

# THE VOICE

The Nebraska State Education Association ❖ May 2016

**VOTE**  
TUESDAY  
MAY 10  
INSIDE: NSEA  
RECOMMENDED  
CANDIDATES



## Ensuring Educator Expertise



- ◆ Delegates Kick Off Sesquicentennial
- ◆ Children's Fund Drive Now Underway
- ◆ NSEA Pilots Praxis Test Project

## Upcoming Assignments

### Primary Election

May 10

■ **What:** Just a week from the Primary Election, many races are tight and every vote is going to count. NSEA has made recommendations, based on education issues, in two dozen races. So if you haven't voted early, check the recommendations Starting on Page 22, and then vote on May 10.

■ **Details:** Polls are open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on May 10. Be a good example, and take time to vote.

### \$150k 4 Kids

Through October 2017

■ **What:** At Delegate Assembly in April, NSEA officially and formally opened a drive to raise \$150,000 for the NSEA Children's Fund.

■ **Details:** The Children's Fund has helped thousands of needy children get the basic necessities required to be able to learn. Find out more about this fund drive on Page xx.

### Leadership Institute

July 11-14

■ **What:** This is the 30th session of this gathering, which promotes leadership skills for emerging Association leaders. There is still time for registration.

■ **Details:** Four expense-paid days at NSEA Headquarters. Contact NSEA's Rebecca Smith for details at 1-800-742-0047.

# Consider an Application for Teacher of the Year

## Department of Ed Taking Applications for 2017 Process

You may be Nebraska's next Teacher of the Year.

If you are open to challenges – and the rewards that come with those challenges – consider applying to become Nebraska's next Teacher of the Year.

The recipient will become a spokesperson for education and the teaching profession, will travel the state and country, and be continually recognized for excellence.

Since 1972, the Nebraska Teacher of the Year program has recognized outstanding Nebraska certified teachers working in a pre-kindergarten through grade 12 classroom setting, and who plan to continue in an active teacher status in a state-approved or accredited school.

Questions on the application form seek details on educational background and personal development, community

involvement, philosophy of teaching and learning, and the teaching profession from the viewpoint of the applicant.

Finalists will be interviewed in October. An awards luncheon and reception will be held at NSEA headquarters in November.

SMART Technologies provides the recipient a package of hardware and software for classroom use. Cash and other assorted gifts add to the value of the title. The program receives financial

support from The Sherwood Foundation, Union Bank & Trust Co., the Nebraska Academy of Sciences and ConAgra Foods Foundation.

The program will accept applications through midnight on Aug. 7. The application is on the Department of Education website, and can be completed electronically. Copies will be mailed to individuals who request them.

For details, call Lora Sypal at the Nebraska Department of Education, 402-471-5059. The application can also be found at:

[www.education.ne.gov/](http://www.education.ne.gov/)



## Have Your Contact Details Changed?

Have you moved? Have you changed your name by marriage? If so, you can update your NSEA membership information online.

Log on to the NSEA website and click on the 'Member Info' button on the left side of the screen. Then click on the 'For Members' link and look for the 'Member Update' icon, and follow directions. Keep your issue of *The Voice* near, as the mailing label includes your 10-digit membership number, used to access your information. The NSEA website is at:

[www.nsea.org](http://www.nsea.org)

## Cover Story:

Without a teaching certificate in hand, Parker Schoen could not lead his classroom alone for the first two days of his teaching career. His mother, Lesa Christiancy, has long known the value and importance of maintaining a valid teaching certificate. For details, turn to

# Page 6



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Volume 69, No. 9  
ISSN Number: 1085-0783  
USPS Number: 000-369

## Great Public Schools For Every Child

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Official publication of the Nebraska State Education Association, 605 South 14th Street, Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. Periodical postage paid at Lincoln, NE, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: send address changes to The Voice, NSEA, 605 S. 14th Street, Lincoln, NE 68508-2742.

Published and mailed 6 times yearly in September, Oc-

tober, November, February, April and August. Published online in December, January, March and May.

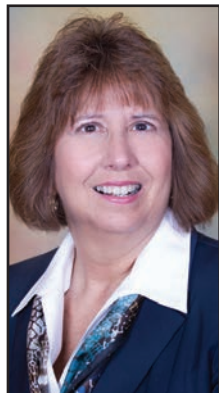
Payment of annual NSEA dues entitles Nebraska educators to receive *The Voice*. Cost of producing 10 issues of *The Voice* each year is \$3.41 per member.

Advertising rates available on request. Appearance of an advertisement in *The Voice* does not imply NSEA endorsement of the product advertised or views expressed.

Cited for excellence each year by the State Education Editors, including these past awards: Best Magazine, Best News Story, Best Feature Story, Best Photography and Best Editorial Design.



# The ‘What I Will Do List’



**NSEA President  
Nancy Fulton**

“  
...education  
is the most  
important issue  
affecting our  
nation’s health,  
well-being,  
economic future  
and political  
security.”

At the start of each election year, we at the NSEA Headquarters watch with great interest as the reports of candidate filings begin to pop up in the news.

We pay particular attention to candidates for the Nebraska Legislature because, frankly, our 49 senators play an oversized role in the success of public education at all levels. Senators wield tight control over a school district’s ability to collect revenue; they tinker with state aid each year; they make decisions that affect class size, counseling and student mental health issues; they proscribe standardized testing measures; and they make decisions on other aspects of the job you do every day.

Time and again, as these candidates file, they put forth their personal versions of the ever-popular “What I Will Do if Elected List.” For instance, one candidate announced earlier this year he would, if elected, “...protect the Second Amendment, oppose illegal immigration, support the death penalty, oppose tax increases, support veteran’s issues and eliminate wasteful spending.”

Whew.

That is certainly a lengthy list of hot-button issues. That’s not to demean or belittle that candidate’s good intentions or any of those subjects; each has importance and relevancy to the state of our democracy and the current overall political climate. Yet over the past few election cycles, every candidate for any office has submitted a strikingly similar “I will do” list for review by potential constituents.

Sadly, most candidates skim over or completely ignore what most Nebraskans consider a very important issue: education.

### Powerful Numbers

I submit, and can make well-founded arguments, that education is the most important issue affecting our nation’s health, well-being, economic future and political security.

Yet political candidates – and political officer holders, for that matter – continue to march forward under the banner of these hot-button issues, often pushed by well-heeled special interests. If candidates would pay attention to the electorate majority, however, their messages would be different.

In late March, the Lincoln Journal Star reported on a survey of likely Nebraska voters by Optimus, a GOP-connected public opinion firm. The Journal Star said the Optimus poll found that “the economy and jobs, health care and education are all more important to Nebraskans than taxes or government spending...”

And, we might add, education ranked higher than each of the aforementioned issues.

In addition, the newspaper reported that education was a close second to the economy in importance among

likely voters in Nebraska’s 1st Congressional District.

A day after the Journal Star report, the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska released the findings of a poll that surveyed 7,100 Nebraskans. The poll, conducted by Gallup, found that 67 percent of Nebraskans “strongly agree” that the state “should make early care and education a higher priority than it is today.” The poll said 58 percent feel the state is investing too little in early childhood care and education. Only 6 percent think the state invests too much.

Further, when asked “how important is it for the state of Nebraska to invest in public K-12 education” 77 percent of Nebraskans said “very important.” Another 15 percent said “somewhat important.” That’s a 92 percent favorable rating for K-12 public education. Community colleges earned an 80 percent favorable rating, and four-year colleges and universities earned a 71 percent favorable rating.

Those are powerful numbers.

### ‘Thou Shalt Vote’

Policymakers and policymakers-to-be would be wise to heed those numbers.

Otherwise, Nebraskans can force education to the forefront of the political discussion. Citizens can use these poll numbers to buttonhole candidates about their support for public education, and then elect those who pledge to make public education a priority.

To that end, bipartisan panels of your colleagues in every corner of the state have interviewed nearly all of the 63 candidates for 25 legislative seats (not all candidates consent to the interview process), as well as candidates for four State Board of Education openings.

