

NSEA-RETIRED ADVOCATE

www.nsea.org/retired

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NSEA-RETIRED OFFICERS

John Heineman,
NSEA-Retired
President
ringojohn@aol.com



Roger Rea,
Vice President
roger.omaha@gmail.com

Dr. Sarah Brown, Secretary
travelersarah@hotmail.com

Arlene Rea, Treasurer
arlenerea36@yahoo.com

DISTRICT DIRECTORS

Patsy Koch Johns, Capitol
pk.cozadlincolntheatre@gmail.com

Dr. Margie Nowak, Capitol
margienowak@hotmail.com

Dan Schiefelbein, Elkhorn
dan.schiefelbein@gmail.com

Ruby Davis, Metro
deltard4@gmail.com

Walta Sue Dodd, Metro
wsdodd@aol.com

Joy Brown, Panhandle
joyb1302@gmail.com

Howard Gaffney, Sandhills
gaffneyhl22@gmail.com

Jan Barnason, Tri-Valley
jkbarnason@gmail.com

If you are not receiving emails from the NSEA-Retired list or your email address has changed, send a message to RingoJohn@aol.com.



Support Our Schools Nebraska: NSEA-Retired members volunteered their time this summer to assist with the referendum petition to repeal LB753! Pictured are several NSEA-Retired members who helped turn in signatures at the Nebraska Secretary of State's office.

VICTORY! Signature Goal Met & Exceeded

NSEA-R volunteers help collect more than 117K signatures

When NSEA and a coalition of not-for-profit organizations launched the Support Our Schools Nebraska petition drive, organizers set a goal of gathering 90,000 signatures in 90 days so voters could decide the fate of LB753's tax scheme to divert public tax dollars to private schools.

Following its launch, NSEA-Retired members volunteered their time to host petition signature-gathering events in every corner of the state. This summer, volunteers and circulators logged thousands of hours gathering signatures from Nebraskans. In all, organizers submitted 117,145 signatures to the Secretary of State on August 30—more than double the 61,000 valid signatures needed to put the issue on the 2024 ballot.

Rita Bennett's Story

The following was written by NSEA-retired member Rita Bennett:

A favorite Sunday morning tradition for me includes enjoying my coffee with the cat snuggled on my lap as I listen to the familiar trumpet sounds that herald another edition of CBS's Sunday Morning. On one Sunday early this summer, however, I found myself unable to relax. Even as my introverted nature caused me to recoil in protest at the idea, I knew there was something I needed to do: I needed to leave the comfort of my cat and recliner and go out and talk to strangers. On purpose. On a Sunday morning. Trust me when I tell you I did NOT want to do it. My strength is not in small talk with



people I don't know. So, what on earth could convince me to leave my comfort zone? Enter the petition drive to repeal LB753, whereby we could collect enough signatures to put LB753 on the ballot—educate voters about the harm this bill would do to our state, and repeal LB753 through votes at the ballot box. Having attended the kickoff event, I had petition forms and instructions for gathering signatures. At the time, I figured I would just get a few signatures from people I knew, and I would have done my part.

Guilt and fear drove me from my recliner that Sunday and would continue to push me out the door on subsequent Sundays all summer long, as I became an active participant in the petition drive. Guilt that if I didn't do all I could, we might fail; fear that if I didn't do all that I could, the citizens of our state could suffer in innumerable ways for decades to come. So, I took my petitions and off I went, all by myself, having decided I could go to the College View Farmer's Market, hang

out, and see if I could get some people to sign the petition (there's that small thing!). At least then I could say I tried to help.

I did not expect what happened next. That Sunday's success encouraged me to return on many subsequent Sundays, and I was joined by several others who wanted to help, too! People flocked to us, excited and eager

to sign. So many voters already knew about LB753 and shared our deep concerns about the bill. Many were moved to sign because of negative ads being run by the "decline to sign" faction, and quite a few voters asked if they could have petitions so they could get signatures, too.

