

NSEA-RETIRED ADVOCATE

www.nsea.org/retired

January 2026

Volume 20, Issue 3

NSEA-RETIRED OFFICERS

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



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

Rita Bennett, Secretary
ritagbennett@gmail.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

Carol Krejci, Metro
clkrejci@cox.net

Walta Sue Dodd, Metro
wsdodd@aol.com

Joy Brown, Panhandle
joyb1302@gmail.com

Howard Gaffney, Sandhills
gaffneyhl22@gmail.com

Deb Gnuse, Tri-Valley
jazzzerdeb@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.



2026 ELECTIONS

YOUR VOICE, YOUR VOTE, OUR FUTURE

Filing Deadline is Feb. 5

Members are encouraged to consider stepping into a leadership role within NSEA-Retired by running for a position in the upcoming elections. Serving in a leadership capacity is a meaningful way to continue advocating for retired educators, strengthening our organization and ensuring that the voices of retired members remain influential at the local, state and national levels.

Candidate filing for all open positions is now available online at www.nsea.org/retired. Interested members should complete the filing process by the deadline of Sunday, Feb. 5. All candidates are encouraged to submit a brief 50-word statement with their application to share their background, interests, and reasons for seeking office with fellow members.

Several leadership positions on the NSEA-Retired Board of Directors are open for election. Each position carries

a three-year term and provides an opportunity to help guide the direction and priorities of NSEA-Retired. Open positions include:

- President
- Vice President
- Capitol-1 District Director
- Elkhorn District Director
- Sandhills District Director

All positions take office Aug. 15.

Numbers for NSEA Delegate Assembly will be four delegates from Capitol District, five from Metro, three from Tri-Valley, two from Elkhorn, one from Panhandle, one from Sandhills and two at-large. NEA Representative Assembly delegates will include one from the Capitol and Metro districts combined, one from the remaining four districts and out-of-state members combined and three at-large delegates. NSEA-Retired President John Heineman serves as a delegate at both DA and RA by virtue of office.



Community Service 101



For educators, giving back has always been part of the job description and retirement hasn't changed that. Eleven members of the Lincoln Education Association-Retired (LEA-R) put that belief into action Nov. 18 by volunteering at the Center for People in support of the Nebraska Diaper Bank.

The group participated in a diaper-wrapping service project, preparing 114 packages that will be distributed to families in Lincoln. While the work was hands-on and upbeat, members also learned about the serious and growing need for diapers across Nebraska, a basic necessity not covered by many assistance programs.

Community service is a natural fit for retired educators, allowing them to continue making a difference while staying connected to one another and the communities they served.

Even in retirement, LEA-R members carry forward the values of service and compassion through projects like their work with the Nebraska Diaper Bank.

OEA-Retired: Lessons on Literacy and Lower Taxes

Omaha Education Association-Retired (OEA-Retired) members enjoyed an informative meeting in early December.

Presentations from two guest speakers addressed topics of interest to retired educators including the current state of Omaha Public Schools and important changes to tax law this year.

Matt Ray, superintendent of Omaha Public Schools (OPS), shared an overview of the challenges facing the district during the current school year, including ongoing efforts to meet student needs while navigating staffing, funding and academic recovery issues. Ray expanded his vision for OPS, emphasizing the importance of ensuring that every child reads at grade level as a foundation for long-term academic success. He also responded to thoughtful questions from the retired members.

Members also heard from Bridget Tynan, a tax preparer with O'Malley Tax Help. She provided information on changes in tax law for 2026. Tynan



O'Malley Tax Help representative Bridget Tynan discusses tax law changes.

reviewed updates to the standard deduction that will apply to 2025 tax returns, highlighting an increased deduction for individuals age 65 and older. Her presentation was especially helpful for members looking to better understand how these changes may impact their personal tax situations.

Tynan also shared practical strategies for reducing tax liability, including the use of a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD). She explained

how retirees can donate directly from their IRA to a qualified charity as part of their required minimum distribution (RMD), which can help lower taxable income while supporting causes important to them.

Both presentations were well received and reflected OEA-Retired's ongoing commitment to keeping members informed, engaged and connected to issues that matter both within and beyond education.

NSEA-RETIRED

Governance/Lobby Day

17

February

Advocate for the Future of Education

9 AM - 1:30 PM



Join NSEA-Retired for Lobby Day

Mark your calendars for Feb. 17, as NSEA-Retired gears up for Lobby Day.

This event promises to be a day of engagement, empowerment and advocacy for educators across Nebraska.

The day will kick off with an orientation session, designed to prepare participants for their roles in advocating for education-related issues. Attendees will learn about current legislative priorities and effective lobbying techniques to ensure their voices are heard.