The recommendation process does not consider a candidate’s stance on issues like the death penalty or medical marijuana – those issues are for other organizations to review and recommend. NSEA seeks to understand each candidate’s stand on public education issues.

Once those stances are clear, the NSEA panels recommend a candidate or candidates. And let me be clear on this point: NSEA’s recommendation is only a recommendation. It is not a command that “thou shalt vote for this candidate.” I trust that those of you who take the time to investigate will read and learn, and then make a personal decision, whether or not that candidate earns the NSEA recommendation.

To that end, you’ll find in this edition NSEA’s recommended candidates for Legislature and the State Board of Education. Please consider casting a ballot for an education candidate. Together, we can join other Nebraskans and push policymakers to move education to the top of the “What I Will Do” list in Nebraska.

## Finding Nebraska’s Great Public Schools (GPS)



NSEA locals from around the state appear or are mentioned in this issue. Look for:  
Alliance.....Page 10  
Arlington.....Page 10  
Battle Creek.....Page 10

Bellevue.....Page 9  
Brady.....Page 5  
ESU No. 16, Ogallala.....Page 5, 10  
Imperial.....Page 10  
Kearney.....Page 10  
Lewiston.....Page 13

Lincoln.....Page 6, 10, 11  
Millard.....Page 9, 10  
Norfolk.....Page 11  
Omaha.....Page 9, 15, 17  
OR-1 (Palmyra).....Page 13  
Peru State College.....Page 13, 20

Ralston.....Page 10  
South Sioux City.....Page 11  
Syracuse.....Page 13  
Umo’ho® Nation.....Page 15  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln.....Page 20  
Wallace.....Page 5

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## Teacher Pay About to Rise in South Dakota

South Dakota teachers are about to get a raise. A big raise.

For years — perhaps decades — South Dakota teachers have ranked near or at the bottom of the salary rankings in the U.S. The most recent NEA Rankings and Estimates puts South Dakota teacher salaries at 51st in the U.S. (including Washington, D.C.), with an average of \$40,023.

By comparison, Nebraska was 32nd in that ranking at \$49,539.

But an education candidate — South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard — realized that his state's teachers were underpaid, and that his state's schools faced severe shortage of qualified teachers.

Daugaard proposed the first increase in the state's sales tax in decades, which will raise nearly \$70 million for the South Dakota education budget. The goal is to raise the average teacher's annual pay up to \$48,500.

Daugaard signed three bills in April to put the plan into place.

"Watching the governor sign the bills was pretty amazing," said Mary McCorkle, president of the South Dakota Education Association.

McCorkle said her state has seen teachers leave for Wyoming, Minnesota and North Dakota to make \$10,000 more each year. Nebraska was not mentioned as an exodus state.

South Dakota is the second state adjacent to Nebraska in the past 10 years to commit to raising teacher salaries. Wyoming ranks 16th in the country, with an average teacher salary of \$56,583.



**Dinner and a Plan:** Talking about leadership and communication plans are, from left Angela Johnson, Brady; ML Lehman, Educational Service Unit No. 16, Ogallala; and Rachel Hanson, Krystal Sauser and Liz Hock, Wallace.

## Training Meetings Provide Leadership, Planning Tips

NSEA leaders in south central and southwest Nebraska have been meeting for leadership training and to talk about education issues and plans for 2016-18.

The dinner meeting formats allowed past, current and future leaders to talk together about individual leadership roles and responsibilities, current issues and trends and upcoming events and opportunities.

NSEA staff also worked with the leaders to discuss and develop a communications plan for reaching out to members, non-members, administrators and NSEA.

Within the discussion, the leaders talked

about how to build capacity for their local association members and develop a plan based on their specific priorities and that underscore the value of membership.

Local associations represented were Wallace, Brady, ESU No. 16 at Ogallala, Perkins County, Ogallala, Sidney, Banner County, Leyton, Wauneta-Palisade, Hayes Center, Imperial, Hitchcock County, Lexington, Overton, Wilcox-Hildreth, Gothenburg, McCook, Arapahoe, Arnold, Litchfield, Broken Bow, Callaway and Sargent.

NSEA Organizational Specialists Randy Gordon and Cindy Copich led the trainings.

## Diagnosis: Nebraska 18th in College Affordability

A study released in April indicates the rising cost of public college, coupled with minimal state financial aid, will make it a challenge for Nebraska to meet workforce needs in the future.

Nebraska was 18th in the College Affordability Diagnosis, a state-by-state comparison of the policies that affect families' abilities to pay for college. The study — published by the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education — analyzes college costs in relation to family income level. The study reveals how higher education has gone from expensive to unaffordable for most low-and middle-income families. The report contends Nebraska provides well below the national average in need-based financial aid. Read the full report at:

[gse.upenn.edu/pdf/irhe/affordability\\_diagnosis/Nebraska](https://gse.upenn.edu/pdf/irhe/affordability_diagnosis/Nebraska)

## Feds Plan to Forgive Student Loans for the Disabled

The Obama administration has announced plans to forgive \$7.7 billion in federal student loans held by nearly 400,000 permanently disabled Americans.

According to news reports, about half of those, or about 179,000, are in default.

The administration found that few eligible disabled loan-holders took advantage of a streamlined process to forgive debt when it was opened four years ago. The new process will allow the U.S. Department of Education to identify, and then contact, those eligible for loan forgiveness.

Through the 2012 process, too many eligible loan holders fell through the cracks, said federal officials.

"Americans with disabilities have a right to student loan relief," said U.S. Education Undersecretary Ted Mitchell. "We

need to make it easier, not harder, for them to receive the benefits they are due."

Letters are already being mailed to identified borrowers explaining the loan forgiveness process. Those who believe they are eligible but who are not contacted should follow steps on the Federal Student Aid website at:

<https://disabilitydischarge.com>

For those who may have fallen behind on debt payment, but are not eligible for forgiveness, there are options. The Credit.com website advises to consider combining eligible loans with a federal Direct Consolidation Loan, or working through the government's default rehabilitation program. Learn more about that program at:

<http://loanconsolidation.ed.gov/>



**Certificate Pros:** Lincoln Education Association members Parker Schoen, left, and Lesa Christiancy, right, have clear understanding of the value of a teaching certificate.

# A Certificate with Meaning

## Teaching Certificate Represents the ‘Important Responsibility’ of Trust

The first two days of Parker Schoen’s teaching career were spent working under the watchful eye of a substitute teacher.

His teaching skills were not in doubt. His depth of knowledge was never questioned. Yet he had to have another adult in the room as he began his career.

What Schoen didn’t have – and what every Nebraska teacher needs in order to teach in a pre-K-12 classroom – was a printed copy of his initial Nebraska teaching certificate.

So while Schoen served as the nominal head of his classroom, a substitute sat in as the certificated, licensed authority in the room.

Schoen was a December 2014 graduate of Nebraska Wesleyan University and was quickly hired to teach English at Culler Middle School in Lincoln. Even though the Nebraska Department of Education works diligently to process certificate applications, background checks and processing take time.

Schoen’s certificate had not yet arrived when he first walked into the classroom as a teacher. That meant Schoen had to have the extra adult in his classroom for two days at the start of second semester in January 2015. It was a relief when his first teaching certificate finally arrived and he could finally teach on his own.

“You don’t realize how much work goes on behind the scenes in the certification process,” said Schoen. “It took a couple of weeks, and they were rushing it.”

Now teaching at Lincoln’s Scott Middle School, Schoen has a deep appreciation for the certification procedure.

“That experience showed me that it is a very, very important responsibility to be trusted to work with kids,” he said.

His understanding of the value of a teaching certificate can be traced to a classroom down the hall from his own room. That’s where Schoen’s mother, Lesa Christiancy, teaches social studies and serves as an instructional technology coach.

### Teaching as an Art

Christiancy has worked through five teaching certificates in her

30-year career. Both the Nebraska Department of Education and the Lincoln Public Schools have notified her that her current certificate expires in August, and she has taken steps to renew her certificate for another five years.

