

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 2024

Tour of Historic Omaha is March 7 meeting

Oh, the places we'll go and the people we'll learn about will be fascinating! Join us for a bus tour of Omaha. We'll see unique architecture (both modern and historic), schools and churches, Fortune 500 businesses (Omaha is home headquarters for six of them), the Bob Kerrey Bridge and nearby Riverfront, and the site where Chief Standing Bear was on trial. Some of the outstanding leaders we'll learn more about include: Abe Lincoln, William Paxton, Sam Mercer, Johnny Carson, Bud Crawford, Lucretia Creighton, Sarah Joslyn, Gottlieb Storz, Rose Blumpkin, Mildred Boyd, Malcom Little (aka Malcom X), and the Fonda family and their contribution to the arts in Omaha.

The three-hour tour will depart from the National Park Headquarters building, **601 Riverfront Drive**, promptly at 10 a.m. The boarding of the luxury bus will begin at 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, March 7. The

Park Visitor Center is located near the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge. There is plenty of free parking, and restrooms are available inside the Visitor Center.

This event will be free for OEA-Retired members. Guests will pay \$10 (either in cash or check, payable to OEA-Retired) before boarding the bus. The bus has an onboard restroom and will return to the National Park Headquarters.

Registration is required. To reserve your place on the tour, go to our website, www.oeretired.org, and click on the link on the home page. You can call Doreen Jankovich at 402-517-8949 if you don't have access to the Internet. At the time this issue of *Voices of Experience* was sent to the printer, there were about 15 spaces left on the 50-passenger bus. Registration will be closed when the bus capacity has been reached.

See you on the tour!

President's Message

By: Walta Sue Dodd, OEA-Retired President

"Education is the bedrock of a thriving society, and a strong public education system plays a fundamental role in shaping the future of individuals and communities." – Daylon Caldwell

Free public education is one of the cornerstones of our democracy. Everyone should champion and support public education. Here are the reasons why:

- Public schools are the equalizer. They provide opportunities for advancement without regard to your background. No one is denied access to learning in public schools.
- Public schools bring social cohesion and understanding of others.
- Public schools pave the way for economic growth and prosperity through an educated workforce that is crucial for economic growth.
- Public schools play a role in shaping an informed citizenry and instill the values of democracy, critical thinking, and civic responsibility.
- Public schools yield long-term benefits for individuals and society as a whole.

Diverting public funds from funding public education to funding private schools is a detriment to the public schools that educate all children – no matter their race, socioeconomic background, gender identity or

religious/philosophy beliefs. Public schools have been under-funded for years – giving public money to private education only makes that problem worse.

Sending a child to a private school, religious school, or home school is a choice that should not be funded by public dollars. Increasingly the funds for public schools are being eroded by schemes to circumvent the Nebraska Constitution, Article VII-1, which states in part: *"The Legislature may provide for the education of other persons in educational institutions **owned and controlled by the state or a political subdivision thereof.**"* [Emphasis added.]

A petition drive to repeal LB 753 (which passed last year) gained more than 120,000 signatures. LB 753 diverts up to \$25 million in public tax money to fund private schools. Voters will decide if public tax dollars can be used to fund private education. I encourage you to support public schools by voting Tuesday, November 5, 2024. Right now you can volunteer in the campaign to repeal LB 753 by signing up for a yard sign; writing postcards to your family, friends and neighbors; and

Voter ID provision takes effect May 14, 2024

In the Nebraska General Election in 2022, voters approved a constitutional amendment requiring voter ID. On June 1, 2023, the governor signed LB 514 into law. The bill puts the voter ID provision into effect. The first election requiring voter ID will be the statewide primary, May 14, 2024. All Nebraska elections after that will require voter ID.

Below is a summary of the guide issued in August 2023 by The Nebraska Secretary of State explaining the new requirements.

What ID can I use to vote?

- Nebraska driver's license/state ID
- Passport, military ID, tribal ID
- Hospital, assisted-living facility or nursing home record
- Nebraska political subdivision ID (state, county, city, school, etc.)
- Nebraska college or university ID

The ID must have the voter name and photo, and it can be expired.