Following orientation, participants will have the opportunity to engage directly with state senators. This is a chance to discuss pertinent issues impacting education issues highlighted in NSEA's 2026 State Policy Agenda and to share

personal experiences.

NSEA-Retired members will hear from state senators during a luncheon.

Additionally, Lobby Day will provide attendees the opportunity to attend legislative hearings and, for some, the chance to testify on key educational matters. This is a remarkable way to contribute to the legislative process and make a real difference in education policy.

Don't miss this chance to stand up for Nebraska's educators and students.

Join NSEA-Retired on Feb. 17 to be part of this important advocacy effort. Register online at www.nsea.org/retiredlobby under Calendar, Events & Registrations.

Know a Non-Member? Ask Them to Join!

As we embark on a new year, it's the perfect time to help non-members consider the benefits of joining the Nebraska State Education Association Retired (NSEA-Retired). Here are five compelling reasons to become a member.

Protect Retirement

Membership in NSEA-Retired provides essential resources and support to help secure your retirement. The association advocates for policies that protect pensions and benefits, ensuring a stable financial future for retired educators.

Improve Public Education

By joining NSEA-Retired, you contribute to a collective effort to enhance the quality of public education. Together, we can promote initiatives and reforms that benefit all students and educators, creating a brighter future for our schools.

Advocate for Students

As a member, you gain a powerful voice in advocating for policies that support education. NSEA-Retired engages in political action to ensure that the interests of students and educators are represented at local, state and national levels.

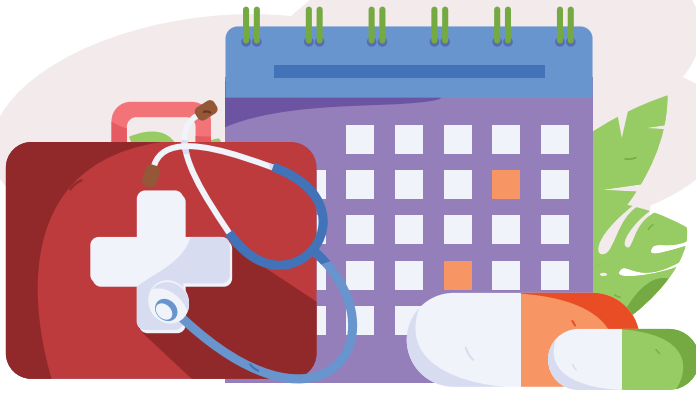
Stay Connected

Membership offers a valuable opportunity to stay connected with fellow educators. Reconnect with former colleagues, share experiences and build lasting relationships within a supportive community that understands the challenges and triumphs of the profession.

Stay Informed

NSEA-Retired provides access to conferences, workshops and media resources that keep you informed about the latest trends and developments in education. Becoming an NSEA-Retired member means being part of a dedicated community. Join us in making a difference for ourselves and for generations of educators to come!

Visit www.nsea.org/retired or contact the NSEA Membership Department at 1-800-742-0047.



Medicare Supplement Rates for 2026

Article By: Roger Rea, NSEA-Retired Vice President

Are you wondering about your health insurance once you reach Medicare eligibility? As an NSEA-Retired member, you have options that are not available to the general public. Both you and your spouse (when he/she becomes eligible) can enroll in Educators' Medicare Supplement. This supplement is only available to NSEA-Retired members, former subscribers to Blue Cross EHA insurance and their spouses.

Educators' Medicare Supplement has features that are not available to individual consumers. For instance, you have the option of purchasing an Educators' Medicare Supplement Plan F (which pays the deductible for Medicare Part B). Plan F supplements are no longer available to individual consumers. In addition, you have access to a very competitive dental plan, made available because of the relationship with the Blue Cross EHA schools. A major advantage of an Educators' Medicare Supplement plan is that you typically have no bill (or, if you choose the Plan G coverage, minimal bills) to pay your physician and you can choose to see any provider in the nation that participates in Medicare to get care when you need it.