When it is mentioned that teaching is a profession, Christiancy quickly adds “and an art” to the conversation. She clearly knows and values her craft.

She also values her certificate as a representation of her profession, and is concerned that a proposal introduced to the Nebraska Legislature would have allowed the state’s Commissioner of Education to waive the requirement that private and parochial school administrators hold a Nebraska certificate.

LB1062 would have been the proverbial camel’s nose under the edge of the teacher certification tent, say opponents, including NSEA. Lessening the integrity of

Nebraska’s teaching certificate standards in any way doesn’t sit well with Christiancy or Schoen.

“Administrators need the education background, they need

to have been in teaching to understand what their teachers are going through,” said Christiancy.

Added Schoen: “We tend to do things really well in Nebraska. Not all states do. Putting teachers through the rigors of the teaching certificate is a good thing,” he said.

LB1062 failed to advance from committee and died at the end of the legislative session (see sidebar, Page 7). Similar legislation could be introduced at any time in the future.

### Steadfast Demands

Just how tough are those “rigors” Schoen mentions?

Dr. Kevin Peters is the director of Teacher Certification for the Nebraska Department of Education.

Peters said teacher shortages in other states have led to

**‘...it is a very important responsibility to be trusted to work with kids.’**

widespread loosening of certification restrictions. Oklahoma, for instance, opened the current school year with 1,500 teaching vacancies, even though state officials loosened certificate requirements and have offered emergency certificates for several years. News reports from Oklahoma indicate that the state issued 506 emergency certificates in 2014-15, and 950 more for the 2015-16 school year by the end of November.

So, while Peters says that “in some states it has come to be ‘if you have a BA, you can teach,’” Nebraska remains steadfast in demanding quality.

“Nebraska,” said Peters, “has one of the strictest teaching certificate programs in the country.”

Requiring a high level of expertise is important, said NSEA Director of Advocacy Trish Guinan. The issue is teacher quality, not politics or “union bosses protecting turf,” she said.

“Nebraska’s certification rules preserve the integrity of the profession by insuring that all teachers in a classroom have a certain level of expertise that a high-quality teacher should have,” said Guinan.

## 14,000 Each Year

Here are some facts about Nebraska’s teaching certificates:

- **Any teacher education graduate** seeking an initial Nebraska teaching or administrative certificate must “demonstrate basic skills competency” by passing the Praxis Core Academic Skills for Educators test. The test covers reading, writing and mathematics.

- **Effective this past September**, Nebraska became one of the last states to require teaching candidates seeking certification to take and pass a required content test for their area of expertise. Peters said the U.S. Department of Education is pushing such tests to make sure teachers are better prepared. Nebraska requires a minimum passing grade on the Praxis Subject Assessment and School Leadership Series Content Test in order to earn an endorsement on an initial Nebraska teaching certificate. Those who don’t pass the content test can receive a two-year provisional teaching permit. Those candidates can take the test again.

- **All Nebraska teaching certificates expire** on Aug. 31 – the certificate holder should be aware of the year of expiration. As NSEA Organizational Specialist Jay Sears advises, “it is wise to remember on WHICH Aug. 31 your certificate expires.”

- **The Nebraska Department of Education**, and in many cases the employing school district, reminds the certificate holder of the approaching expiration. Peters said the NDE sent out 4,700 yellow “reminder to renew” postcards in late February. However, those educators who move frequently can be tough to contact, said Peters, which makes it important for educators to know when their certificates expire. Meanwhile, an updated list of 2016 renewals will be sent to most school administrators on May 1. Larger school districts, said Peters, keep their own list of where educators stand on the certificate renewal timeline.

- **The five analysts** in the NDE’s Teacher Certification Division

## Effort to Water Down Certification Fails in Legislature

NSEA has a long-standing resolution that addresses the importance of teacher certification, and the Association turned to that document when it came time to testify in opposition to LB1062 earlier this year.

LB1062 would have allowed private schools to hire administrators who do not hold a Nebraska teaching certificate.

NSEA Resolution G-2 says “The NSEA supports the legal requirement that all Nebraska professional educators shall be certificated by the State of Nebraska in order to practice the profession of teaching within the state, and that such certification be granted only after successful completion of a prescribed course of study in an educator preparation program accredited by the State Board of Education and the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).”

That language has been in NSEA’s resolutions for more than 30 years.

NSEA’s Director of Public Policy and Legislative research, Jason Hayes, told the Legislature’s Education Committee that without licensure, there is no leverage for accountability.

“Professional Educator certification in Nebraska is the ‘licensure’ for educators to practice their profession, much like the licensure of medical personnel, attorneys, plumbers, beauticians, and day care providers,” said Hayes, reminding senators that teachers in private and parochial schools, like their public school counterparts, are required to have teaching certificates.

“If a private or parochial school hires a person to fill the role of superintendent without certification from the state, where is the accountability?” said Hayes.

LB1062 did not advance from committee and died with the close of the legislative session.

processes about 14,000 teacher certificates each year. Peters said the goal on a simple renewal is a two or three day turnaround. The goal on a regular teaching certificate – like Schoen’s initial teaching certificate – is about two weeks. For educators coming into Nebraska to teach, the goal is four to six weeks.

## Cannot Be Paid

In the worst-case scenario, said Peters, if an educator forgets or neglects to renew before a teaching certificate expires, the process provides a safety net. School districts report staff to the NDE by Sept. 15 each year, and if a staffer has an expired certificate Peters’ office will call.

“If it’s a simple reminder, the teacher can get online and in 5 or 10 minutes, the process is done,” he said. “The teacher can go back to the classroom and continue teaching.” In the “worst of the worst” scenario, Peters said the educator might not have applied because of an issue that would raise questions. He cited one Kansas educator hired by a Nebraska school district who was quickly found to have active arrest warrants. The teacher was removed from the classroom immediately – and took off on the run.

- **According to state statute**,

school districts cannot legally pay a teacher who does not possess a valid Nebraska teaching certificate.

- **The No. 1 question** received by the NDE’s Teacher Certification Division is this: What happens if I break my contract with my school district? Knowing that life events force changes (a spouse is transferred, for instance), Peters said “I never advise them to break their contract, as it could come back and kill their career.”

- **Each Nebraska teacher education program** has a teacher certification officer, and Peters and staff meet with those representatives six times a year. “They are a great resource when someone needs a program set up to meet certification,” he said.

- **The fee for a teaching certificate** – \$55 – essentially pays for the operation of the NDE Teacher Certification Division. Of that, \$40 pays for Peters and his staff of five analysts, and operations of his office. The remaining \$15 covers the cost of the Professional Practices Commission and associated legal fees and investigations.

- **Teaching is a profession** and was defined as such by the Legislature in 1967. Following that declaration, the Nebraska State Board of Education adopted five ethical principles and standards of professional conduct and competency for educators. Failure to abide by those standards may be cause for discipline. When such failure in conduct is alleged, or if a formal complaint is filed, an investigation into the charge begins in the teacher certification division. An investigation can result in dismissal of charges, a formal reprimand, temporary suspension of a teaching certificate, or in the case of the most serious charges, revocation of a certificate.

Regardless of the issue, if you have a question about your teaching certificate, contact your NSEA organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047, or the Nebraska Department of Education’s Teacher Certification Division at 1-402-471-0739.

"I started taking history classes at the University of Nebraska at Kearney — and I was hooked after the first class. The quality of the curriculum and the professors made me decide to keep going and get my master's degree. I wanted a degree that would mean something. In my last year of classroom teaching, I was named Texas History Teacher of the Year. Now I run the social studies department for my entire district. Getting my degree at the University of Nebraska changed my life."

**Steve Sonksen, Texas**  
History, MA  
University of Nebraska at Kearney

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**Time to Vote:** Picking up ballots during the Saturday morning session of the NSEA Delegate Assembly were, from left, Terry Hall, Bellevue; Paul Schulte, Millard; and Julie Adams, Bellevue. Delegates cast ballots on four bylaw amendments and a seat on the NEA Board of Directors.

