

Focusing on the Mission

Stocks to Board: We must create inseparable bond between members, union

Neither NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia nor Executive Director John Stocks sugarcoated what changed for the NEA and many other labor and progressive organizations in the early morning hours of November 9, 2016.

“This is the first time we’ve met since the end of the world occurred,” said Eskelsen Garcia, only slightly hyperbolic. “We all know where we were at on Election Day when the votes began coming in and we realized it wasn’t going to happen. To be clear, this is unlike anything we have ever seen.

“This is not George Bush. This is not Ronald Reagan. He is morally and mentally unfit to be President of the United States. Where we come in as a Board and as a union is looking at our Mission.”

That Mission is as follows:

Our mission is to advocate for education professionals and to unite our members and the nation to fulfill the promise of public education to prepare every student to succeed in a diverse and interdependent world.

“Democracy might look like Election Day but it also looks like the day after Election Day,” Eskelsen Garcia added. “I refuse to say this is our new normal; there is nothing normal about this. It is, however, our new reality.”

And with that, the NEA Directors spent two jam-packed days examining ways to advance the NEA mission, ensure members’ rights are preserved, and make sure democracy remains in full effect until the *next* Election Day.

Stocks bookended Eskelsen Garcia’s message near the end of the two days, outlining the path forward and what work will need to be accomplished.

“We derive our power and our strength from our members,” Stocks said. “It’s not just our numbers, it’s about their voices and engagement. Their contributions to their students, to their workplaces, and to their communities. That is the essence of where our power comes from. ... It is about organizing new members, but it also about creating a culture of deep member engagement that requires a lot of listening; *deep* listening. It is also about creating an inseparable bond between our members and the union because every effort will be made to drive a wedge between our members and their union.”



NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia addresses the Board.

Stocks outlined five assumptions that will drive the NEA’s thinking moving forward.

1. We are facing a hostile government that is intent on dismantling unions (at the federal, state, and judicial levels)
2. Thirty-three states are either facing or are likely to face budget shortfalls
3. The impact on the labor movement and progressive partners will be substantial and will impact our collective power and voice
4. Faith in government has plummeted ... and has contributed to a loss of faith in public institutions (religion, media, banks, and public schools); this loss of faith helped propel the President to victory
5. Safeguarding the union requires a focus on both our offense and our defense

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VP Pringle updates on recent RA actions

NEA Vice-President Becky Pringle provided insight to a pair of projects she's been charged with shepherding.



The first item she touched on was the work on Racial Justice in Education. This is an outgrowth of NBI B from the 2015 RA in Orlando. "Previously we were primarily building awareness," Pringle said. "Now we're expanding and scaffolding on that awareness. Our focus this year will be specifically on what our states, locals, and partners are doing and connecting them to each other. The second piece of this initiative is capacity building. We're developing materials you've asked for and enhancing our trainings."

Pringle also highlighted the work already underway through the Center for Social Justice, which has created a Racial Justice in Education cohort in 16 states. All totaled, 48 states have addressed the issue and 14 have had planning grants issued. The Vice-President also noted the Ed Justice website (www.neaedjustice.org) and the resources available there.

At the 2015 RA in Orlando, the delegates approved NBI D which called for the creation of a Professional Growth Continuum (PGC) for nearly 500,000 NEA Education



Support Professionals. A task force was created to study and develop the PGC.

The PGC includes nine different areas: Universal Standards, Communication, Organization, Technology, Cultural Competence, Ethics, Reporting, Professionalism, and Health and Safety. Members could be at any of the three levels in each area: Foundational, Professional, or Advanced/Mastered.

The next steps for the task force is to finalize the competencies, develop self-assessment tools, and begin engagement with ESP members, including pilot sites to beta-test the standards.

S/T Moss showcases membership growth

NEA Secretary/Treasurer Princess Moss sounded a cautiously optimistic tone when delivering her report to the NEA Board of Directors.