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Supporting All Children

I may have retired a couple years ago, but I cannot retire from my passion: supporting all children and standing up for our public schools. Work that matters often means getting out of our comfort zones. I'm so proud to have helped with the petition drive, and proud to be an informed, involved member of the NSEA.

“ I’m so proud to have helped with the petition drive, and proud to be an informed, involved member of the NSEA. — Rita Bennett ”

The RED FLAGS in tax schemes like LB753

The Bill: LB753, passed by the 2023 Nebraska Legislature, creates dollar-for-dollar tax credits costing up to \$100M to pay for financial contributions to K-12 private schools through “scholarship granting organizations.”

1 Private schools are not required to follow the same reporting requirements as the state's public schools, limiting the ability to gauge whether the taxpayer funds are being used effectively or appropriately.

2 Many private schools increase tuition once their costs are subsidized by state taxpayers. A similar voucher scheme in Iowa led some private schools there to increase tuition by more than 40%. In Milwaukee's voucher program, 20% of students leave private schools annually, either because they gave up their scholarship or the private schools pushed them out.

3 Fewer than half of Nebraska's 93 counties have private schools—and in 38 counties located west of Kearney, there are only 7 counties with a private school.

4 The cost of these annual tax credits can grow to \$100M by 2033. Unlike other measures considered in each budget cycle, these tax credits would be on autopilot, reducing revenue available to fund priorities such as career education in public schools.

5 Provisions outlined in LB753 allow for scholarship granting organizations (SGOs) to keep to 10% of the “donated” money for administrative costs.

6 A student who qualifies for scholarships under LB753 is NOT guaranteed admission to a private school. Unlike public schools who are open to all students, private schools can and do discriminate against children.



FIND MORE

SupportOurSchoolsNebraska.org



Find more LB753 facts at <https://bit.ly/OpenSkyLB753>.



NSEA-RETIRED
Members at NEA RA

A REMARKABLE JOURNEY:
Six NSEA-R Members Unite for NEA-Retired Annual Meeting, NEA Representative Assembly

In July, the city of Orlando, Florida witnessed a momentous event as the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and the NEA Representative Assembly unfolded. Among the attendees were six extraordinary individuals from the NSEA-Retired: Walta Sue Dodd, Pat Etherton, Dan Schiefelbein, Roger Rea, Arlene Rea, and John Heineman, who embarked on a memorable journey filled with camaraderie, inspiration, and a reaffirmation of their lifelong commitment to education.

One of the highlights of the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting was the election of John Heineman as an alternate to the NEA Board of Directors. John's dedication and exemplary leadership qualities have earned him this well-deserved recognition. As an alternate, he will play a crucial role in shaping policies and ensuring retired educators' voices are heard at the highest level of NEA's decision-making process.



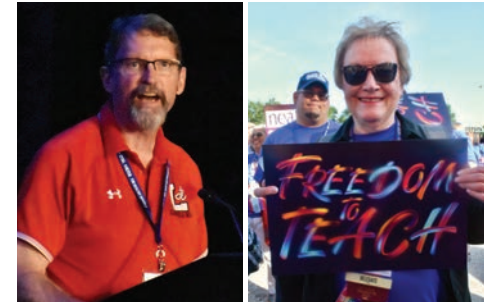
NEA President Becky Pringle laughs with Art Tanderup

Delegates from NSEA-Retired also had the privilege of attending the NEA Human and Civil Rights Banquet, a

