



NEBRASKA NEA Director's Report

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In This Issue



- Board Business
- Budget/Dues
- Task Force on For-Profit Colleges
- Constitution and Bylaws
- Lobbying for Members
- NEA Foundation Gala
- NSEA Teacher Honored
- Read Across America
- Board Reports
- Leading the Profession
- ESP Survey
- General Council
- Special Presentations



Membership losses will likely trigger cuts to NEA budget

Job losses in school districts around the country have continued to pile up, and they are taking their toll on the NEA budget. Secretary-Treasurer Becky Pringle anticipates that cuts totaling \$9.5 million must be made this spring. These cuts come on top of cuts of \$17.5 million that were passed by the Representative Assembly last summer in Chicago. This year's budget problems arose when larger than anticipated membership losses came in this fall. NEA had anticipated a membership decrease of 60,000 certified members, but by December it was clear that the decrease was closer to 103,000. In addition, the ESP decreases have totaled 15,000. Unfortunately, the job losses do not appear to be ending. In building a budget for next year, NEA believes membership numbers could drop another 160,000.

Although this may seem like incredibly bad news, Pringle remains optimistic about the future of NEA. The organization can refocus on the core goals and reevaluate whether everything NEA does is targeted at the most important goals. "This is an opportunity to remake ourselves; it's really very exciting," Pringle said. "It's not about what we're cutting; it's about what we're becoming." The total amount of cuts remains quite large. Following the current trend, from 2010 through 2014 NEA will have reduced its budget from a high of \$374 million down to \$320 million. Over the next three months, the board will gather information and consider how to balance the budget. At the May meeting, the NEA board will be asked to make suggested budget cuts that would be brought to the Representative Assembly. Pringle, who heads NEA's budget committee, plans to look carefully at what's going on throughout the association and carefully consider all options. Pringle asked the question, "Do we have the will to do what we have to do? Do we have the courage?"

Given the changes, NEA executive director John Stocks is reviewing all internal operations for consistency with NEA's goals and core functions. Many staff layoffs have taken place, some jobs have not been filled, and Stocks believes that more layoffs may be necessary. In addition; Pringle noted that NEA has been working hard to reduce spending this year even before the full impact of the latest job losses is felt. With the current year's budget cycle 66 percent complete, NEA still has 75 percent of its budget remaining as unspent. The UniServ Advisory Committee reported that because of the revenue decline, NEA will lower the amount that can be supplied to state affiliates for UniServ grants. The grants will drop from \$37,048 to \$34,850, a decline of six percent.

Board Business

Teacher dues to rise by \$2 in 2013- The formula used to calculate NEA dues has triggered a \$2 increase in dues from \$180 to \$182 for certified members starting in the fall of 2013. The dues are calculated using a formula based on the average salary for a classroom teacher. Next year, the average salary is expected to rise by a small amount to \$57,303 nationwide. Education Support Professionals will not see an increase in dues. They will continue to pay \$107.50 based on an average salary of \$31,300.

Board votes to spend \$1.9 million- The NEA board voted to approve a withdrawal of up to \$1.9 million from the board's contingency fund. In a vote of 167-1, the board agreed to the move, which was recommended by the Executive Committee because of the unforeseen membership loss in the 2011- 2012 membership year. NEA's membership has declined by 88,357 members this year, which brings the organization down to a total membership of 3,078,404.

Task Force Report on For-Profit

The NEA board accepted the nine recommendations of the Task Force on For-Profit Colleges and Universities, paving the way for the association to continue its relationship with Walden University, a for-profit college. Following a thorough investigation of its business practices, including its labor history, loan default rates, course quality, and accreditation, the committee recommended that NEA continue to work with Walden University, as well as two nonprofits, the University of Massachusetts and Western Governors University. The 10-member task force met numerous times over the last year to determine whether any of the practices by the universities violated any NEA policies. "We are not in violation of our policies in selecting Walden," said Vice President Lily Eskelsen in speaking for the committee. She said the committee also considered whether there should be policies against using a for-profit college, and they decided in favor of quality institutions with good business practices.