On one hand, Moss was upbeat with news that overall NEA membership numbers look likely to finish the school year up over those from 2015-16. Active Professional members are up 33,100 over last year, Active ESP is up 1,376. Overall, Active membership is currently up 34,171. The net, factoring in NEA-Student (which tends to lag until near the fiscal year's end) and NEA-Retired, is up overall 22,174. It would be the second consecutive year for an increase.

This is all positive and welcome news, following seven consecutive years of membership declines. Yet Moss provided a counterbalance to increased membership. She noted with the newly-elected President it is increasingly likely the NEA will be squarely in the sights of the IRS and the Department of Labor.

Her optimism has also been boosted by the NEA's New Educator Campaign which saw 118,592 new members through October 31, 2016, an increase of 16,719 over this same time frame last year.

"The personal touch and engagement makes a tremendous difference," she said. And with the increased focus in organizing, especially of early-career educators, the NEA is able to collect more data than ever before on its newest members to better provide what they need.

The NEA Foundation's annual Salute to Excellence in Education Gala honored educators from 43 states at Washington's National Building Museum. Among the honorees were five recipients of the Horace Mann Award of Teaching Excellence. From left, Melissa Ladd (GA), Stephanie Johnson (SC), Kelly Stacy (Horace Mann), Al Rabanera (CA), Sonia Galaviz (ID), and Carol Bauer (VA). Galaviz, a fifth-grade teacher in Boise, took home the night's top honor the NEA Member Benefits Award for Teaching Excellence and a check for \$25,000. The other four finalists received \$10,000. To nominate an educator visit: <http://www.neafoundation.org/pages/nea-awardees/>



Structure of RA changing in Boston

At the direction of NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia, the six at-large members of the NEA's Executive Committee recently completed a months-long review of the Representative Assembly. The purpose of this review is to steward a continuous process of member engagement in the improvement of the NEA-RA to advance the mission of the NEA which is as follows: "Our mission is to advocate for education professionals and to unite our members and the nation to fulfill the promise of public education to prepare every student to succeed in a diverse and interdependent world."

With the mined data and feedback from stakeholders, the Executive Committee designed a series of engagement opportunities with leaders, members, NEA staff, and previous NEA delegates to begin formulating its recommendations.

"When Lily charged us to look at the Representative Assembly we tried to look at it through two lenses," said senior Executive Committee member Earl Wiman. "Were we advancing the mission of our organization? And the other was delegate engagement; are we reaching people with what's important?"

The Committee reported out a list of 12 recommendations to the NEA Board.

Those recommendations were:

- ◆ A daily theme to serve to inspire and focus our delegates
- ◆ Conclude each day with something inspirational built around that day's theme
- ◆ Place the ESP of the Year and Teacher of the Year addresses on the same day to celebrate professionalism
- ◆ Limit guest speakers not related to RA business
- ◆ Eliminate the victory/thank you speeches of election winners at the end of the RA



Boston Convention and Exhibition Center

- ◆ Form an NBI Consolidation Committee
 - ◆ Create a physical "kiosk desk" or text number for delegates on the floor to research "Requests for Information" so that delegates' questions could be answered in advance
 - ◆ Allow flexibility as to when the Budget is considered
 - ◆ Replace verbal Audit Committee Report with a written submission as other committee reports
 - ◆ Make the threshold for Amendments to Standing Rules consistent with other action items
 - ◆ Approve the Agenda with a hard-stop (time-certain) on-or-before a specific hour on the final day
 - ◆ A commemorative pin for New Delegates
- The Executive Committee also recommended looking at technology enhancements in the future that might include a replacement of the phone system as well some form of electronic voting to allow delegations to remain in the hall during debate and still be able to cast their votes.
- In addition to the aforementioned recommendations, the Executive Committee presented a sample "run of show" for upcoming RAs that

included a likely daily theme.