# Nearly 150!

## NSEA Celebration Opens at Delegate Assembly; Members Elect NEA Director, Alter Bylaws

As Delegate Assemblies go, NSEA's 155th edition had just about everything an Association junkie might enjoy.

The more than 300 registered delegates enjoyed eloquent and sometimes lighthearted keynote addresses; razor-thin vote margins; a well-contested election that took two ballots to finalize; and a New Business Item that can be given at least some measure of credit in the override of a gubernatorial veto.

Add in substantial changes to portions of the NSEA Resolutions document that was heartily debated, and delegates put in plenty of work.

They also participated in the kickoff of the Association's sesquicentennial celebration. NSEA will formally mark 150 years at Delegate Assembly 2017. Most importantly, delegates learned that the Association remains strong at the 149-year mark.

In her annual report to delegates, NSEA President Nancy Fulton thanked delegates for standing as the voice of teaching professionalism.

"Our greatest strength is our passion to stand for what is right and what is impor-

tant in our classrooms, in our local school districts and at the state and national level," she said.



NSEA Executive Director Craig R. Christiansen affirmed Fulton's remarks. Whether considering membership numbers, finances or politics, the Association is strong, he said, "despite efforts to whittle away at the rights, professionalism, and more" of public education employees.

"Associations like ours do not last for 150 years unless they are doing things right, and are doing the right things," he said.

### 'Perceived Mismatch'

Those "right things" are also going on in Nebraska public schools every day, and National Education Association President Lily Eskelsen García urged delegates to spread the word about those stories to friends, family and associates (see story, Page 10).

"Funny motivational speaker" Kay Frances – the daughter of educators – received high marks for her advice about stress relief. She defined stress as "the



**Friends to Teachers:** Earning NSEA's highest honor, the Friend of Education, were Sen. Galen and Dr. Marilyn Hadley, Kearney.



**NEA-Bound:** Omaha Education Association member Tracy Hartman-Bradley, left, was elected to the NEA Board of Directors. Sasha Cervantes, right, also of Omaha, aided Hartman-Bradley's campaign.



**Smiling with Lily:** These Delegate Assembly attendees took a moment to pose with NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia. From left are Connie Martin, Millard; Amy Burns, Kearney; Eskelsen Garcia; Nebraska Loves Public Schools representative Brittany Mascio; Dene Oglesby, Ralston; and Carrie Sheppard, Battle Creek.

## Eskelsen García: Teachers are Fabulous!

National Education Association President Lily Eskelsen García reminded NSEA members that public school teachers “are incredible. We are fabulous. We should be full of ourselves.”

But teachers forget to brag about how good they are, and about the good things going on in America’s public schools. Teachers must tell their stories, she said, “because the public is being told a lie, that public schools – a monopoly – are failing and that we need charter schools and vouchers and to incentivize the teaching profession.” Those lies are being told by those who want to privatize, incorporate and profit from public schools.

“They are being told this by corporate CEOs – there could be a connection...,” said Eskelsen García.

Eskelsen García was the keynote speaker during the Friday night session of NSEA’s 2016 Delegate Assembly, with more than 300 NSEA members present.

The good news of public schools is highlighted by the fact that



more children are graduating from high school with college credit than ever before, and that 85 percent of America’s wealthiest families send their children to public schools.

Those who tell mistruths, however, cannot compete with the power of the Association’s numbers.

“Our power is built on the truth of three million individual educators who walk into public school buildings and look into the eyes of students every day,” she said.

That’s three million members who can pick up the phone and call policymakers on any given day and talk about the good news of public education.

Teachers must tell friends, family and neighbors about the good news of public schools. Much is at stake, she said.

“We are the source of every other profession. We are the source of the future. If the public doesn’t understand how important we are, if we don’t understand how important we are, then we are going to mess it up,” she said

perceived mismatch between what is happening and what I want to happen.”

Said Frances: “We have to take life seriously, but we have to laugh.”

Serious business was also on the agenda, and delegates took two ballots to elect a new Nebraska representative to the NEA Board of Directors. A three-way race between Grand Island’s Deb Gnuse, Omaha’s Tracy Hartman-Bradley and South Sioux City’s Tracia Blom took two ballots, after no candidate earned a majority. Hartman-Bradley edged Gnuse on the second ballot and will begin a three-year term on the NEA board on Sept. 1.

### Narrow Margin

Delegates gave overwhelming approval to three minor changes to Association bylaws, but a fourth failed by the narrowest of margins.

For each of the past several years, NSEA’s Ethnic and Minority Affairs Committee has proposed a change to bylaws that would allow election of an at-large ethnic minority representative on the Association Board of Directors. A change to bylaws requires a two-thirds majority, and

this year’s effort failed by one vote – 179-90.

Generous changes were also made to the Association’s set of resolutions, which act as the conscience of the Association. NSEA’s resolution expressing support for Education Support Professionals was amended to express that ESPs should “not be used in place of certified teachers.”

Using paraprofessionals in place of teachers, said South Sioux City’s Tracia Blom, “puts ESPs in situations they are not trained for.” Delegates agreed.

Also passed: new resolutions calling for elimination of discrimination and stereotyping, and four resolutions outlining the Association’s approach to the educational needs of minority students.

Speaking of generous: through various fundraisers, delegates gave more than \$1,500 to the Children’s Fund, which kicked off a \$150k for Kids campaign that will close in October 2017 (see story, Page 15).

Finally, delegates gave overwhelming support to the dues proposal, which was for a \$12 increase in the 2016-17 Association year.



**On Duty:** Five orange-vested election marshals supervised voting during the Saturday morning session of Delegate Assembly. From left are Jason Wiese, Arlington; Roberta Rudden, Alliance; Dennis Batterman, Imperial; Chris Martin, Lincoln; and ML Lehman, ESU No. 16, Ogalalla.

# Delegate Action Pushes Override to Success

## On Heels of Assembly, Letter, Senators Override Veto

Acting at Delegate Assembly, more than 300 NSEA members from across the state approved three New Business Items – including one that has already borne fruit.

### Delegates Handle Husker Crowds

Members attending NSEA's 155th Delegate Assembly coped well with the added stress of 72,000 red-clad Husker fans attending the University of Nebraska spring football game on April 16.

The spring game date was revealed in January, more than two years after NSEA sealed the date with the Embassy Suites. NSEA works that far in advance to assure hotel availability. Here are dates of coming Delegate Assemblies, all scheduled at the Cornhusker Hotel in Lincoln:

**2017:** April 21-22  
**2018:** April 27-28  
**2019:** April 26-27

Without dissent, on a voice vote, delegates asked that NSEA urge state senators to override the governor's veto of LB947, which will allow recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals to "obtain professional licenses to practice their profession."

Those licenses are required by a profession, such as teaching, cosmetology, nursing and 170 other professional categories.

A news release from NSEA detailing the action by delegates was delivered to Nebraska media outlets not long after delegate action, and a letter from NSEA President

Nancy Fulton was hand-delivered to the offices of all 49 state senators the following Monday. Local association presidents were alerted via email of the Delegate Assembly vote and were urged to spread the word and contact state senators. On Wednesday, April 20, senators voted 31-13 to override the veto.

In her letter, Fulton said educators know Nebraska's future is brighter when all hard-working young adults are encouraged and allowed to follow their career dreams.

"We believe we must do everything we can to keep talented students in our state," said Fulton. "It makes no sense to force these educated youth to other states to practice their professions. Instead, we should encourage them to stay in Nebraska and help to grow our economy."

Delegates renewed the Governance Review Task Force, which is studying the Association's governance structure. The task force will make any recommendations for change at the 2017 Delegate Assembly.