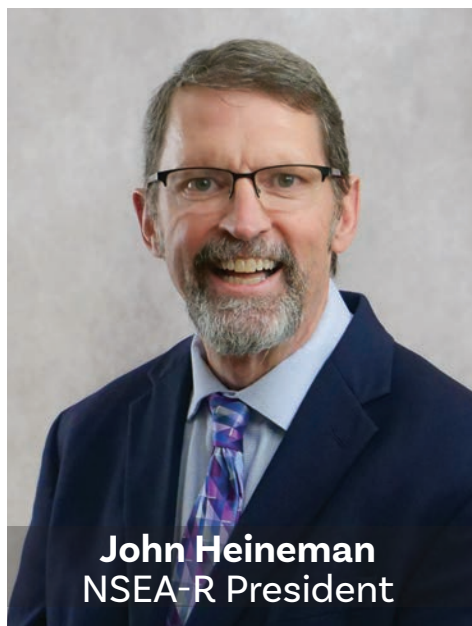
poignant event that celebrated the spirit of equality and social justice. Amidst a sea of passionate educators, they witnessed the recognition of individuals who have tirelessly championed the cause of human rights within and beyond the education sphere. The banquet served as a powerful reminder that as retired educators, our advocacy for equity and inclusivity continues to be an essential part of our identity. A special highlight was watching NSEA-Retired member Art Tanderup receive the H. Council Trenholm Memorial Award for his outstanding work as a pipeline fighter, water protector, Ponca corn planter, and tractor corn artist.

The NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA RA acted as a catalyst in forging bonds of friendship and support among these delegates. They discovered a network of like-minded retired educators who shared their stories, wisdom, and experiences. This newfound community

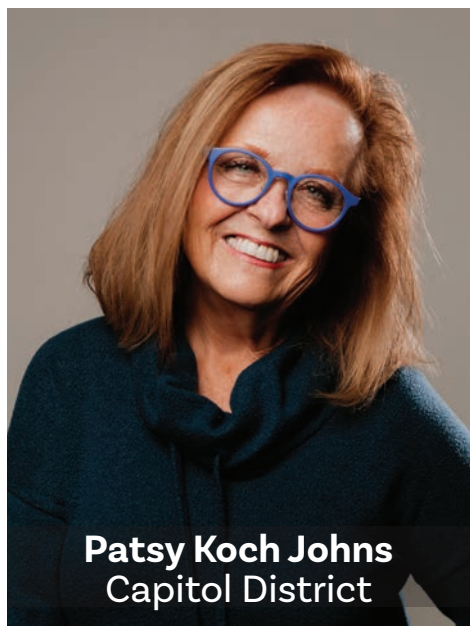
will serve as a constant source of encouragement and inspiration as they continue to make a difference in the lives of students and fellow educators.



NEW NSEA-R EXECUTIVE OFFICERS



John Heineman
NSEA-R President



Patsy Koch Johns
Capitol District



Howard Gaffney
Sandhills District

John Heineman has been elected as the president of the Nebraska State Education Association-Retired. The state's 2000 Teacher of the Year spent more than 30 years at Lincoln High School, he passionately taught speech and theater, inspiring countless students to express themselves confidently and creatively. Notably, he held the distinction of being Lincoln High's first International Baccalaureate Coordinator, fostering a global perspective within the school community.

In addition to his contributions within the classroom, he served on the Nebraska State Education Association Board of Directors, advocating for the rights and welfare of educators across the state. Furthermore, his impactful involvement extended to the national level, as he served on the NEA Board of Directors during his time as an active member. Through his leadership and dedication, Heineman has played a pivotal role in shaping educational policies and elevating the teaching profession. Now, as president of the Nebraska State Education Association-Retired, he hopes to continue to champion the cause of education, ensuring that the voices of retired educators are heard and valued.

Patricia Koch Johns has been involved in education for more than 40 years in Nebraska, as well as Arkansas, Georgia, and Missouri. In 1972, she earned her degree in education from Kearney State College with an emphasis in theatre, English, and speech. She continued her education and earned a master's degree from the University of Arkansas with a degree in communications with an emphasis in theatre in 1974. Koch Johns began her teaching career in Nebraska in 1976 at Cozad High School and remained there until she accepted a position at Lincoln High School in 2000. In 2006, Koch Johns was named the Nebraska Teacher of the Year, and in 2012 she was honored with the Governor's Excellence in Arts Education Award. As a master teacher/leader, Koch Johns was an English department chairperson and created curricula for 8th-grade theatre and dramatic literature and established the new Lincoln Public Schools graduation requirements. Koch Johns was also a lead writer for the original Nebraska Frameworks for the Visual and Performing Arts and served as an advisor for the creation of the NDE Language Arts Degree.