Day 1: Union Strength for Member Advocacy

Day 2: Union Strength for Social Justice

Day 3: Union Strength for Professional Practice

Day 4: Our NEA Mission

Eskelsen Garcia was pleased with the recommendations and is excited to see how they impact the RA experience for the 8,000 delegates.

"We want to be very intentional with how we end the Representative Assembly each day," she said. "We want people to be excited about the work they're doing, and we want to have an ending that honors the work of our members and excites them to do the work."

The President also addressed the need for perhaps the most radical change recommended which is a time-certain end on the last day.

"One of the reasons why this recommendation was made was because of transportation costs," Eskelsen Garcia said, noting drivers are limited to 15 hours on the road from the time the bus pulls out of the garage to the time it is re-parked that night. "It could potentially cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to extend the RA past a certain time. We need to be good stewards of our funds."

In order to implement these RA modifications – all of which are at the purview of the NEA President – the Executive Committee did bring an amendment to Standing Rule 4 before the Board for recommendation for approval to the RA. The modification to SR4 was as follows: "Appropriation requests shall be considered by the Representative Assembly at the time of the adoption of the budget. The adoption of the budget shall be by vote of the Representative Assembly ~~after consideration of all new business items.~~" The Board supported this amendment.

Constitution & Standing Rules Amendments

NEA's Representative Assembly will vote on at least 15 proposed changes to the NEA Constitution and Standing Rules this summer in Boston. The NEA Board discussed four of the items and made recommendations. The Board will discuss the remaining items at its May meeting.

- ◆ **Constitutional Amendment 1** would allow the chair of the Resolutions Committee's internal editing committee to be a delegate to RA. The chair would not be allowed to vote for officers. The board OPPOSES this amendment.
- ◆ **Constitutional Amendment 2** would change the frequency of the Representative Assembly to every other year starting in 2022. The board OPPOSES this amendment.

- ◆ **Constitutional Amendment 3** would delete language in the constitution that is no longer needed because the NEA's three officers are on the same three-year cycle and no longer on staggered terms. The board SUPPORTS this amendment.

- ◆ **Standing Rule Amendment 1** would extend the amount of time required for consideration of new business items during different sessions of the Representative Assembly. The amendment would extend the time from 60 to 90 minutes in the second business session, and from 90 to 120 minutes in subsequent sessions. The board OPPOSES this amendment.

NEA Standing Rule and Bylaw Amendments may be submitted until March 2.



Gorsuch nomination concerns NEA

Like many of the other NEA officers and staffers who presented to the NEA Board of Directors during its February Meeting, NEA General Counsel Alice O'Brien attempted to find the humor in what is the organization's new reality.

"It's been a pretty good few weeks for attorneys," she cracked to begin her update on legal matters of concern to NEA members. O'Brien was referring to the myriad legal challenges to recent Presidential executive orders directed toward immigration and refugees.

The topic of primary importance was Supreme Court of the United States nominee, Judge Neal Gorsuch.

"He is further to the right than Justice Antonin Scalia in many ways," O'Brien informed. "He is a textualist and an originalist. That is, he believes the Constitution should be interpreted the same as when it was originally crafted. ... Well, there have been plenty of changes since."

O'Brien said the NEA Legal Department is "very concerned" about Gorsuch. "At age 49, he will likely sit on the bench for the rest of all of most of our lives."

Among cases currently on the high court's docket that could be deter-



GORSUCH

mined following confirmation are: *Trinity Lutheran* which could decide state school voucher programs; *Gloucester* which would determine transgender student guidance enacted during President Obama's administration; and *Andrew* which may determine the level of educational benefits required under the IDEA.

O'Brien believes Senate confirmation hearings will begin in March with a vote by the full Senate likely before Easter recess. Confirmation of Supreme Court justices requires 60 Senators voting affirmatively.