Delegates also approved, without dissent, a request that NSEA urge the Nebraska School Activities Association to amend its bylaws regarding unsportsmanlike conduct to include "a racially hostile environment." Omaha Education Association member Sasha Cervantes proposed the New Business Item, and said recent reports of racially hostile incidents require such change. "As an elected body, we must set the expectation that racial harassment is unacceptable in school activities," she said.



**Norfolk Trifecta!** Three award recipients hailed from Norfolk. From left are NSEA Rookie of the Year Curt Guenther; Teaching Excellence Award recipient Kimberly Erickson; and Angie Stenger, representing Flood Communications, which earned the Champion of Education Award.



**Member Honorees:** Lincoln Education Association's Chris Martin, left, earned the NSEA Community Service Award, while South Sioux City Education Association member Dayla Brown, right, was named NSEA's Education Support Professional of the Year.



**Public Education Advocate:** Lincoln radio station KFOR 1240 earned the NSEA Public Education Advocate Award and was cited for general support of public education and for specifically devoting substantial air time to the Lincoln Education Association's Harvest of Books drive. From left are announcers Dave Hillgoss and Carol Turner; Sales Director Joy Patten; and General Manager Julie Gade.

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CSP 809P-01	Medical & Psychosocial Aspects of Addictions	PE 877-01	Motor Learning	TESE 879P-01	Teaching Social Skills to Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder
CSP 856-02	Multicultural Counseling	PHYS 811-01	Astronomy for High School Teachers	TESE 886-01	Co-Teaching & Collaborative Services
EDAD 831-01	Social Foundations of Education	PSY 862P-01	Adult Development & Aging	TESE 894-01	Research in Assistive Technology
EDAD 848-01	Curriculum Planning	SPAN 845-01	Topics in Latin American Literature & Culture: Cuban Women Writers		
EDAD 851-01	Human Resource Management	SPAN 898-01	ST: Teaching Spanish to Heritage Speakers		
EDAD 853-01	School Business Management	SPCH 845P-01	Diffusion of Innovations		
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# A Success for Public Schools

## Senators Increase State Aid, Act on Mental Health Task Force

All in all, the 2016 session of the Nebraska Legislature was a success for public schools in Nebraska.

Public education avoided the major spending lids and revenue growth caps proposed in early versions of LB958 and LB959, and despite forecasts of revenue shortfalls in the near future, state aid for 2016-17 received a decent boost.

Senators authorized an increase in state aid to education funding of more than \$31.5 million. That 3.33 percent increase came through passage of LB959 and LB1067. Originally, the state aid forecast was for \$5.6 million in growth, or a miniscule 0.59 percent increase.

However, lawmakers included an additional \$8.6 million in LB959 to enlarge the number of rural schools under equalization, and an additional \$17.3 million in LB1067 to cover poverty and transitional issues as portions of the Omaha learning community are dissolved.

Both LB958 and LB959 went through major changes in order to advance from committee. While in committee, amendments eliminated the harmful provisions in favor of minimal structural changes to the state aid formula in LB959, and a \$20 million property tax rebate for agricultural land in LB958.

The entire session was hampered by an early revenue forecast shortfall of \$120 million. Much of the shortfall was covered by intergovernmental fund transfers and money from the state's reserve fund.

Unfortunately, the shortfall also sidelined many educational funding proposals such as the Mentor Teacher Program in LB274; the Nebraska Department of Education's behavioral health specialist in LB838; the Whole Child Project in LB1052; and additional funding for school mental health programs in LB443.

If the fiscal situation improves in the near future, there will be movement on these initiatives in 2017.

### Employment Rights Success

Senators did approve two important bills on employment rights.

LB83, proposed by Omaha Sen. Tonya Cook, will allow employees to disclose their wages to co-workers without threat of reprisals from their employers.

On the social media front, Sen. Tyson Larson's LB821 protects an employee



**Know Where They Stand:** NSEA members of all political stripes are involved in vetting candidates for the Nebraska Legislature and other offices, as shown here in an interview with Sen. Dan Watermeier of Syracuse, left. Watermeier earned the recommendation of the team, which included Ruth Neeman, Syracuse; Pamela Riffle and Amanda Volkson, Peru State College; Burke Brown, District OR-1 (Palmyra); and Devin Garcia, Lewiston. Peru State College's Bill Clemente, also on the team, provided the photograph.

and job applicant's social networking website from access or adverse action by an employer.

Also on the plus side of the ledger: a pair of anti-NSEA bills from Crete Sen. Laura Ebke died in committee. LB1044 proposed to eliminate the Court of Industrial Relations, which has a decades-long record of success in resolving labor disputes. A second proposal from Ebke, LB288, would have prohibited the deduction of union dues from an employee's paycheck.

"By and large, the Legislative Session was successful in that the ability for public schools to fund and provide quality public education in Nebraska was unimpeded in 2016," said NSEA President Nancy Fulton.

### Mental Health Task Force

An NSEA-supported proposal from Syracuse Sen. Dan Watermeier that will create the Task Force on Behavioral and Mental Health was adopted by the Legislature.

Legislative Resolution 413 creates the task force, which comes about as a result of a Legislative Performance Audit report that found there needs to be an additional study of ways and methods to reduce behavioral and mental health care service gaps.

The task force would consist of seven members, including the chair of the

Legislature's Health and Human Services Committee or his or her designee; the chair of the Judiciary Committee or his or her designee; the chair of the Appropriations Committee or his or her designee; and four additional members of the Legislature to be appointed by the Executive Board.

### Retirement Focus

The teacher retirement system had plenty of attention in this session.

Senators approved changes to the Omaha Schools Employee Retirement System (OSERS) that will transfer investment decisions from the Board of Trustees to the State Investment Council. Changes will also come to the process that selects members of the OSERS Board of Directors.

In addition, pension benefits for new OPS hires after July 1, 2016, will mirror benefits of Tier 2 members in the State School Retirement Plan.

Provisions of two other proposals were amended into the OSERS legislation. A periodic study of retirement plans – at least once every four years – will now be required of political subdivisions. Minor changes to the terms of members of the state's Public Employees Retirement Board were also made, to ensure better continuity between incoming and outgoing members of the board.

Another amendment will require an "experience study" of the state retirement system every four years. Current law provides for one every five years.



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# #150k4KIDS

*NSEA Children's Fund: helping children realize a better today & tomorrow!*

## Delegates Launch Children's Fund Campaign: Goal is \$150,000

### 18-Month Drive to Assist Children's Fund Kicks Off at Delegate Assembly

#### Fund Now Taking Donations Via PayPal

For more than 20 years, the NSEA Children's Fund has been assisting children in need.

Now, the presidents of NSEA's six governance districts believe the Children's Fund itself needs a bit of assistance. At NSEA Delegate Assembly they announced the formal launch of a drive to raise \$150,000 for the Children's Fund by October 2017, which marks the 150th anniversary of NSEA's founding.

Every penny raised between now and October 2017 will count toward the drive. That's an ambitious goal over the next 18 months, since the fund typically collects from \$45,000 to \$50,000 in donations in any given year.

There is a need, however, as expenses can reach beyond \$70,000 in a year. As an example, the Children's Fund took in \$24,834 in donations from Sept. 1, 2015, through March 31, 2016. During the same time period, expenses were at \$34,327 — an operating deficit of \$9,493.

NSEA President Nancy Fulton was optimistic that the goal would be met, if not surpassed in the course of the campaign.

"I know that members understand the importance and value of the Children's Fund," said Fulton. "I also know that members will do all they can to encourage every member and every local to consider making it a reality and a success."



Local associations are encouraged to brainstorm fundraising ideas; to challenge other local associations; to collect change; host a jeans day fundraiser; or consider other ideas to contribute toward the fund.

Watch *The Voice* and the NSEA website for the logo, above, to find updates on the drive, and for ideas about how to raise funds for the campaign.