The task force did recommend that if, in the future, a college with an NEA affiliated staff did apply they should be given first consideration. However, at this time, none have. In fact, when NEA contacted many universities with member affiliates the universities said they were already full and not interested in partnering with NEA members, Eskelsen said. They did not want to offer NEA members' discounts and said they were more interested in catering to in-state students. The task force investigated the quality of the three finalists. "Walden was the shining star," Eskelsen said. "Bluntly, our standards are really, really tough, and we adhered to them, and we took people off the list who didn't make it." All NEA members can access professional development through the NEA Academy, which links to the three universities. In addition, NEA offers a service which reviews professional development courses at other universities around the country. Members considering taking online classes should check with NEA Academy for information.

[Click Here ---- NEA Academy](#)

Constitution and Bylaws

The following proposed changes to the NEA Constitution & Bylaws were discussed at the February NEA board meeting. The board took positions (noted after the summary) on each item:

Constitution Amendment No. 1 This amendment would add the following phrase to the preamble of NEA's Constitution where it would join 10 other statements of purpose: to "defend public employees' right to collective bargaining ..." The NEA board recommends: DO NOT PASS

Constitution Amendment No. 2 This amendment would lower the required number of classroom teachers on nearly all NEA committees from 75 percent to 50 percent. A similar amendment to this one was defeated last year at Representative Assembly. The amendment was slightly changed and appears to have greater support. The NEA board recommends: DO PASS

Bylaw Amendment No. 1 This bylaw change would add an eleventh goal to the list in the bylaws: It would add the following sentence: "Advocate for tax reforms to reduce the gap between the nation's economic classes" This item was debated quite heavily. The NEA board recommends: DO NOT PASS.

Standing Rule Amendment No. 1 The standing rules govern how the Representative Assembly functions. The first proposed change would eliminate the ability of people speaking on behalf of a state delegation or the NEA board to speak for three minutes instead of the standard two minutes. Speakers would still be required to announce that they were speaking on behalf of a state delegation or the NEA board, but individual speakers would not have to say they were speaking "as an individual." The NEA board recommends: DO NOT PASS * *Because this amendment was submitted by the Committee on Constitution & Bylaws and the board did not support it, the proposal will be withdrawn.*

Standing Rule Amendment No. 2 This rule change would modify the "object to consideration" rule. If someone wanted to make an "object to consideration" motion they would have to submit a written rationale as to why the motion was either "strongly undesirable" or a "protection from abuse" of the RA's "generosity." The NEA board recommends: DO NOT PASS

Standing Rule Amendment No. 3 This standing rule would require the chair to ask a question of the RA after a "motion to refer" is made. After the person who moved to refer has spoken, the chair would ask whether there are speaker request forms to speak to the motion to refer to committee. The NEA board recommends: DO NOT PASS

Standing Rule Amendment No. 4 This standing rule would require a minimum of two one-hour breaks during the RA. Currently, there are no such requirements and the chair is given the leeway and flexibility to call breaks as necessary. The NEA board postponed taking a position on this item until the May board meeting.

Standing Rule Amendment No. 5 This standing rule would change references in new business items that refer to K-12 or Pre- K-12 to "Pre-K-Graduate School." The NEA board recommends: DO PASS

Because Standing Rule Amendment 1 was withdrawn, the numbers will be reordered.

Lobbying / Politics

Legislative & Political Landscape

John Stocks, Executive Director, reported on the current legislative and political landscape. He described the current political environment, Republican Presidential primary, and how the NEA is preparing for the presidential election. There are tools and materials available for all 50 states and each constituent group. Stocks detailed what is happening in the states regarding legislation that would outlaw payroll deduction, collective bargaining, and other anti-union bills. Member activism is crucial in this election year. Twenty-four state affiliates are currently being helped by the Ballot Measure/Legislative Crisis Fund, an increase of 16 over the previous year for legislative crises, and twenty states are being helped with ballot issues.



