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NEBRASKA NEA Director's Report

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**NSEA Board Members Attend
NEA Superweek and
NEA Board Meeting**

Lobbying / Government Relations

NEA Directors John Heineman, Jenni Absalon, Rebecca Marks were joined on by NSEA Board members on lobby day. We spent the day meeting with Nebraska's elected representatives' staff and also met with Senator Johanns on Capitol Hill.



Nebraska leadership with Senator Mike Johanns. (Left to right) John Heineman, Paul Schulte (Millard), Jenni Absalon, Alan Bone (Westside), Senator Johanns, Deb Rasmussen (Lincoln), Roger Rea (Retired), and Rebecca Marks.

The NEA Directors and visitors attend a lobbying briefing before heading to meet with Nebraska's representatives.

NEA Legislative Priorities

- Social and economic justice: Promote progressive taxation, ensure school safety and equal opportunity
- Retirement security: Preserve Social Security, state pensions; repeal GPO and WEP
- Healthcare: Preserve Medicare, expand Medicaid and access to mental health services
- Privatization: Preserve public education, collective bargaining
- K-12 education: Preserve formula-funded aid, reauthorize ESEA, obtain relief from flawed NCLB provisions
- Education Support Professionals: Pass "Classified School Employee of the Year" bill
- Higher education: Pass "DREAM Act" as part of comprehensive immigration reform, preserve student financial aid

Topics for Capitol Hill Visits:

NEA Backs Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Immigration policy profoundly impacts NEA members and their students - how we treat new immigrants reflects commitment to values that define us.

- Create a realistic path to citizenship for the 11 million aspiring citizens who call America home.
- Preserve the unity of families, traditional and nontraditional - family unity is critical to student success.
- Incorporate and expand the DREAM Act and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) - access to in-state tuition, federal loans, health benefits.

Comprehensive Approach to School Safety

- Limit access to weapons of war, universal background checks; ban assault weapons / large magazine clips.
- Greater emphasis on mental health, better screening; fund school-based health centers; incentives to enter profession; parity in insurance coverage.
- Enhance school safety, let communities decide what they need - counselors, nurses,

- security; facilities upgrades.
- Student / educator supports, bullying prevention, professional development, cultural competence.

Impact of Sequestration 2013/Fiscal Cliff 2.0

Federal Education-Related Discretionary Programs

The failure of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction to produce a bill identifying budgetary savings of at least \$1.2 trillion over ten years (fiscal years 2012-2021) has triggered an automatic spending reduction process that includes sequestration (the cancellation of budgetary resources) to take effect on January 2, 2013, as stipulated in the Budget Control Act of 2011 (Public Law 112-25). For fiscal year 2013, automatic, across-the-board budget cuts will be applied to most programs, including all discretionary education programs, except Federal Pell Grants.

KIDS NOT CUTS!

Across-the-board cuts are a bad idea and would be devastating to the programs and services that ordinary Americans depend on, including education, transportation, public safety, medical research, and environmental protection. These cuts could also lead to the loss of tens of thousands of education jobs, but more importantly, the loss of services to millions of children. Funding for services like education, benefits for veterans, and transportation have already taken a \$1.5 trillion hit. These built-in cuts bring Non-Defense Discretionary spending to the lowest level as a share of the economy (GDP) on record. We need to make investments that strengthen our economy and protect core American values. We've already asked our children to make big sacrifices. We can't keep sticking everyday American families with the tab.

- Across-the-board cuts of over \$3 billion would be particularly devastating for education, where cuts would result in:
 - Services cut or eliminated for millions of students.
 - Funding for children living in poverty, special education, and Head Start slashed by billions.
 - Ballooning class sizes.
 - Elimination of after-school programs.
 - Decimation of programs for our most vulnerable; homeless students, English language learners, and high-poverty, struggling schools.
 - Slashing of financial aid for college students.
 - Loss of tens of thousands of education jobs; at early childhood, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels.
- In real terms, across-the-board cuts could mean students crammed into overcrowded classrooms, 4-year-olds cheated out of early childhood education, and dreams not realized due to soaring college costs.
- Despite the fact that 5.4 million more students are in our schools today and that costs have increased by 25 percent since 2003, these cuts could actually cause education programs to drop to pre-2003 levels.