What if I forget my ID?

You will fill out a provisional ballot. For your ballot to count, you need to present a valid photo ID to your county election office on or before the Tuesday after the election.

How do I vote with a voter ID?

- In person – present a valid photo ID or vote provisionally
- Early in the Election Commissioner's office – present a valid photo ID or vote provisionally

- Early by mail – write driver's license/state ID number on ballot application or enclose a copy of valid photo ID or reasonable impediment certification with your application. The deadline to return your early-voting ballot application is 6 p.m., Friday, May 3.
- By-Mail Precincts or By-Mail Special Elections – write driver's license/state ID number on ballot return envelope, or enclose a copy of valid photo ID or reasonable impediment certification in your ballot-return envelope.

What if I can't afford an ID?

You can get a free state ID for voting from the Nebraska DMV. If you were born in Nebraska, you can get a free certified copy of your birth certificate for voting purposes from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

What if I can't get an ID?

If you have a reasonable impediment, you can complete a certification instead of presenting a valid ID. Reasonable impediments are:

- Inability to obtain a valid ID due to
 - Disability or illness
 - Lack of birth certificate or other required documents
- Religious objection to being photographed

Contact your county election Commissioner's office or the Secretary of State's Office for more information. The website is: www.sos.nebraska.gov.

New OEA-Retired website is up and running!

By: Roger Rea, Webmaster pro-tem

A fresh look has been added to the OEA-Retired website! Thanks to the work of your Board of Directors, we now have a new website. The good news is that the website is found at the same web address: www.oeretired.org. Among the features for the new website are:

- A fresh, colorful logo for OEA-Retired
- Website navigation buttons on the top menu
- No log-in is required to access all of the website features
- Links to various sources of information regarding retirement issues
- Information on health insurance after you retire, including tips on making the transition to Medicare
- Information about OSERS

If there are things that you would like to have included on the website, please let us know! You can

do that by using the "Contact" link on the website (if your browser window is relatively small, you may need to click on the "More" tab at the top of the page to find this link). There is also a new email address for OEA-Retired: retiredOEA@gmail.com.

The website launch was advertised via email to all members for whom we have a valid email address. Initial response to the website has been very positive! We garnered more than 30 participants for our March Tour of Historic Omaha through the website after sending an email to members. If you did not get the email, it may be in your "bulk mail" or "spam" folder. Or, we may not have your correct email address!

NSEA is now in charge of our membership list. If you move, or just want to update your email address, send an email to: membership@nsea.org. You can find a link to this email address under the "Contact" tab

on our website. Be sure to include your name and current address. Include your new address, email, and phone number. Mention that you are an OEA-Retired

member. We will never use your email address except to inform you about OEA-Retired business.

OEA-Retired meeting calendar

OEA-Retired will have two more general meetings this year. The March meeting will be a bus tour of Historic Omaha; the May meeting will be held at the OEA office, 4202 South 57th Street, from 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. The meeting dates and tentative programs as well as NSEA-Retired meetings of note are:

March 7, Thurs. – Historic Omaha Bus Tour. Check-in begins 9:30 a.m.

April 18, Thurs. – NSEA-Retired Conference at Mahoney State Park

April 19-20, Fri. and Sat. – NSEA Delegate Assembly (Lincoln)

May 9, Thurs. – OPS Superintendent Matt Ray and OSERS Director Shane Rhian

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.

NSEA-Retired elections underway soon!

Elections for NSEA-Retired officers and delegates to NEA Representative Assembly (NEA-RA)

and NSEA Delegate Assembly (NSEA-DA) will be underway soon! NSEA-Retired is governed by a Board that includes officers and Directors from each of the six NSEA-Retired Districts across the state. Metro District has two Directors on the NSEA-Retired Board: Walta Sue Dodd and Ruby Davis. Ruby's seat on the Board is up for election this year; Ruby has filed for re-election.

This year NSEA-Retired members in Metro District will elect a Metro District Director to the NSEA-Retired Board, 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.

There are multiple OEA-Retired candidates for the spring elections. You can find a complete list of candidates for the various offices, as well as a short biographical 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!