On lobby day, Nebraska Directors, NSEA President Nancy Fulton, and NSEA Vice President Leann Widhalm, were joined by NSEA Board members Linda Freye and Paul Schulte (shown here with Congressman Fortenberry). Each Board meeting NEA Directors lobby Nebraska's elected representatives on Capitol Hill.

Topics for the Visit:

ESEA Reauthorization

- * Congress needs to continue its work to reauthorize ESEA.
- * All students have the human and civil right to a quality public education and a great public school that develops their potential, independence, and character.
- * We must find an appropriate balance of federal and state roles by refocusing on strong state accountability systems while continuing to maintain a sharp federal focus on equity across state and district lines.
- * The House draft bills do not push states enough to narrow achievement gaps; provide equal access to quality education; or ensure that state standards and assessment and accountability systems work for students.
- * The current House proposals also would eliminate Maintenance of Effort, triggering a race to the bottom in state and local support for public education.

Educator Tax Deduction

- * Educators often reach into their own pockets to purchase classroom supplies because they want to make sure students have what they need to succeed.
- * Studies show that teachers are spending more of their own funds each year to purchase essential classroom supplies.
- * According to NEA's most recent survey, educators spent an average of \$477 a year out of their own pockets to purchase classroom supplies such as books, pencils, paper, and art supplies.
- * A large majority of teachers spend an average of \$15 a month out of their own pockets to feed students. These numbers are increasing due to the growing number of children in poverty who lack even the basic necessities for success in school.
- * The \$250 educator tax deduction has expired. Extending it will make a real difference for many educators, who often sacrifice personal needs to pay for classroom supplies and instructional materials.

Social Security Offsets

- * The GPO and WEP hurt people who have dedicated their lives to public service by taking away benefits they have EARNED.
- * The offsets impact student learning by discouraging talented people from entering or staying in the education profession.
- * The GPO and WEP hurt many public employees, including educators, police officers, and firefighters. We should respect, not penalize, public service employees.

NEA Foundation Salute to Excellence

More than 800 national education leaders and supporters gathered on February 10, 2012 to honor 35 of the nation's top public educators, who received [The California Casualty Awards for Teaching Excellence](#). Congratulations to Millard teacher

Matt Dykstra, Nebraska's award winner!



Read Across America



March 2, 2012 - Read Across America Day

NEA's Read Across America is an annual reading motivation and awareness program that calls for every child in every community to celebrate reading on March 2, the birthday of beloved children's author Dr. Seuss.

The theme is green for a very special 2012 Read Across America celebration. NEA's Read Across America campaign will showcase **The Lorax**. Universal, Dr. Seuss Enterprises, and Random House have joined NEA's Read Across America, creating new posters and classroom guides for the campaign. Read Across America will also develop new event ideas and materials to help you make this a Seussational celebration. Check out <http://www.nea.org/grants/886.htm> for great ideas and resources.



Board Reports

ESP Survey Planned

Bill Raabe, the NEA's director for the Center for Great Public Schools, reported on a survey of Education Support Professionals that is planned later this month. Some 1,880 ESPs from all regions, job categories, genders, and races will be surveyed about their profession. The results of the survey will be announced at the ESP Conference in March. The survey is the first step in planning a strategy to help ESPs "lead the profession." Efforts to do this with teachers were started more than a year ago when attacks on teacher tenure and evaluation grabbed national headlines. However, Raabe said it's time to get ESPs involved. "We need to find out what they hope, fear, and dream about," he said. Raabe said focus groups of ESPs took place already in preparation for the national survey. Focus group participants said that they had been hit hard

by the economy and that they struggled with getting everything done in their job because they are always pulled away from tasks.