Raise Your Hand ! Ensuring Success for Every Student

*"We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. Life often leaves us standing bare, naked and dejected with a lost opportunity. The 'tide in the affairs of men' does not remain at the flood; it ebbs. We may cry out desperately for time to pause in her passage, but time is deaf to every plea and rushes on. Over the bleached bones and jumbled residue of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words: Too Late." **Martin Luther King Jr***



President Calls for New Campaign

NEA unveiled a campaign in early February to put into place the best ideas around improving public education. Complete with graphics and logos, the "Raise Your Hand" plan calls for a series of initiatives within four areas: 1) Successful students, 2) Accomplished Professionals, 3) Dynamic Collaboration, and 4) Empowered Leaders. Van Roekel and Secretary-Treasurer Becky Pringle laid out the groundwork for the proposal while speaking powerfully at the board meeting on Feb. 9 in Washington D.C. "We've got to step it up. We have to do more," Van Roekel said. "We have to build this movement.

We have to get America back to believing that public education is the solution, not the problem. "Pringle's voice thundered from the podium as she encouraged board members to "raise your hand" for students. "I'm tired of posers hijacking the discourse," she said. "I'm tired of being dismissed as a professional, disregarded as a professional, and disrespected as a professional," Pringle said. "I am someone who dedicated her life to making sure all students succeed."

At the center of the "Raise Your Hand" campaign is student success, said Pringle. A triangle graphic highlighting the campaign objectives reads, "Ensure the success of every student." And to do that, Pringle said, "we need to produce concrete results." She went on to highlight specific goals that NEA plans to accomplish:

Successful students-NEA would help train 1,000 teacher leaders, while also advocating for enhanced professional development and training to implement the Common Core State Standards.

Accomplished professionals-NEA would establish at least 50 new peer assistance and review programs and dozens of new profession-ready residency models in combination with teacher-training programs.

Dynamic collaboration-NEA will have at least 30,000 members, 30 state affiliates, and 250 locals engaged in an online system of professional collaboration by the end of this year.

Empowered leaders-NEA will select at least 200 teachers to participate in a comprehensive leadership training curriculum, including a field-based leadership practicum. NEA will also develop ESP leaders using the "Elevating the ESP Careers" work group.

Although improving teacher effectiveness is mentioned repeatedly in many of the research-based ideas being promoted by NEA, Van Roekel made it clear that the role of ESPs in schools is critical. "If we're going to fight privatization and the horrible salaries that our ESP work for, we have to do it with professionalism," he said. "Not everyone can do those jobs." Van Roekel was very optimistic about the "Raise Your Hand" campaign.

Focusing NEA's efforts around initiatives that increase student learning may change the public debate surrounding education, he said. "I'm hoping that by this summer that we'll create a much different buzz, not just about NEA, but what we're doing in this country," he said. "We have to change the results for kids." NEA hasn't limited its lobbying for public school improvements only to its members.

Following the inauguration of President Barack Obama to a second term, Van Roekel sent a letter saying that NEA "will do our part by transforming our union to take more responsibility for the quality and the practice of educators." The "Raise Your Hand" campaign, along with the proposal to increase dues by \$3 in a special assessment, is an outgrowth of NEA's efforts to Lead the Profession. Just over a year ago, NEA released "Transforming Teaching," a groundbreaking 40-page document produced by the Commission of Effective Teachers and Teaching. The report was followed by NEA's Three-Point Plan, the Policy Statement on Teacher Evaluation and Accountability passed by the RA, and the Joint Committee on Leading the Profession. The ultimate goal of the campaign is to change the public dialogue on education. Imagine waking up one day and reading in the New York Times: "The National Education Association Leads the Way in Ensuring that all Students Have a Quality Education." The campaign was designed around the research-based Great Public Schools Indicators as well as criteria adopted by the Representative Assembly.



Leading the Profession Dues Assessment

The NEA board of directors called for a \$3 special assessment on dues in order to help create more projects that will improve student learning in public schools across the country. The special assessment will come before the Representative Assembly in July in the form of a bylaw amendment. State affiliates have already started dozens of new initiatives to improve student learning, and many have applied to the national for assistance over the past year. NEA received nearly \$2.4 million in requests to assist in Leading the Profession projects, but had barely \$1 million available.

President Dennis Van Roekel said that the Special Fund would be dedicated to getting these state initiatives started.

The board spent nearly an hour discussing the bylaw proposal before finally deciding to forward it to the RA. Two amendments were proposed, but failed. One would have exempted ESPs from the special assessment. The other would have added a "sunset" clause that would have ended the assessment after three years. Although the board had little notice of the bylaw proposal, the board decided to move forward. The deadline to the bylaw proposal, the board decided to move forward. The deadline to submit amendments this year is March 2. The proposed \$3 special assessment actually would hold NEA dues for classroom teachers at \$182, the amount that was projected last summer. However, teacher salaries around the country fell this winter from a projected average of \$57,303 down to \$56,415. Because of this, NEA dues were reduced to \$179. If it passes the \$3 assessment dues for next year would be \$182.