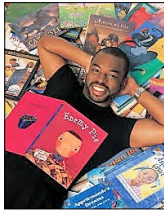
Related to SCOTUS, O'Brien made a point of highlighting several cases currently in the pipeline that would threaten unions' abilities to charge an agency/fair share fee. She cited eight different cases that are in various stages of litigation nationwide. The most-likely to wind up before the Supreme Court of the United States is *Janus vs. AFSCME Council 31* which is in the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago.

Should the case wind up going before SCOTUS, O'Brien believes it would be referred to the high court this summer for the 2017-18 term. She conceded it is likely fair share will no longer be the law of the land by June 2018. It was a year ago that the *California Teachers Association vs. Friedrichs* case was before SCOTUS when Justice Scalia died. The court wound up deadlocked, 4-4 and the lower court's ruling held.

NEA News in Brief

Reading Rainbow's Burton is NEA's Friend of Education

The NEA Friend of Education Committee recommended LeVar Burton, longtime host of PBS' *Reading Rainbow*, as its 2017 honoree. In presenting the recommendation, FoE Chair Christine Sampson-Clark (NJ) noted: "Burton has been instrumental in impacting an entire generation of readers.



Through more recent business ventures that have included the relaunch of *Reading Rainbow* in an online format, Burton continues to make a positive impact on childhood literacy especially for those classrooms in high needs areas just as his mother did for him as a teacher of English." Burton's mother Erma Gene was an English teacher, social worker, and school administrator. He served as host and executive producer of the award-winning *Reading Rainbow* from 1983-2006. The Board approved the recommendation and Burton will be honored in Boston at the Representative Assembly.

RAA celebrates 20 years

For the 20th year the NEA will celebrate childhood literacy with its annual celebration of Read Across America on March 2. Ashley Strickland (AL), Chair of the NEA's Read Across America Advisory Committee, reported

to the Board that this year's theme is "Celebrating a Nation of Diverse Readers." Strickland suggested visiting www.nea.org/readacross to find various resources including downloadable calendars and posters of recommended books. Additionally, low-priced branded merchandise may be found at www.raastore.com.

Nation's charter schools examined by NEA task force

NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia and Vice-President Becky Pringle are co-chairing a newly-formed task force on charter schools whose charge is to review the 2001 NEA Policy Statement on Charter Schools. "A policy statement is the highest expression of NEA policy on an issue," noted Eskelsen Garcia. "If adopted, a policy statement supersedes all other NEA positions including resolutions and the legislative program." As much has changed in the charter school landscape since 2001, Eskelsen said it was past time to review and update the existing policy statement. "Forty-three states have charter laws on the books," she said, "we need a new approach as we talk about charter schools and set the NEA's course forward." In addition to the NEA's two highest-ranking officers, there are 19 other members that represent a diverse mosaic of NEA membership on the task force. The timeline is to create a draft document yet this month and have a proposed Policy Statement to present to the NEA Board

at its April meeting. If approved by the Board, it would go before the Representative Assembly for consideration this summer.

Board approves \$10 million sequester in BMLC Fund

The NEA Executive Committee brought forward a recommendation to sequester \$10 million from the Ballot Measure/Legislative Crisis Fund (BMLC) to be used by affiliates in the event of federal or state legislative attacks. The BMLC originated in 2000 when its creation was authorized by the Representative Assembly. Currently \$20 of the NEA's annual dues is earmarked for this Fund, which may be used in support or opposition of ballot measures at the local, state, and federal level. Likewise, if there is legislation introduced that could be either favorable or detrimental to the NEA or its affiliates, this funding could be requested. Affiliate funding requests go before a BMLC Oversight Committee which evaluates the request and, if favorable, recommends approval to the Board or, when the requested amount is under \$500,000, to the President and Executive Director. The estimated BMLC availability by year's end will be nearly \$77 million. Shelly Moore-Krajacic, who moved the item on behalf of the Executive Committee, said the \$10 million sequester was necessary "to allow us to have nimbleness and move quickly should something arise unexpectedly." The Board approved the sequester request.