Leading the profession

Bill Raabe also demonstrated NEA's new toolkit to help implement the Policy Statement on Teacher Evaluation and Accountability passed last July at Representative Assembly. The 177-page interactive document focuses on teacher evaluation, peer assistance programs, and fair dismissal and layoff criteria. The toolkit will be available for download on the NEA website by the middle of February, Raabe said. The toolkit is a must-have for all local associations that are considering changes to their evaluation process. The links within the toolkit will help association leaders quickly find examples of real contract language on the subject of evaluation and fair dismissal. Secretary-Treasurer **Becky Pringle** said that the joint Committee on Leading the Profession, which she chairs, expects to have a report out in March. **Maddie Fennell**, chair of the Commission on Effective Teachers and Teaching, engaged the board in a discussion about her commission's "Transformation" report which came out in March.

General Counsel

Jason Walta, an assistant counsel for NEA, delivered a report on legal activities. General Counsel Alice O'Brien adopted a baby boy born Feb. 6 and was not available. Walta reported on payroll deduction litigation in Arizona, North Carolina, Wisconsin, and Alabama. NEA has been partially successful in stopping this legislation. NEA is also fighting attacks on collective bargaining in numerous states. NEA is awaiting a decision by a judge in Wisconsin on whether Act 10; a piece of legislation passed a year ago stripping employees of many bargaining rights, is legal.

Special Presentations

Richard W. Hurd, Professor of Labor Studies at Cornell University, spoke to the Board about Public Sector Unions Under Siege. At a time when NEA is facing increased demands on their resources to meet members' needs who are facing unprecedented attacks from elected officials, we are facing reduced membership and dues revenue. Private sector unions who faced similar challenges in the 1990's reacted in four different ways: Strategic Rigidity; Organizational Evolution; Organization Combustion; or Inclusive Unionism. The most successful strategy has been Inclusive Unionism. The SEIU is an example of this successful strategy for change. NEA can learn from these experiences. Barriers to union transformation include: reliance on limited structural fix; strategic rigidity/denial; lack of clarity; resistance from elected leaders, members, and staff; the servicing magnet; burnout, apathy; internal dissonance; and conflicting values. In order to achieve successful transformation, all of these issues have to be addressed in the context of strategic planning and change. Not only is it essential to have effective leadership, it is also important to organize at the grassroots level. It is necessary to assert a strong vision, engage leaders/members/staff, build internal political coalitions, and

remove obstacles (get the elephants out of the room). The choice for NEA's future is to just manage decline or to build for strength.

Barby Halstead-Worrell, NEA staff, detailed the implications of successful change strategies for NEA, and talked about potential members that we could be recruiting. As retired membership continues to grow, NEA affiliates need to discover ways to utilize this valuable resource. She also described the problems experienced by the states that have lost payroll dues deduction and have been forced to switch to other forms of dues payment. States that still have payroll dues deduction were encouraged to fight to keep it. While NEA membership has remained relatively stable, market share has decreased. The good news is that NEA affiliates in all 50 states are working to create new locals. We all must become organizers with a laser focus to empower others.

Ann Johnson, NEA Staff, talked to the Board about engaging the Millennial Generation (those born after 1980) to become leaders in the NEA. She stated that the average age of an NEA member is 46, but the average age of an activist is 57, meaning the activists are older than the general membership. In the next 5-10 years, 1 million members from the baby-boomer generation will be leaving education. NEA is creating a researched based model for young member engagement, following new members from age 20-30. To meet the needs of, and engage, this younger generation, NEA needs to: create mentorship programs; help ID new, emerging leaders; be open to change and new ideas; engage them in social events; value face-to-face contacts; and understand how they differ from older members.

General Information

Important Reminders

Sign up as an education advocate at www.EducationVotes.NEA.org
Sign up to be an Educator for Obama and recruit others to do the same at
www.EducationVotes.NEA.org