Howard R. Gaffney was born and raised in Custer County. He received his high school diploma from Anselmo-Merna, Nebraska in 1965. He attended Kearney State College, now known as the University of Nebraska Kearney, where he received a bachelor's degree in 1970, Middle School Endorsement in 1975, Master of Education in 2002, and Specialist Degree in 2012.

Gaffney was at Sandhills Public School in Halsey-Dunning, Nebraska from 1970-2005. He was an elementary teacher, a high school teacher, a head teacher, an assistant principal, and a coach while employed there. In 2007-2011, Gaffney was at Hyannis School in Hyannis, Nebraska where his duties included K-12 principal and Athletic Director. From 2017-2021, he served as the Superintendent at Stapleton School in Stapleton, Nebraska. In 2022, he left retirement to be the Interim Superintendent at Anselmo-Merna School in Merna, Nebraska which was completed on July 1, 2023.

Gaffney also owns and manages a farm-ranch operation in Anselmo.



Dan Schiefelbein
Elkhorn District

Dan Schiefelbein received his bachelor's degree in education from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He received a master's degree in School Administration from Kearney State College and an Education Specialist Degree from the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

Schiefelbein spent 12 years teaching Social Sciences, Driver Education, and Physical Education before taking his next role as a school administrator.

Schiefelbein was a high school principal for 16 years and spent four years as a superintendent. He retired from working in public education in 2012 and started working for Shelter Insurance as an agent recruiting specialist.

Schiefelbein was elected to serve as the Elkhorn representative on the NSEA-Retired Board and has previously served Tri Valley President and Metro District Vice President.

Have an article idea for the
NSEA-Retired Advocate or the
NSEA Voice magazine?

Send your idea to John Heineman
at RingoJohn@aol.com

Dear De Tonack,

We want to take a moment to express our deepest gratitude for your outstanding leadership as the past president of the NSEA-Retired Association. Your tenure has been nothing short of inspiring, and we are truly grateful for the positive impact you have had on our organization and its members.

Your visionary approach to leadership is remarkable. Under your guidance, the NSEA-Retired Association has flourished, advancing its mission to support retired educators and promote their welfare. Your ability to envision a future where retired educators can thrive and make significant contributions to our communities is truly inspiring. Your unwavering commitment to the organization's goals and your ability to rally others toward a common vision has been instrumental in our success.

One of the qualities that sets you apart as a leader is your genuine kindness and compassion. You have consistently shown a deep understanding of the challenges and needs of retired educators, and your empathetic nature has touched the lives of countless individuals. Your willingness to lend a listening ear, offer guidance, and provide support has made a tremendous difference in the lives of our members. Your kindness has created a warm and welcoming environment within the NSEA-Retired Association, fostering a sense of belonging and camaraderie among retirees.

Furthermore, your commitment to inclusiveness is truly commendable. You have championed diversity and ensured that every voice within our association is heard and valued. By actively seeking out different perspectives and encouraging open dialogue, you created an environment where everyone feels respected and included. Your efforts to amplify the voices of underrepresented groups and promote equity have been instrumental in making the NSEA-Retired Association a more inclusive and equitable organization.

De Tonack, your leadership has left an indelible mark on the NSEA-Retired Association. Your vision, kindness, and inclusiveness inspires us all and sets a high standard for future leaders to aspire to. We want to express our deepest gratitude for your unwavering dedication and commitment. Your leadership has transformed lives and made a lasting impact on our community of retired educators. Thank you for being an exceptional leader and an even more remarkable individual.