ESP dues are projected to remain at the budgeted amount, \$107.50, based on an average salary for ESPs of \$31,233. However, the proposed special assessment would increase those dues by \$3 to \$110.50 if passed by the RA.

Board Business

Reports:

Executive Director

John Stocks, reported that the social justice dialogue that took place in December went very well. He also noted that NEA had numerous victories as part of last November's election, and that NEA was successful in lobbying during the Lame Duck session of Congress. Finally, Stocks read an emotional remembrance about Charles Poland, an NEA member and bus driver who was killed in Alabama in January while trying to keep his children safe from a gunman. The gunman abducted one child and held him hostage for nearly a week before the child was rescued and the gunman shot by FBI agents.

Secretary/Treasurer

Becky Pringle said that projected losses in membership are not as great as predicted and that NEA will lose 70,000 fewer members than projected. This change means that the projected \$8 million in cuts that NEA needed will be less than \$2 million. Finally, Pringle asked for members to participate in a survey from the Commission on Standards and Performance Reporting. This group, which is in charge of accreditation standards for teacher preparation programs, will have a web survey open from Feb.15 to March 29.

Vice President

Lily Eskelsen headed the NEA contingent that negotiated the partnership with AFSCME and SEIU. Eskelsen also provided the board with an update to the Governance Review Project. This group is studying whether NEA needs to update any of its governance structures. She reviewed some of the highlights of NEA's governance history. The group will continue to conduct surveys and engage NEA groups in dialogue about whether changes are needed.

Read Across America

NEA will celebrate Read Across America Day on March 1. The theme this year involves the surprising combination of toothbrushes and reading. In partnership with Renaissance Dental, NEA is calling for kids to brush two minutes, two times per day and read for 20 minutes. The slogan is, "2 X 2 + 20." This is the 16th year for Read Across America and plenty of Cat in the Hat supplies are available at <http://www.nea.org/grants/886.htm>.

NEA Board Approves Partnership with AFSME and SEIU

The NEA board of directors approved a partnership agreement with two other major labor unions at its February meeting in Washington, D.C.

The agreement with AFSCME and SEIU would include no-raid agreements and a method to smoothly solve jurisdiction disputes.

AFSCME is the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees and has 1.7 million members. It is affiliated with the AFL-CIO.

The SEIU is the Service Employees International Union that represents 2.1 million workers in the sectors of health care, local and state governments, and private property services-janitors, security officers and food service workers. They disaffiliated with the AFL-CIO in 2005 and joined with other unions to form Change to Win. NEA, AFSCME, and SEIU combined represent 45 percent of all organized labor in the U.S.

Although the three organizations have not been engaged in any major raids or fights, the proposal establishes a four-year partnership in an attempt to avoid any fighting so that the three groups can focus on battling anti-union legislation together.

The proposal is not a merger, but will allow the three groups to cooperate on shared interests. NEA does not intend to change any of its governing documents as a result of the board's decision to approve the partnership.

Vice president Lily Eskelsen led the NEA team in negotiations to hammer out the partnership documents. "I am bringing you this proposal for partnership with complete enthusiasm and confidence," she said. "We believe that it prepares us, protects us and positions us to withstand the attacks that will inevitably be launched against all unions in the hope that they can cause us to destroy each other in vicious raids."

Eskelsen was joined on the drafting team by Ohio president Pat Brooks, Illinois board member Jim Grimes, NEA staff member Michael Edwards and NEA general counsel Alice O'Brien.

Grimes described the negotiations as, "a grueling but amazing process." He said the goal was not just to protect the associations and their current affiliates, but to strengthen the relationships. The partnership is similar to what NEA has with AFT, he said.

"Probably one of the most buoying areas for me was when the members of AFSCME and SEIU shared with me their desire for great public schools in America," Grimes said. "It's their families that are affected by this."

The presidents of all three associations decided to move forward with the idea earlier this year and issued a charge that said, "To move forward building a powerful partnership among our three unions that can advance the rights and working conditions of America's workers and the broader social and economic justice movements in our country."

As a result, the teams drafted three documents: Statement of Solidarity, Dispute Resolution Protocol, and Organizing for Power National Agreement on Representation.

It will still be up to state affiliates and locals to abide by the no-raid language, but with a

solid partnership agreement at the national level, it's hoped that the different affiliates will be able to avoid clashing.