Examining bias in Black girls' discipline

When the NEA Board hosted its Women's Observance, there was a purposeful intersection of the Women's and Black Observances with honoree Erika K. Wilson, Esq, assistant professor of law at the University of North Carolina.

"We are making an effort to better align all of our social justice observances so that we see they are connected," NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia said. "Raising our awareness and that of our colleagues around the country is so important to teaching about racial injustice."

Wilson's research interests lean toward ensuring educational equality for disadvantaged students. She proceeded to enlighten the Board during a fact-driven address about the challenges facing Black girls

To wit:

- ◆ Black girls are suspended five times more than white girls but do not commit more serious offenses
- ◆ Nationwide, Black girls comprise 16% of female students in K-12 but receive 45% of the out of school suspensions
- ◆ They comprise 33.2% of female students interacting with the juvenile justice system

- ◆ Black girls with darker skin tone are likely to receive harsher discipline than lighter skin toned

"The bias is that Black girls are disciplined for more subjective behavioral infractions," she noted. "An educator needs to make the judgment. The number one reason is for defiance, followed by inappropriate dress, using profane language, and physical

aggression." She pointed out Black girls are also subject to stereotypes from slavery that persist today: the Mammy (obese, asexual), Jezebel (seductive, sex-crazed), and Sapphire (aggressive, dominant, mouthy).

"The behaviors that Black girls are disciplined for are often based on stereotypes related to gender and traditional-based standards of femininity based on those of white women,"



Women's Observance speaker Erika Wilson addressing the Board

Wilson said. "The negative stereotypes that persist about Black women and the ones about feminine behavior make it more troubling."

Wilson also noted this subset of students face more exposure to trauma, violence, abuse, and other toxic stress that can impact behavior.

"Educators need to learn to recognize the signs of trauma that may underlie perceived defiant or disrespectful behavior," she said.

Dues rate increasing \$1 over original projection

In the midst of its 2-year budget cycle, the NEA Board of Directors authorized a modification to the 2017-18 dues rate based upon the formula outlined in NEA Bylaw 2.7. The rate, previously projected to increase by \$1 from \$187 to \$188 for Active Teachers and from \$113.50 to \$114.50 for Education Support Professionals, will instead increase \$2 to \$189 and \$115.50, respectively. The annual rate for NEA-Retired will increase from \$30 to \$35.

The formula outlined in NEA Bylaw 2.7.a. states: "Dues of Active members engaged in, or on limited leave of absence from, professional educational employment shall be .00225 times the national average annual salary of classroom teachers in the public elementary and secondary schools (rounded to the nearest dollar) plus .00055 of the national average annual salary of classroom teachers in the public elementary and secondary schools (rounded to the nearest dollar) to be allocated to UniServ grants according to the policy of the Board of Directors. The computation shall be based on salary data for the prior year as determined by NEA Research." Additionally, there is \$1 assessment of teachers and 50 cents of ESP directed to the NEA Foundation, \$3 to the Great Public Schools fund, and \$20 to the Ballot Measure/Legislative Crisis fund.

NEA Research relies heavily on the American Community Survey from the U.S. Census Bureau to determine the national average salaries of both teachers and ESP. For 2016-17 those figures rose to \$59,019 for teachers and \$32,693 for ESP.

Several ESP At-Large Board members addressed the body with concern about a further increase in dues, noting they're not seeing the same types of increases in their locals.

"We are as frustrated as you are because the data that we have is the data that we can get," said NEA Secretary/Treasurer Princess Moss. "We really thought about this and we looked at other alternatives, but since the early 1970s this has been the most consistent and accurate source of data we can gain to calculate the average salaries."