Educators' Medicare Supplement has premiums rated in age bands, rather than individual ages. Other Medicare Supplements are rated by individual ages, which means that you will receive two premium increases each year: one on your birthday (because you are a year older) and the second on the policy anniversary of the supplement. Educators' Medicare Supplement groups the ages for coverage. The groupings are:

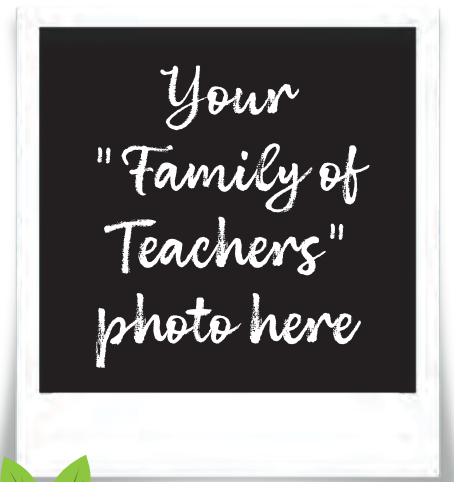
65-66; 67-69; 70-74; 75-79; 80-84; and 85+. So long as you are in the same age band, you will only see one rate increase per year, on the policy anniversary (which is Jan. 1 of each year).

Insurance claims are reviewed every year to determine what the rates will be for the coming year. On Jan. 1, the medical rates for both Plan F and Plan G supplements increased by 2.5%. For members who have both medical and dental coverage, rates increased by 2.7%.

Premiums for Educators' Medicare Supplement have been very stable over the past two decades. The overall increase in premiums over that time frame has been about 3% per year. For several years, there was no increase in premiums and for one year premiums actually decreased by 0.5%.

The premiums for Educators' Medicare Supplement are posted on the NSEA-Retired website, www.nsea.org/retired. Click on the RETIREMENT AND INSURANCE tab and scroll down to find the link to the 2026 premiums. You will also find a description of the Medicare supplement and a video explaining both Medicare and the Supplement benefits.

More than 5,000 NSEA-Retired members and spouses are enrolled in Educators' Medicare Supplement. You may contact BCBSNE's Member Services Department at 800-991-5650 for more information. Be sure to tell them that you are an NSEA-Retired member to get connected to the right operator. Ask for the supplement by name: Educators' Medicare Supplement.



Family of teachers

Teaching isn't just a profession—it's a legacy. Whether it's a family of educators spanning generations or a new tradition in the making, "Family of Teachers" celebrates those who dedicate their lives to shaping young minds.

If teaching runs in your family, we want to hear your story! Submit a photo of you and your fellow educators—parents, siblings, grandparents or even aunts and uncles—who share this incredible calling. Let's honor the passion, dedication and impact of families who make a difference in the classroom every day.

Submit your photos today and be featured in "Family of Teachers" at www.nsea.org/Family.

Family of teachers



Scan Me

WCEA-R Brings Smiles to Students During High Five Friday

Members of the Wilber-Clatonia Education Association-Retired (WCEA-R) greeted elementary students in November, lining the school entrance to offer high fives and warm smiles as part of Wilber-Clatonia Public School's High Five Friday.

The event welcomed back retired teachers and administrators who spent years serving the Wilber-Clatonia community, giving students an upbeat start to the day while allowing retirees to reconnect with the school.

After greeting students, WCEA-R members met with the student council for coffee and donuts. Students presented the retirees with "Faculty" T-shirts and the visit was shared on social media, generating positive responses from families and community members.

High Five Friday was one of several recent WCEA-R activities. Earlier this month, the group held its annual gathering with active WCEA members at Wilber-Clatonia, where pre-retirement information, member benefits booklets and promotional materials were distributed.

WCEA-R members also recently gathered to honor a longtime educator and community member following his passing, attending services together in support of his family.

These events highlight WCEA-R's continued involvement in supporting educators, students and the school community.



Members Visit Great Plains Black History Museum

Lincoln Education Association-Retired members recently gained insight into Nebraska's Black history through a presentation by Eric Ewing, executive director of the Great Plains Black History Museum.

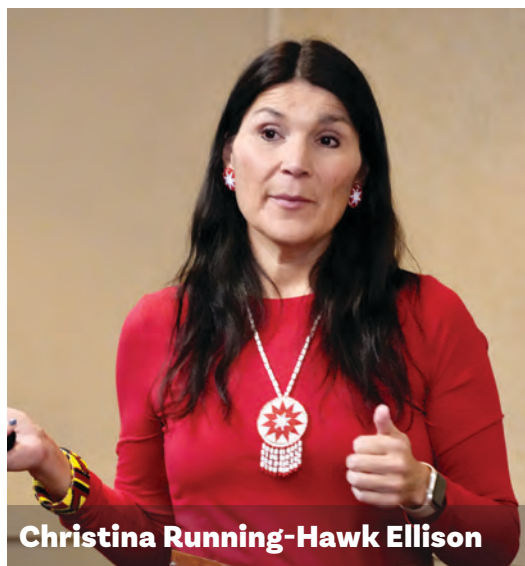
During a monthly meeting, Ewing shared the mission and work of the Omaha-based museum, highlighting its role in preserving and sharing the stories, contributions and experiences of Black communities in the Great Plains region. The presentation was well received and sparked strong interest among members.