To make donations easier, the Children's Fund is now set up to accept donations through PayPal. Find the PayPal link at:

[www.nsea.org/childrens-fund](http://www.nsea.org/childrens-fund)

Questions? Call Sally Bodtke at NSEA at 1-800-742-0047 or at:

[sally.bodtke@nsea.org](mailto:sally.bodtke@nsea.org)



**Certificated Generosity:** Honored at NSEA's Delegate Assembly for their generosity were members of the Umo'Ho' Nation Education Association and the Omaha Education Association. Marguerite Cortez, left, accepted for the UNEA as the local that raised the most cash per member. OEA President Chris Proulx accepted on behalf of the local that raised the most cash for the Children's Fund in the past year.

# Ag Sack Lunch Program Serves Lunch to Another 5,000 Fourth-Graders

## Meals Provided as Part of Visit to State Capitol

The annual Ag Sack Lunch Program, which provides free sack lunches to Nebraska fourth-graders while teaching them about where their food comes from, wraps up its sixth year in May. By the end of the school year, 5,000 students from more than 90 schools will have participated in the 2015-16 program.

Since its inception in 2010, nearly 30,000 students have enjoyed and participated in the lunch-and-learn program. The Ag Sack Lunch Program is sponsored by the Nebraska Soybean Board (NSB), the Nebraska Pork Producers Association (NPPA), the Nebraska Corn Board (NCB), and the Nebraska Beef Council (NBC).

Each year, more than 20,000 students visit the State Capitol in Lincoln as part of their fourth-grade curriculum. The Ag Sack Lunch Program ties into these visits by inviting teachers to schedule their classes for the free sack lunches and to hear presentations about how their food is grown and produced. The program spon-

sors budget for 5,000 free lunches a year, with reservations on a first-come, first-served basis. The lunches consist of Nebraska-produced foods to emphasize the message to students that their food comes from farms in Nebraska.



The presentations last about 20 minutes and teach students how important agriculture is to the state's economy. Presentation leaders, or "Ag Ambassadors," are students from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln trained specifically to conduct these sessions.

All of the students have farming backgrounds and are enthusiastic about agriculture.

Students also receive a card game called "Crazy Soybean" to take home and play with their families. Each card has an ag fact on it which effectively broadens the impact of the program's message. Many teachers use the game in classroom settings as well.

For details, call Karen Brokaw at 402-432-2299.

## Gifted Association Makes Two Requests

The leadership team at the Nebraska Association for the Gifted has two requests:

- Hold the dates of Feb. 23-24, 2017, for the Association's annual conference;
- And consider answering the Association's call for Best Practice Collaborators.

The Association is seeking school districts or schools to collaborate for summer, fall and spring professional development.

For details, call 1-402-880-9103, or send questions about that request to:

[negifted@gmail.com](mailto:negifted@gmail.com)

## Doctoral Student Asks for Survey Respondents

A child language doctoral student at the University of Kansas is seeking educators to respond to a survey for her studies.

Through the university's Child Language Doctoral Program, former public school teacher Teresa Girolamo's survey seeks to better understand school services available to children, and services available to students with language needs. The survey takes 10 to 15 minutes, and responses are completely anonymous. Participants may stop the survey at any time. The survey is at:

[http://kuclas.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_9uxhUQz610C1PsV](http://kuclas.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_9uxhUQz610C1PsV)



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# Praxis Review Aids Students

## Teachers-to-Be Get an Assist

A dozen Metro area college students seeking formal entry into teacher education programs received a helping hand in April via a pilot project from NSEA and marketed through the Student Education Association of Nebraska affiliate and NSEA's Ethnic and Minority Affairs Committee.

The project utilized four NSEA member-teachers to give the students a review and better understanding of the needed skills and understanding of the Praxis Core Academic Skills for Educators test. The Nebraska Department of Education requires passing scores on the test for admission into any Nebraska teacher education program.

The Praxis is designed to determine whether candidates for education programs can demonstrate "basic skills competency" in reading, writing and mathematics. The math portion of the test is most often cited as a stumbling block for those seeking entry into teacher ed programs and, later, for certification.

"When students in Nebraska sit down to take the Praxis, we want them to be successful," said Carol Hicks, an NSEA organizational specialist who helped to organize the pilot. "This is a step toward that success."

Also assisting were organizational specialists Mike Wiesen and Andrea Longoria.

NSEA members who presented were Cassandra DeStefano, on reading; Nicole Benson, writing; and Jennifer Olsen and Dawn McKain on math. All are Omaha Education Association members.

The no-cost session was held at the College of Saint Mary cam-



**Review Masters:** Assisting future educators with a Praxis test review in April were these Omaha Education Association members, from left: Cassandra DeStefano, Jennifer Olsen, Nicole Benson and Dawn McKain.

pus in Omaha. In attendance were students from Midland University, College of St. Mary, Peru State College, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Northeast Community College.

Several of the students expressed interest in further assistance through tutoring, which will be available to small groups. NSEA leadership is in hopes that more such sessions will be available across the state in the near future.

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To reserve a Hertz rental, call 800-654-3131 and using your CDP# 50655, or at:

[www.neamb.com/hertz](http://www.neamb.com/hertz)

David Glenn is Nebraska's NEA Member Benefits representative

# Six Things to Know About Unpaid Bills

## If Debt Collectors Hound You Over Forgotten Bill, Here is Advice on What to Do About it

By Kaitlin Pitsker

### 1. Uh oh. You forgot.

It can happen to the best of us: A bill gets buried in a pile of papers and, before you know it, you've missed a payment. If you have a solid history of paying your bills on time, you'll likely be given a longer leash than customers with a history of late payments, but you may still be subject to late fees or an increase in your interest rate. You will usually be contacted before the debt is turned over to a collection agency or debt collector. You cannot be reported to the credit bureaus, which will ding your credit score, until your payment is 30 days past due. An unpaid medical debt cannot be added to your credit report for 180 days to allow time for insurance payments to be applied.

### 2. You may request forgiveness.

If you have a good history with the creditor, call and ask for the late fee to be waived, says credit expert John Ulzheimer.

Some credit card issuers extend an olive branch for late payments as a cardholder benefit. For example, the Citi Simplicity card doesn't charge late fees, and the Discover It card lets first-time offenders off the hook. But such flexibility ends when the debt has been reported to the credit bureaus; it will remain on your record for seven years from the date that the account went into default. A medical debt, however, must be removed from your credit report as soon as it has been paid.

### 3. If a debt collector calls.

Debt collectors typically charge the original creditor about 40 percent of what they collect as a fee, or they buy debts outright and keep everything they collect. Debt collectors are required to send a written validation notice within five days of contacting you. If you don't think you owe the money, or you believe that there has been a mistake, you have 30 days from the time you receive

the notice to dispute the debt. That buys you time. If it's a company you've done business with, start by checking your own account transactions, or ask the company to check its files to see if there's a record of a payment.

"You may have forgotten that you co-signed for a credit card or for an apartment, but, most of the time, you really do owe the debt," says Ulzheimer.

### 4. You have recourse.

The Fair Debt Collection Practices Act is designed to shield you from debt collectors'

most egregious tactics. For example, they may not contact you before 8 a.m. or after 9 p.m., and they may not use obscene language or threaten you with violence. If a collection agency violates the rules, you can report the problem to the Federal Trade Commission, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau or your state attorney general's office.

### 5. When it's

time to settle up.

Banks and credit card issuers will be looking to collect the debt in full, but they will usually work with you to schedule payments. If your debt has gone to a collection agency, always make a settlement offer rather than pay in full, says Ulzheimer.

"Even if you pay them 20 percent of what they're trying to collect, they're still going to make a mint off of you." Keep a record of the payments you make.

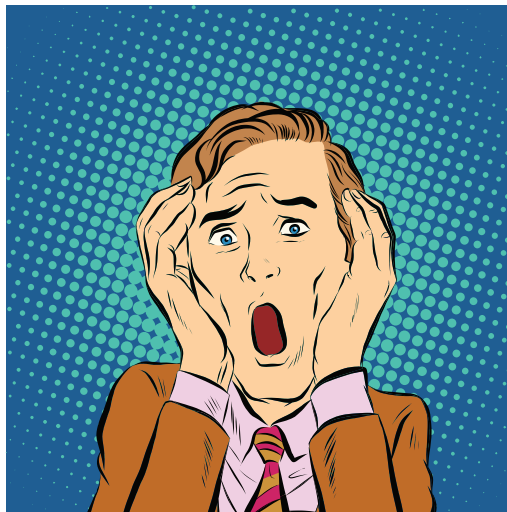
### 6. The tax man calleth?

