026 is $202.96. The premium is higher if your income is greater than $109,000 (single), or $218,000 (married filing a joint return). The Medicare Part B deductible for 2026 is $283. Medicare Part B covers doctor visits.

Subscribers to Educators' Medicare Supplement will not pay the Medicare Part A deductible amounts. Those who enrolled in the Plan F supplement will not pay the Part B deductible; those who are enrolled in the Plan G supplement will pay the Part B deducible before the supplement picks up the rest of the covered charges for doctor's visits. The premiums for Educators' Medicare Supplement are age-based, and will increase on January 1, 2026 by 2.7% for those who have both the Medical and Dental coverage.

Prescription drugs are covered by Medicare Part D. In 2026, your out-of-pocket cost for covered drugs is capped at $2,100. The savings are made possible by a provision enacted in 2022. There is a caution: to gain benefit from the cap, you must select a drug plan that covers all of the medications you take, and you must use a pharmacy that accepts your drug plan. If you use non-formulary drugs (ones not covered by your plan), none of the cost of the non-covered drugs will apply to your out-of-pocket maximum! The deadline for selecting a Part D plan for 2026 is December 7, 2025. Go to the Medicare website, ***www.medicare.gov***, to find an appropriate Part D provider and for further information.

There are more details posted on the EHA website, ***www.ehaplan.org/retiree-info***. Due to the late release of the Medicare premiums and deducible amounts, the recorded webinar on Educators' Medicare Supplement will not be posted on the EHA website until early December. You can find the 2026 premium rates by age band on the OEA-Retired website, ***www.oearetired.org***, and clicking on the "*Insurance*" tab at the top of the page.

Reduce your 2025 tax burden by giving to charities from your IRA

By: Roger Rea

The contributions you made to your 403(b) account (tax-sheltered annuity) when you were working, or to your traditional IRA, were not taxed when you made the original deposit. That saved you the income taxes on your contribution – a good thing! But when you reach age 70½ (and older), you are required to take distributions from these investments or you will be taxed as if you did. As an incentive to make the taxable withdrawal, the IRS adds a 25% penalty on the amount that should have been withdrawn! The amount that you need to take from your IRA investment is called a Required Minimum Distribution, or RMD. The company that holds your IRA will send you an estimate of your RMD for the year, but it is up to you to tell them when you want it sent to you.

When you take your RMD, all of the RMD will be subject to both federal and state income tax. When you take your RMD, you will be asked to set a withholding rate for both federal and state income tax. And all of the money you get from your RMD will be added to your income for the year. Retirees who need the additional money from the RMD are willing to pay the tax on this deferred income.

Many retirees give money to charities. The new tax rules make it much harder to deduct charitable contributions than in prior years. The standard deduction for 2025 is $15,750 for single filers, $31,500 for married couples filing jointly. You cannot itemize your deductions to get credit for charitable donations until you have met the standard deduction.

There is a way to give some or all of your RMD to charities, get the credit for the charitable giving, AND not have to pay tax on the RMD. It is called a "Qualified Charitable Distribution," or QCD. This differs from a regular IRA withdrawal, which is a taxable event, and from a standard charitable contribution, which generally requires you to itemize deductions to receive a tax benefit. A QCD is nontaxable income. For 2025, individuals 70½ and older can direct up to $108,000 per year (up to $216,000 for married couples filing jointly) from their IRAs to operating charities. Using a QCD can satisfy all or part of your annual RMD, can help lower your tax bill, and meet your philanthropic goals. You must have the money sent directly to the charity to be able to take advantage of the QCD. If you get the distribution directly from your IRA custodian, all of it will be taxable and will add to your income for the year.

A qualified charitable distribution (QCD) offers a significant tax advantage by excluding the donated amount from your taxable income. Unlike a standard charitable deduction, this benefit applies even if you take the standard deduction and do not itemize. It also reduces your adjusted gross income (AGI), which can help lower Medicare premiums, reduce the taxable portion of Social Security, and minimize the net investment income tax.

In short, a QCD is a powerful tool for tax-efficient giving for eligible individuals (age 70½ and older), effectively allowing you to donate pre-tax IRA dollars directly to charity and exclude that amount from your income. Consult your financial planner or tax advisor for additional details.

OSERS annual COLA paid in Feb.