Moss noted the ongoing fight to increase minimum wages nationwide has had an impact on ESP salaries. She also said the Research Department sifts through the data and pulls out school lunch workers, school bus drivers, school custodial, etc. so as to not skew any data. Further, each of the nine ESP classifications is weighted based upon the number of NEA percentage of NEA ESP members in each. This modification to the originally projected amount is a 1.36% increase; the cost of living allowance is currently 2.1%.

The annual NEA-Retired dues rate is examined every two budget cycles. This is the first increase of the annual rate in five years and they will remain fixed for the next two cycles.

After hearing from many Board members, NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia said she would commission a Board task force to study Bylaw 2 and potentially submit a Bylaw Amendment prior to the March 2 deadline. Any such Amendment would need to be approved by the RA.

Observance leads Board on field trip

NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia and NEA Black Caucus Chair Jacqui Greadington had a special gift for the Board of Directors for the Black Observance.

The honoree, Mary Elliott, is a Museum Specialist at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture and was instrumental in designing the "Slavery and Freedom" inaugural exhibit. Elliott's visit was merely the beginning of the Black Observance. The highlight came later that evening when the NEA arranged a private reception and tour of the freshly minted Smithsonian.

"I cannot think of anything more appropriate to celebrate than something this historic," Eskelsen Garcia said. "It is not every day you open a new Smithsonian on the National Mall."

Greadington echoed Eskelsen Garcia's thoughts: "Looking at the past gets us to the present and charts a course to the future."

For her part, Elliott properly prepared the Board and other invited guests, including past Presidents, NEA staff, and members of state affiliate leadership teams, for their visit.

"This museum allows us an opportunity to explore and revel in African American history and culture," she said. "We tell this American story with international aspects. We start in 15th Century Africa and examine the continent's vast diversity of people."

Elliott provided the Board an overview of the museum's setup. The recommended touring plan is to descend three levels in a large glass



NEA Board members Melinda Smith and DeWayne Sheaffer at the African American Museum

elevator where years roll back visibly on an adjacent wall until you arrive at your destination on the African continent in the 1400s.

"Yes, there is suffering, but this is also the power of the human spirit," Elliott said. "Many of our guests have noticed that as you rise up it becomes more celebratory. ... At the heart of all this is the fact that we all know this nation

has a history with race. This is a place for dialogue and reconciliation."

"Ignorance is a sickness that has a cure," added Eskelsen Garcia. "The cure is information. The cure is education. The cure is finding out what you don't know. The country has waited decades for this emotional, heart-tugging museum."

Focusing on the Mission

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"We have to focus on what's in our control," Stocks said. "We have to pick our fights judiciously and prioritize the ones that strike at the heart of our survival and our mission. ... Many of these are the same circumstances when unions first began."

To that end, Eskelsen Garcia said it's important to not Monday morning quarterback the 2016 election.

"Had our candidate won, we were better positioned than ever to be that respected voice who she turned to first on education issues," Eskelsen Garcia said. "I know the question continues, should we get involved in the primaries or should we wait until we're into the general election. We need to erase the names of the people, the candidates, because in four years they will be completely different. (As a union) we can't set policy based on this year because it will be different in four years."

The NEA PAC Council established the PAC Guideline Review Committee to review the endorsement guidelines because, as Eskelsen Garcia

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— John Stocks, NEA Executive Director

noted, "the PAC Council is the only body that is authorized to change the policies. But this body, the Board of Directors, is the only body that is allowed to act on those policies." She urged the Board to return to their states and talk about the process with members and have them make recommendations for the PAC

Guideline Review Committee through Board members.

Both Eskelsen Garcia and Stocks referenced the triangle as, the NEA President noted, "a defense against the dark arts." On the three sides of the triangle are "Invest in Opportunities to that will Grow and Transform the Union," "Protect and Defend the Union," and "Build Local, State, and National Capacity."

To accomplish this, Stocks said, means going back to the union roots.

"It is about a 365-days-a-year culture of relational organizing," he said. "We need a cycle of organizing in this union that is constant and becomes the dominant culture in this union."