**Former NSEA-Retired
President De Tonack**

WELLNESS

Article By: Linda Kennedy, M.A., EHA Wellness Program

Retirement marks a significant transition in one's life, a time when the hustle and bustle of the daily grind gives way to a newfound freedom. However, with this liberation from a daily routine often comes the risk of sedentary habits and a decline in physical activity. It's crucial to remember that retirement is not just a time to relax; it's an opportunity to lead an active, healthy, and fulfilling life. It's important to stay active during retirement to help you embrace wellness and vitality in your golden years.

Physical activity is a key component of maintaining overall health and quality of life, regardless of age. However, it takes on an even greater significance during retirement. Here's why staying active should be a top priority:

- **Enhanced Physical Health:** Regular exercise reduces the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and osteoporosis. It keeps your cardiovascular system strong, maintains bone density, and supports joint health.
- **Mental Well-Being:** Exercise is a natural mood lifter. It releases endorphins, the "feel-good" hormones, which can help alleviate feelings of depression and anxiety, common challenges in retirement.
- **Cognitive Benefits:** Staying active has been linked to improved cognitive function and a reduced risk of cognitive decline. Engaging in activities that challenge your brain and body can help keep your mind sharp.
- **Social Interaction:** Participating in group activities, fitness classes, or sports can provide valuable social interactions, reducing feelings of isolation that some retirees may experience.
- **Maintaining Independence:** Regular physical activity maintains strength, balance, and flexibility, which are crucial for independent living so you can continue to enjoy your favorite activities and handle daily tasks without assistance.

Whether you are just starting out with getting active or you already have a routine, the following practical strategies can help you incorporate activity into your retirement routine:

- **Set Realistic Goals:** Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity per week, as recommended by health experts. Start slowly and gradually increase if you are feeling good.
- **Explore Various Activities:** Engage in activities you enjoy to help ensure you'll stick with it!
- **Create a Routine:** Establish a consistent exercise

schedule. This makes it easier to stick to your fitness goals. Consider incorporating exercise into your daily routine, such as taking a morning walk or practicing gentle stretches before bed.

- **Stay Socially Active:** Join clubs, fitness classes, or recreational sports groups in your community. Combining physical activity with social interaction can be highly motivating.
- **Prioritize Strength and Balance:** Include strength training exercises to maintain muscle mass and bone density. Incorporate balance exercises, like tai chi, to reduce the risk of falls.
- **Mix Leisure with Activity:** Find leisure activities that involve movement, such as dancing with your partner, playing with grandchildren, or taking leisurely bike rides.
- **Stay Hydrated and Listen to Your Body:** Drink plenty of water, especially during exercise. Pay attention to your body's signals and avoid overexertion.
- **Consult Professionals:** Before starting a new exercise regimen, consult your healthcare provider, especially if you have any pre-existing health conditions.

Retirement is not a time to simply kick back and watch the days go by. Rather, it's an opportunity to prioritize your health and well-being by staying active and engaged. Regular physical activity can lead to a more vibrant, fulfilling retirement, enabling you to make the most of these golden years. So lace up those walking shoes, grab a friend, and embark on this exciting journey to a healthier and happier retirement!

COMING SOON!

As a retiree, you are still eligible for the EHA Wellness program if you are under 65 and insured by the EHA BCBS Medical Plan or the EHA BCBS (Direct Bill) Retiree Medical Plan.

We all know that moving the body is one of the best things you can do for your health. Well Played, the October challenge offered by EHA Wellness will focus on how to have fun while staying active. Daily emails will provide you with tips, healthy recipes, and videos to help you stretch safely. It's daily inspiration to get you moving in the right direction! Just for signing up, you'll receive a stretch strap!

Check out all of the opportunities by logging into your account at www.ehawellness.org.

Medicare Insurance Seminars coming this fall!

**Article By: Roger Rea,
NSEA-Retired Vice President**

Medicare is the core insurance for individuals over age 65 and those with disabilities. The coverage can be a bit daunting for those who are new to Medicare, so NSEA-Retired has partnered with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska to provide information seminars across the state to help answer questions members have about Medicare and its coverage.