Medicare scam calls abound during Open Enrollment

By: Roger Rea

The open enrollment period for Medicare and the Affordable Care Act is prime time for insurance scam calls. The open enrollment time is right now! The calls typically offer to save you money, and to get "all of the benefits that you are entitled to" with Medicare or your other health insurance products. The callers may claim that new Medicare, Social Security, or supplemental insurance cards are being issued or that your beneficiary file must be updated. They then ask you to verify your personal information, which will be used to commit theft. Don't fall for this scam!

The Medicare scam calls often use spoofing technology to manipulate your caller ID into displaying that they are calling from Medicare, a health or life insurance provider, or a local phone number. The callers are typically quite aggressive, calling over and over at all times of the day in an attempt to wear down the victim.

These criminals will say anything to try to gain

a person's trust. In some cases, the criminals may have already obtained some limited personal information about you, such as your name, address, or even that you are on Medicare. The criminal then uses this information to try to make the call seem legitimate. The callers may claim that they can improve the benefits. Do not believe these claims, and do not carry on a conversation with the caller. If you do fall for the scam, be assured that the caller got a handsome bonus to get you to buy insurance from them, that your money is lost, and that they will not be there when you need them! The easiest and best way to avoid the scam is to just hang up!

I recently got a call from such a scammer. He knew that I was on Medicare, and seemed to know that I had Blue Cross as my supplement. I called Blue Cross after I hung up, and they assured me that: (a) they did not make the call; (b) the caller had no affiliation with Blue Cross; and (c) that I am currently getting all of the benefits that Medicare provides (all

Medicare subscribers get all of the benefits that Medicare provides).

How can you stop these calls? The National Do Not Call Registry was established to prevent unsolicited sales calls. Registering your home or cell phone number is completely free. If you've already registered your phone number with the Do Not Call Registry and are still receiving unwanted calls, the calls are most likely from scammers

To get on the Do Not Call list, go to www.DoNotCall.gov or call 1-888-382-1222 from the phone you want to register. It's free. If you register your number at DoNotCall.gov, you'll get an email with a link you have to click on within 72 hours to complete your registration.

OEA-Retired

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NSEA-Retired Spring Conference comes to Mahoney State Park April 18

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 the spring conference will be in the Omaha area.

Please join us for our NSEA-Retired spring conference Thursday April 18 at Mahoney State Park, 28500 W Park Hwy, Ashland, NE. Take Exit #426 off of I-80 on the way to Lincoln, turn west and watch for the signs to the Park.

The event begins at 8:30 a.m. with registration and refreshments. Parking at Mahoney State Park is

free; registration for the conference is required. If you do not have a State Park Permit, tell the guard at the gate that you are there for the conference, and you will be admitted to the Park without charge.

The conference will have breakouts on NEA Member Benefits, Wellness, Nebraska authors, and a speaker from the Nebraska Humanities. To register for the conference, go to www.nsea.org/retired and select *Calendars, Events & Registrations*. Deadline for registrations is Friday, April 12. The event is free for all members and \$10 for guests. Let's have a good showing of Omaha members at this event!

LB 1365 to make OSERS changes

LB 1365, introduced by Senator Mike McDonnell, will make two changes in the Omaha School Employees' Retirement System, OSERS. All members of retirement systems in Nebraska are provided opportunities to learn about their retirement benefits prior to retirement without loss of pay or leave time. The bill removes the age limit restriction (age 50 and above) to participate in the OSERS preretirement planning session. This change will bring OSERS into alignment with all other retirement systems managed by the state retirement systems regarding eligibility for preretirement planning. The bill also provides that the OSERS trustee on the Public Employee Retirement Board (PERB) will have ex-officio status prior to the transfer of governance and management of OSERS to the state retirement systems on September 1, 2024. The governor will appoint an OSERS member (who

must be a teacher, either active or retired), and the appointment must be confirmed by the Legislature. The selection process for the OSERS trustee is still being developed.

Get updates on legislation

NSEA prepares weekly updates on pending legislation in its weekly email, *Capitol Update*.

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!

Since none of the terms for the current officers for OEA-Retired are up for election this year, there will not be any OEA-Retired elections at the May 2024 meeting.