The Omaha School Employees' Retirement System, OSERS, provides a cost-of-living adjustment, COLA, to retiree checks each year. The COLA is determined by calculating the change in the consumer price index, CPI, for the previous twelve months (ending August 31) to determine how much to adjust the amount of your retirement pension. While the adjustment was made in the January check when OPS administered the retirement plan, NPERS has interpreted the law differently, and will adjust the OSERS pension with the February 3, 2026 check. The annual COLA is capped at 1.5% for Tier 1 retirees (those who became OSERS members on or before July 1, 2013); it is capped at 1.0% for Tier 2, 3 and 4 retirees (those who became OSERS members after July 1, 2013).

General inflation exceeded 1.5% for this past year, so most Tier 1 retirees will get the full 1.5% COLA in February, and most Tier 2, 3 and 4 retirees will get a 1.0% COLA. If you retired less than two years ago, your COLA may be slightly less than the full amounts – the amount of the COLA is outlined in state law. Your "take home" increase will be less than the full COLA if you have income tax withheld from your pension, or if you chose any of the joint-and-survivorship payment forms. The annual COLA adjusts your base OSERS pension benefit. It is not applied to the State Service Annuity or Medical COLA amounts that you receive.

The February COLA adjustment is independent from the Medical COLA benefit. The Medical COLA benefit is paid in October each year to individuals who have been retired for 10 years or more.

Membership Drive Update

By: Deb Pauley, OEA-Retired President

Sherry Brodkey and I continue to serve as co-chairs of the OEA-Retired Membership Committee. The goal of the Committee is to increase the number of pre-retired and retired members of OEA-Retired.

We attend the monthly meetings of OEA Association Representatives (ARs). We hand out membership brochures, membership forms, answer any questions members have about the retired program, and award two $10 Scooters gift cards to ARs in attendance. We believe that our presence at the meetings helps bring a smile to the teachers at the end of a long day.

Active members can use the OEA-Retired website, ***www.oearetired.org***, to join OEA-Retired. As an added bonus, our website has information about our retirement system, OSERS, including a detailed explanation of the six payment options available and the differences in the four retirement benefit tiers. *[The benefit tier depends on the date that you were hired by OPS.]* It also has a link to a benefit estimator calculator so members can get an idea of what their retirement benefit will be. In addition, the website has information about health insurance options after you retire, including how to make the transition from active-employee insurance to retiree-insurance (including how to make the transition to Medicare).

Many members are not aware that they can join OEA-Retired at any age, and that they do not have to be retired to become a retired member. Our overall goal is to have more teachers join OEA-Retired early and not wait until they retire. Each year the cost of membership goes up, and we would like to have members join at the current rate. Be sure to visit our website. Encourage active teachers that you know to join as pre-retired, lifetime subscribers. Help spread the word: ***"join sooner, rather than later!"***

OEA-Retired

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NSEA-Retired elections coming in 2026

Elections will be held soon for NSEA-Retired representatives in several categories. NSEA-Retired officers up for election next year include President and Vice President. There will not be an election for Metro District Director this year. NSEA-Retired Board members can serve a maximum of three, three-year terms.

Delegates to represent NSEA-Retired at both NSEA Delegate Assembly (in April) and NEA Representative Assembly (in June and July) will also be elected. OEA-Retired members are encouraged to file for election for NSEA Delegate Assembly. Metro District has five retired delegates to NSEA Delegate Assembly.

Nominations for Officers and delegates to both NSEA Delegate Assembly and NEA Representative Assembly will be taken through the NSEA-Retired web page, ***www.nsea.org/retired*** starting in January 2026.

The filing deadline is February 5.

EHA health Insurance changes for 2025-26

Public school retirees aged 50 to 64, who have been insured through the Educators Health Alliance (EHA) for five years immediately prior to their retirement, can continue their EHA coverage in retirement (prior to signing up for Medicare) through the EHA Direct Bill Plan. The premiums for 2025-26 for this coverage increased an average of 5.49% on September 1, 2025. There is no change in the deductible offerings, but there is an increase in the out-of-pocket maximums.

Current premiums and deductible options can be found on the EHA website, ***www.ehaplan.org***. A 32-minute video explaining retiree coverage can be found by clicking on the *RETIREE* tab at the top of the EHA website.

These changes only affect retirees younger than 65 who are still insured through EHA. Subscribers to Educators' Medicare Supplement have rate changes that are on a calendar year basis. Premiums for the Medicare supplement are stable for several years unless you are moving to a different age band (at age 67, 70, 75, 80 and 85). You can learn more on the EHA website.