Members who are turning 65 will receive a letter from BCBS when the schedule is complete, giving the locations and information on how to reserve a space at one of the seminars. The schedule will also be posted on the NSEA-Retired website at nsea.org/retired. One of the seminars will be recorded, and the recording will be posted on the NSEA-Retired website when the seminars have been completed.

A key time each year falls between Oct. 15 to Dec. 7—that is the time when all Medicare subscribers can switch their Medicare drug plan coverage (Medicare Part D coverage) without any penalty. It is also the time when insurance companies increase their sales pressure to promote their specific Part D products.

Choosing a drug plan that is best for you is not intuitive! The lowest premium is not necessarily the cheapest plan; the highest premium is not necessarily the best coverage; the lowest deductible is not necessarily the best plan for you; the cost of a drug will not be the same at all pharmacies. The only way to choose a plan that is right for you is to go to the Medicare website, medicare.gov, enter your ZIP code and the drugs that you actually use, and five pharmacies that you can access. The website will return

the results of the 24 plans that are available in Nebraska along with the total cost of the plans for the drugs that you actually use (the total cost will include the premium, deductible, and the copays that you make for the drugs), and will allow you to compare drug pricing at up to five pharmacies.

The Medicare information seminars will cover the basics of Medicare (how to sign up, when to sign up, and what Medicare covers), as well as information on Educators' Medicare Supplement, a

Medicare supplement that is endorsed by NSEA-Retired and underwritten by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska.

NSEA-Retired members as well as subscribers to an Educators Health Alliance (EHA) insurance plan and their spouses qualify for enrollment in Educators' Medicare Supplement. Enrollment in Educators' Medicare Supplement brings you specific benefits that are not available to the general public, and our supplement is not available to the general public – only to our members, EHA subscribers, and their spouses.

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska FALL SEMINARS

BCBS In-Person Sessions

Morning sessions: 9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. (check in at 9 a.m.)

Afternoon sessions: 1:30 p.m. – 3 p.m. (check in at 1 p.m.)

Kearney	Monday, Oct. 23 Educational Service Unit 10 – Room B, (76 Plaza Boulevard, Kearney)
Omaha	Wednesday, Oct. 25 Metropolitan Community College Swanson Conference Center, Building 22
Norfolk	Thursday, Nov. 2 Northeast Community College – Lifelong Learning Center, Suites F and G, (701 East Benjamin Avenue)
Lincoln	Wednesday, Nov. 8 Jack J. Huck Continuing Education Center – Rooms 303 and 304, (301 South 68th Street Place)

Webinars:

Thursday, Oct. 26, 9 a.m. to 10 a.m.
Monday, Oct. 30, 2 p.m. to 3 p.m.
Thursday, Nov. 9, 5 p.m. to 6 p.m.



Nebraska State Education Association-Retired
 605 S. 14th St. Lincoln, NE 68508
 (800) 742-0047 www.nsea.org/retired

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Register today for the NSEA-Retired Fall Conference

October
18

The NSEA-Retired Fall Conference will be held Oct. 18 at the Grand Island Stuhr Museum and will feature breakout sessions both in the morning and afternoon. Attendees will learn about the rich history of Stuhr Museum's expansive facilities. Registration is available at www.nsea.org/retired. The event is free for all members and \$10 for guests. Registration and refreshments will begin at 8:30 a.m. **The deadline for registration is October 11.**



NSEA-Retired PAC Update

Nebraska boosted the amount of dollars contributed by \$1,500—a 34% increase over 2022.

The dollars exceeded the NSEA-Retired goal of raising donations by 2%. The NEA PAC collects voluntary contributions from members and uses those contributions to support candidates for office who support our public schools and high-quality education for all children.

Please consider a donation today by visiting EducationVotes.org/donate.

You may either make a one-time donation or recurring monthly. When you donate, know that your money is going to support those who support public education.

The NEA PAC thanks all who donated this past year!