The IRS is preparing to use private debt collectors to go after people who owe back taxes, according to the Association of Credit and Collection Professionals. Details will be announced soon.

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## Poverty Takes Center Stage at Spring Meet

### Koch Johns Keynotes Conference with Clips from Film Series

The Nebraska Loves Public Schools team recently began work on a project that challenged them to look at the issue of poverty in education from a new angle, using performance as a force for social change.

The result was *Poverty: Not a Choice*, a short film series that has had more than 75,000 online views.

Directed by retired Lincoln High School speech and theatre teacher Patsy Koch Johns – an NSEA-recommended candidate for State Board of Education – and inspired by the stories of real Nebraska students, the project shares day-to-day realities faced by public school kids living in poverty throughout our state.

Koch Johns shared clips from the segments and spoke to more than 100 NSEA-Retired members at the Association's Spring Conference in Schuyler in mid-April.

Individual segments from the series have been used by school districts statewide for professional development, teacher prep programs with aspiring teachers, churches, and afterschool and mentoring programs for training.

About 42 percent of Nebraska students live in low income situations. No one chooses to live in poverty, least of all, children. Help spread the word about how poverty impacts education and how each of us can do our part to help. Schools can't do it alone! Consider donating resources to an area school in need.

Members are urged to explore other ways to help at: [nelovesps.org/take-action/](http://nelovesps.org/take-action/)

#### Why Join NSEA Retired?

As the NSEA-Retired mantra says, "Now More Than Ever, the Commitment Continues."

NSEA-Retired is a state-wide association of educators committed to protecting current pension and Social Security benefits. It continues to be a strong advocate on retirement issues, and also the advancement of



**Conference Crowd:** NSEA-Retired Spring Conference attendees review the various contents of their conference folders as they plan out how they will spend their busy day at the St. Benedict Center near Schuyler.

quality public education.

As an NSEA-Retired member, you are kept abreast of new developments on important retirement issues. You are able to continue your NEA Member Benefit Programs, as a retired member of this organization. Your membership also supports public education and Nebraska's children.

Active NSEA members may join this organization as a Pre-Retired Lifetime member, while still teaching. Retired educators may join as Lifetime members or Annual members if they are at least 50 years old, and were an active member in the Association the year they retired.

NSEA-Retired works with the Educator's Health Alliance (EHA) advocating for improvements in the BC/BS retiree health plan. NSEA-Retired works to improve retirement benefits and provide affordable health care protection. NSEA-Retired and NEA-Retired lobbyists monitor and act on legislation that affects retired educators. Various newsletters, publications, and emails help keep members of the organization up to date on the issues concerning them. NSEA-Retired sponsors a fall and spring conference featuring workshops and speakers of interest to retirees. We also host a Lobby Day in early February where retirees get to visit with their senators on issues that affect retirees and education.

As an NSEA-Retired member, you are eligible for the NSEA Blue Senior Classic Medigap coverage (with dental option) if you are age 65 or older. Members aged 50-64 are eligible to continue Educator's Health Alliance (EHA) health insurance after retirement, provided they are enrolled as an NSEA Special Services member.

Please consider enrolling for the 2016-17 school year after June 1, at:

<https://www.nsea.org/nsea-retired-join-now>

#### Save the Date!

The NSEA-Retired fall conference will be held at Aurora on Tuesday, Oct. 18. Planning for the conference is now under way. Check the NSEA-Retired website after June 1 for more details – but in the meantime, reserve that date!

— Renae Kelly,  
Editor

[renaekelly@gmail.com](mailto:renaekelly@gmail.com)



**Koch Johns**



**Scholarship Recipients:** NSEA-Retired Vice President Tom Black, center, recently presented certificates of achievement to recipients of the Association's 2017 scholarships. The University of Nebraska's Haley Montgomery, left, and Peru State College's Mariah Bigelow, right, received \$1,000 scholarships for their student teaching semesters next year, as did Caitlin Cassell of Peru State College, who was unable to attend.

## California Casualty Awards Athletic Grants to Schools

Grants Assist Programs; Kilgarin Honored; Wausa, Stapleton, Others Feted

Five Nebraska high school athletic programs are the richer because NSEA members applied for grants through a California Casualty grant program.

The awards will:

- Purchase new starting blocks for the **Aurora High School** track and field team.
- Buy balls and bats for the **Conestoga High School** girls' softball team.
- Procure uniforms for the **Hershey High School** cross country team.
- Provide warm-ups for the **Omaha North Magnet High School** track team.
- Aid the **Wauneta-Palisade High School** track team in purchasing poles and safety equipment for pole vaulting.

Grants range from \$1-\$3,000. Applications are being taken for the next round, with a deadline of Jan. 15, 2017. Apply at: [www.calcasathleticsgrant.com](http://www.calcasathleticsgrant.com)

### NSEA Director of Communications and Public Affairs

**Karen Kilgarin** has been recognized by the University of Nebraska Kearney as this year's Distinguished Political Science Alumna.

Kilgarin was recognized at a banquet in Kearney in April, where she gave the annual George Norris Lecture.

Kilgarin is a 1979 graduate of Kearney State College, where she majored in political science. She was elected to the Nebraska Legislature from her South Omaha district in 1980, and served one term. After working as the Lincoln Bureau Chief for KMTV Channel 7, she joined the staff of Gov. Ben Nelson in 1992 as communications director, a position she held until joining NSEA in 1995. She returned to state government to manage the Department of Administrative Services in 1998, and returned to NSEA in 1999.

The **Stapleton Public Schools** received a \$2,500 grant from the Give a Note Foundation and Radio Disney, with proceeds to be used by the school district's music program. Only six U.S. schools to receive a grant.

"Most of our instruments are very old and need to be replaced. I am hoping to re-

place some of the older instruments with newer ones and purchase a few elementary instruments for programs and instructional use. This is such a huge honor and surprise for us since we are a small Class D school in the Midwest," said music teacher and NSEA member **Daniel Gibbs**.

NSEA member **Kristie Hayes** of the **Ponca Education Association** has received the Community Outstanding Service Award from the Nebraska State Athletic Administrators Association.

Hayes has kept official score books for basketball for more than 30 years, runs the scoreboard at home football games, scores home golf and track meets and is secretary for the 17-school Lewis and Clark Conference. She is also active in conference and district tournaments. She is the school technology teacher at Ponca.



**Kilgarin**

Four Nebraska high school personal finance programs – all led by NSEA members – have been recognized for excellence by the Working in Support of Education (W!SE), a non-profit that promotes financial literacy and readiness for college and the workforce.

**Wausa High School's** personal finance class was ranked 19th best in the country, and is helmed by **Dawn Friedrich**. **Lincoln Southwest High's** college personal finance class, led by **Josh Hinrichs**, was eighth in the large school division.

Also in the Top 100 schools nationwide was **Tri County High School's** personal finance class, taught by **Dennis Krejci**; and **Fillmore Central High School's** personal finance class, led by **Cindy Talley**.

Three Nebraska schools have been named U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools.

The honorees are **Lincoln's Prescott Elementary School** and **Irving Middle School**, and the **Alfonza W. Davis Middle School** in Omaha.

They were among just 47 U.S. schools, 15 school districts and 11 post-secondary institutions honored. They were cited for innovative efforts to reduce environmental impact and utility costs, improve health and wellness, and ensure effective sustainability education. Fifty-one percent of the 2016 honorees serve a disadvantaged student body.

## Dates Set for Two EHA Retiree Benefits Sessions

Two meeting dates have been set for newly declared retiree members of the Educators Health Alliance.