The national boards of all three associations have approved the document and it is now considered ratified. The document can be renewed in four-year terms if all three parties choose to do so, or any party can withdraw with 90 days notice.

Constitution & Standing Rule Changes

The Representative Assembly in Atlanta this July will consider the following proposed changes to the Constitution and Standing Rules.

The board of directors took positions on the items during its meeting on Feb.9:

Constitutional Amendment 1:

Change the percentage of classroom teachers required on NEA committees from 75 percent to the percentage within NEA membership. **BOARD OPPOSES**

Constitutional Amendment 2:

Remove the classroom teacher percentage requirement for NEA committees.
BOARD SUPPORTS

Constitutional Amendment 3:

Change the percentage of classroom teachers required on NEA committees from at least 75 to at least 60 percent. **BOARD SUPPORTS**

Constitutional Amendment 4:

Allow NEA to provide the text of proposed amendments to the Constitution or Bylaws through printed or electronic means. **BOARD SUPPORTS**

SR 1:

Return to the original definition used in Robert's Rules. Since 1986, NEA has allowed the sponsor to speak before a motion to object to consideration is considered.
BOARD OPPOSES

SR 2:

Allow for an "object to consideration" motion on items that are being proposed to be added to the Legislative Program. Because new items being added to this document are amendments, they are not currently open to this type of objection motion.
BOARD SUPPORTS

Amendment 3:

Postpone any vote on a motion to refer until the following day, unless it's the final day of the RA. Motions to refer New Business Items are often made throughout the process and the concern is that they are made in haste and essentially defeat an item.
BOARD OPPOSES

Amendment 4:

Limit the number of words in a new business item to 100 or fewer. **BOARD OPPOSES**

Amendment 5:

Require the person submitting a new business item to provide an email address so the person can be contacted. **BOARD OPPOSES**

Amendment 6:

Make available to the sponsor of a new business item the full analysis of the cost estimate for the item. **BOARD OPPOSES**

Amendment 7:

To provide for an in-person winter meeting for a subsection of the Resolutions Committee. Because of budget challenges, the winter, in-person meeting of the Resolution Committee was changed to a virtual online meeting. The Committee on Constitution, Bylaws and Rules believes that this proposed amendment is in conflict with NEA bylaws.

(President Van Roekel told the board he intends to rule this motion out of order)

Amendment 8:

Require two in-person meetings of the Resolutions Committee, at least 60 days apart. The cost of this item is approximately \$238,000. **BOARD OPPOSES**

Guest Speakers and Observances

LGBTQ Observance

Being the first openly gay member of the U.S. Senate seems to have made Wisconsin's newest senator famous, but that's not why Tammy Baldwin ran for office. "I didn't run to make history," she said. "I ran to make a difference." Baldwin addressed the NEA board of directors on Feb. 8 during the LGBTQ observance. She opened her remarks by thanking John Stocks, NEA's executive director, who took a two-week leave of absence to return to his home state and help organize for Baldwin's campaign.

Baldwin's "vision for tomorrow" is the reason voters chose her over her opponent, she said. Winning by nearly six percentage points, she pulled off an upset that many thought wouldn't happen. "When I started running, people all said I didn't have a chance," she said. "But we keep pushing forward. It's a commitment to the progressive values that we share."

Baldwin credits her positive attitude with propelling her ahead. "You can always find reasons why we can't do it," she said, as she described America's current problems: Republicans and Democrats fight, there is too much corporate power, and Washington D.C. is broken. "I am the wrong person to tell that something can't be done," she said. "What we had really won in this election was a chance," said Baldwin. "What we secured was the chance to move America forward."

Black History Month Observance

It would be easy for Dr. Julianne Malveaux, the former president of Bennett College in North Carolina, to see race as the reason students don't perform up to their potential.

But it's not that simple, she said. "This isn't a white folk issue or a black folk issue," Malveaux said. "This is an American issue."

Bennett College is America's oldest historically black college for women. Bennett served as the 15th president of the school before leaving in 2012. What she takes away from her time there is that engaging students in learning is a challenging task that takes great educators. "You've got to get out there as advocates," she said while speaking to the NEA board of directors on Feb. 9 in Washington, D.C.

Malveaux has returned to her role as a noted labor economist, author, and color commentator. And she's not one to mince words when it comes to politics. "In the long run, continued public policy disparities hurt our nation," she said. "They hurt African Americans and Latinos, but they hurt our nation more."