Following the presentation, more than 20 members traveled to Omaha to visit the Great Plains Black History Museum in person. The group began the day with lunch at Big Mama's Kitchen, a longtime Omaha restaurant known for its cultural and community significance, before touring the museum.

The visit provided members with an opportunity to further engage with the history discussed during the presentation and to experience the exhibits firsthand, deepening their understanding of the region's Black heritage.

The presentation and subsequent museum visit reflected members' interest in educational programming and meaningful opportunities for learning beyond regular meetings.





Christina Running-Hawk Ellison



Stacy Kester-Pearson



Ed Ventura



Deb Carpenter-Nolting



Fall Conference Highlights Engagement of Retired Members

Retired educators from across Nebraska gathered Thursday, Oct. 23, for the annual NSEA-Retired Fall Conference at the Ramada Inn in Grand Island.

The conference brought together members for a day focused on learning, reflection and connection, continuing a long-standing tradition of professional engagement among retired educators.

Attendees heard from a diverse lineup of speakers covering topics ranging from history and literacy to advocacy

and member benefits. Jeanette King presented information on Nebraska SHIP, while Christina Running-Hawk Ellison, an NSEA member and Omaha Public Schools teacher, explored the history of American Indian boarding schools in a session titled "Save the Indian."

NEA Director Ed Ventura discussed the importance of educator voices in legislative testimony, and Claudine Kennike of ESU 10 presented on literacy. Stacy Kester-Pearson, president

of the Millard Education Association, provided an overview of NEA member benefits available to retirees.

The conference concluded with a presentation by Deb Carpenter-Nolting titled "Well-Behaved Women Don't Make History" highlighting the impact of women who challenged the status quo.

The annual fall conference continues to serve as an opportunity for NSEA-Retired members to stay informed, engaged and connected to issues affecting education and public policy.

Holiday Luncheon Raises Funds for LPS Emergency Food Pantry



More than 45 members of the Lincoln Education Association–Retired gathered in early December for their annual Holiday Luncheon, combining seasonal celebration, entertainment and community support.

Members were entertained by the Lincoln Continentals, a local barbershop chorus founded in 1946 and the Lincoln chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society. The group performs throughout the year at community events, including spring and Christmas shows, singing valentines, sporting events and church services.

As part of the luncheon, members participated in a raffle featuring a Coach purse and a \$50 merchandise certificate to Flynn Designs, both generously donated by members. Proceeds from the raffle totaled \$357 and were donated to the Lincoln Food Bank for use by Lincoln Public Schools' Emergency Food Pantry. The donation equates to nearly 700

meals for students and families in need. The pantry experienced significant shortages during the recent government shutdown.

Fundraising continues to play a vital role in supporting LEA-Retired's mission. At its November meeting, the group also raffled 11 gift cards to local Lincoln businesses through member donations.

The holiday luncheon reflected LEA-Retired's ongoing commitment to fellowship, service and support for educators and students in the Lincoln community.

LEA-Retired remain active and will hold regular meetings this spring to process scholarship and grant applications. The organization awards three \$1,000 scholarships to Lincoln Public Schools graduates completing student teaching and five \$500 grants to early-career LPS teachers. These efforts are supported in part through a continued partnership with Union Bank.

BEA-R Marks the Holidays with Music and Giving



Members of the Bellevue Education Association–Retired (BEA-R) gathered Thursday, Dec. 4, at the Bellevue Welcome Center to enjoy a holiday program performed by Bellevue High School All-State instrumentalists.

The seasonal event highlighted the strong, lasting connection between retired educators and current students.

For many in attendance, the performance was especially meaningful, as several of the student musicians are children of former BEA-R students, reflecting generations of learning within the Bellevue school community.

In addition to celebrating student talent, BEA-R members embraced the spirit of giving by collecting and donating funds to support the food

banks at both Bellevue high schools. The donations will help provide resources for students and families in need during the holiday season.

The event combined music, reflection and service, underscoring BEA-R's continued commitment to supporting students, schools and the Bellevue community.





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

NON-PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
LINCOLN, NE
PERMIT NO. 2188

Save the Date

NSEA-RETIRED

SPRING CONFERENCE

APRIL

23

The NSEA-Retired Spring Conference will be held Thursday, April 23, at the Lincoln's Children Zoo. This annual event brings retired educators together for a day of learning, reflection and connection.

Registration will be available at www.nsea.org/retired. The event is free for all members and \$10 for guests. A light breakfast and lunch will be provided.



Lincoln Children's
ZOO