Malveaux challenged the educators at the NEA to change the way they teach. She said

that with 40 percent the United States leads the world in the category of people between the ages of 55 and 64 with college degrees. But if you look at younger age groups, that 40 percent number doesn't change. "They teach folks like they taught us," she said. Different people have different learning styles, and "it's not really racial," she said.

Although Malveaux was invited to speak to the board in February because it's Black History Month, she said that she doesn't believe in it. "If you give me a month, I'll rock your world, because there isn't a day that you teachers don't have the chance to help a student."

Superintendent Jerry Weast Speaks to the NEA Board

It's not often that a superintendent is invited to speak at an NEA board meeting, but it's also not often that a superintendent says publicly that transforming schools cannot be done without unions. Jerry Weast retired last fall after 13 years with the Montgomery County School District in Maryland. The district, one of America's largest, has close to 170,000 students. It also has some of the greatest learning achievements. The percentage of students graduating, earning a four-year-college degree and taking and passing Advanced Placement tests all increased dramatically during Weast's tenure with the district, and he says it was a group effort.

"Working together is imperative," he said. "No superintendent can do this alone, no board can do this alone, and no plan can do this alone. It's the people who execute the plan who do it." Weast's humility was clearly on display as he addressed the board on Feb. 9. "I've always considered myself a teacher on special assignment," he said. But the key to Weast's success was his ability to get everyone to work together. "If you want people to change it has to be supportive, not punitive," he said. That meant changing the outlook on tests. Weast liberally quotes scores and statistics from tests like the SAT or Advanced Placement, but he doesn't hold up any of the other mandated assessments. "Our people were not against measurements," he said. "They were against these poor measurements." "We didn't chase state tests," Weast said. They were unreliable. They didn't predict anything, except they cost \$25 and they made somebody happy somewhere." Instead, Weast said, Montgomery County reverse engineered graduates. They traced student success all the way back to kindergarten and found that if they could read in kindergarten and if they had good daycares, their chances of success were much higher. They put together a series of guideposts to help staff and students.

Next, they reviewed the different programs they were using in the district. Weast said they had so many programs that they couldn't keep them all straight. He likened their situation to a packed closet. "We got rid of \$60 million worth of programs that weren't worth a dime," he said. Weast said that finding time for teachers to engage in meaningful professional development and break out of their isolation was probably the hardest thing he did. "All I did was help them build schedules," he said. "People don't want to share power, but they can learn." Large bureaucracies will kill transformation, Weast said. He had to insist over and over that people in the Central Office stop sending memos and become a "support

for teachers." If they weren't able to do that, he replaced them. Much of the "education reform" in America is based on competition, standardization, privatization, and test-based accountability. But, Weast said, this isn't what works to improve schools. Researching high performers in the U.S. and around the world, he concluded that success comes from collaboration, individualization, equitable opportunity, and trust-based professionalism. And that's what he implemented in Montgomery County. But such change doesn't happen overnight or even in a few years, he said. "It takes structures if you're going to diffuse the leadership and share the power." It also takes trust, stability, and an attitude that refuses to be stopped by roadblocks. Weast's motto was: "Don't tell me they can't do it. It's under what conditions can they do it." Much of Weast's emphasis was on making sure that ethnic minority students were both challenged in the classroom through AP tests, and connected to the school through the adults who work there. Weast made the point of emphasizing the importance of ESPs in making these connections. "The poor children in your building turn to the custodians, the cooks and the bus drivers," he said. "And many of these workers go on to become teachers." Weast noted that large businesses care about performance, but they also care about the wellbeing of their employees. "They want to deal with the equity and the ethics," he said. Weast harkened back to his mother who worked in a one-room school house in Kansas. He talked about all the jobs there are to do in schools and the collaboration needed to get everything done. And he did what he could to apply those same lessons in Maryland. "What made Montgomery special," Weast said, "was that they all worked together."

NEA Foundation Excellence in Education Gala



Nebraska's Attendees at the GALA

NEA Foundation's 2013 Gala in Washington, D.C. was held on Feb. 8. The annual event, sometimes known as the Academy Awards of public education, honors some of the best teachers from around the country. From the list of honorees, five were selected to receive a \$10,000 award courtesy of Horace Mann. They included: Kellie Blair-Hardt, a special education teacher from Virginia; Melissa Collins, second grade

teacher from Tennessee; Julia Marshall, teacher interventionist and literacy coach from South Carolina; Leslie Nicholas, language arts teacher from Pennsylvania; and Jennifer Thomas, instructional coach and English language arts teacher from California.



With NEA President Dennis Van Roekel



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Please contact your Nebraska Directors if you have any questions or concerns.