EHA Field Representative Greg Long and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska representative Kent Trelford-Thompson will lead the meetings. The meetings will begin at 4:30 p.m. and will last about an hour. The sites and dates:

- **Wednesday, May 11**, Holiday Inn, 110 S. Second Ave., Kearney.
- **Thursday, May 12**, Educational Service Unit No. 3, 6949 S. 110th St., LaVista.

EHA members may also view a previously recorded webinar of the 2016/17 Retiree Direct Bill informational session for health care benefits. The webinar can now be viewed at your convenience from the EHA website at:

[www.ehapan.org/retiree-info](http://www.ehapan.org/retiree-info)

For more details, contact Long at 402-440-9633, or via email at:

[greg@ehapan.org](mailto:greg@ehapan.org)

## Mid Level Meet Planned at Elm Creek

The annual Nebraska Mid Level Academy Conference has a theme, a keynote, a date and a site – so now is the time to register and get it on your calendar.

The theme for the 2016 conference "The Good, the Bad, the Ugly" and the event will unfold at Elm Creek on Wednesday and Thursday, June 1-2.

The conference is open to all teachers and administrators grades four through nine. The Academy is an organization where successful teachers, administrators and state department educators share their successes with their peers.

Keynoting the event will be Kay Glidden, assistant administrator at Region 3 Behavioral Health Services in Kearney. Glidden will present useful information about "Calmer Classrooms," as teachers from around the state have become aware of the difficulties teaching children with behavioral and learning challenges.

Register by reaching Kay Stricker at: [strickerk@discoverers.org](mailto:strickerk@discoverers.org)

Cost is: \$50 per person before May 5 and \$75 after that date. Administrators are free with two paid staff. Check registration details about the food that will be provided. A social is in the works for Thursday evening.

# YOUR PRIMARY PRIMER

## The Candidates: Your Decision

There is much rancor and much anger flowing out of election campaigns this year. Much of it originates at the national level, but state races are not immune.

Serious voters also need to be wary of misinformation and outright lies spread by political operatives. One robocall this spring on behalf of an opponent of one of the candidates on these pages claimed that two of four candidates in the Primary Election had dropped out of the race!

So know that the facts here are based on each candidate's written answers to questions about public education. The recommendations themselves — and they are only recommendations — come from the majority vote by bi-partisan committees of your colleagues



who read the answers and then interviewed the candidates who availed themselves of the interview process. Recommendations are based solely on education issues.

Remember that the officials you elect will be asked to make decisions that affect all you do in your classroom and school building. They will decide whether to provide your school with more money for counseling and mental health issues, more state aid, more or less testing, and scores of other issues that affect you and your students.

There was no recommendation in District 11 or District 49. To find your Legislative District, go to: [legislature.gov/about/leg\\_map](http://legislature.gov/about/leg_map)

## NEBRASKA LEGISLATURE

### **Legislative Dist. 1: Dan Watermeier**

**Where: Otoe, Johnson, Nemaha, Pawnee and Richardson counties.**

Watermeier has become a leader in Legislature, and, with a family of teachers, understands the needs of public education. He is an advocate for local control and defends stability of financing public schools.

### **Legislative Dist. 3: Carol Blood**

**Where: Bellevue and parts of Papillion, bounded roughly by 25th St. on the east, the Douglas/Sarpy county line on the north and S. 60th and S. 84th to the west.**

Blood is a “farm girl” who comes from an education family and is highly supportive of public education. The interview team called her “honest, passionate, organized, research-based and relatable.”

### **Legislative Dist. 5: Mike McDonnell**

**Where: Omaha, bounded roughly by I-480 and Highway 75 on the east, 72nd St. on the west, the Douglas county line to the south, and Grover and Martha streets to the north.**

A former high-profile Omaha city employee and union member, the interview team recognized McDonnell as a “very strong ally” with educators in the Legislature.

### **Legislative Dist. 7: John Synowiecki**

**Where: Southeast Omaha bounded by the Missouri River on the east; I-480 and Highway 75 on the west, Harrison St. on the south and I-480 on the north.**

A former senator, Synowiecki has a proven record of support for public education and public unions. He has a family of teachers working for OPS, and said he opposes charter schools.

### **Legislative Dist. 9: Sen. Sara Howard**

**Where: East central Omaha bounded by Grover and Martha streets to the south; 72nd street on the west, Highway 6 and Leavenworth on the north and I-480 to the east.**

“Warm, approachable” and a strong vote for children and public education for the past four years, Howard is counted on to support teachers and students in the Legislature. She is committed to representing her district and is a strong backer of collective bargaining.

### **Legislative Dist. 13: Justin Wayne**

**Where: Northeast Douglas Co., bounded by the county line**

**at the north, 72nd and 96th streets to the west, the Missouri River to the east and various streets to the south.**

A member of the Omaha Board of Education, Wayne has knowledge of education issues, and, according to the interview team, “is ready to hit the ground running.” He has existing relationships with many senators and has worked in the Legislative arena.

### **Legislative Dist. 15: Lynne Walz**

**Where: Dodge County.**

Enthusiastic, open-minded, willing to learn and “stupendous” support for public education. That was the interview team’s assessment of Walz, who opposes vouchers. Her opponent opposes due process.

### **Legislative Dist. 17: Ardel Bengtson**

**Where: Dakota, Thurston and Wayne counties.**

As a former educator, and a participant in the teacher retirement plan, Bengtson understands well the needs of teachers and public schools. She is also quite active in her community.

### **Legislative Dist. 19: Sen. Jim Scheer**

**Where: Madison County and northeast Stanton County.**

A former member of the State Board of Education, Scheer now has four years in the Legislature behind him. He is a relationship builder and has been a solid supporter of public schools.

### **Legislative Dist. 21: Larry Scherer**

**Where: Northwest Lancaster County and the City of Lincoln, north of Oak Creek.**

Former legal counsel to the Legislature’s Education Committee, Scherer helped craft the state’s school aid formula. He is a proven friend of education, as his work as director of research for NSEA has proven over the past dozen years.

### **Legislative Dist. 23: Sen. Jerry Johnson**

**Where: Saunders, Butler counties, most of Colfax County**

Johnson has been a leader in the Legislature, where he serves as chair of the Agriculture Committee. He is unopposed.

### **Legislative Dist. 25: Jim Gordon, Les Spry**

**Where: Northeast Lancaster Co., and the City of Lincoln roughly east of 56th St. and north of Pine Lake Road.**

Gordon is a family law attorney and chairs the Board of Directors

for The Mediation Center, is past chair of the Child Advocacy Center and the Make-A-Wish of America board. Supports class size reduction and less mandated testing. Spry, is a practicing nephrologist and past president of the Nebraska Medical Association. He is a strong supporter of public education.

### **Legislative Dist. 27: Anna Wishart**

**Where: Southeast Lincoln, bounded by Oak Creek to the north, with a sliver stretching to Rokey Road.**

A former legislative staffer, Wishart has a great understanding and institutional knowledge of the Legislature. A product of Lincoln Public Schools, she is a known advocate for public schools.

### **Legislative Dist. 29: Sen. Kate Bolz**

**Where: South central Lincoln bounded by South St. to the north, 27th St. to the west, 56th St. to the East and Rokey Road to the south.**

Serves on the Legislature's Appropriations Committee, and several special committees, including the Children's Commission. Sixth generation Nebraskan who grew up on farm just outside Lincoln.

### **Legislative Dist. 31: Sen. Rick Kolowski**

**Where: Western Douglas County, largely within a one- to two-mile radius of Zorinsky Lake.**

Kolowski was the founding principal of Millard West High and is a proven supporter of public schools in the Unicameral. He is articulate about education and values the profession and craft of teaching.

### **Legislative Dist. 33: Sen. Les Seiler**

**Where: Adams County and the west half of Hall County.**

A former teacher, Seiler has been a reliable vote on the Legislature's Education Committee. He understands the value of public education and opposes vouchers and private charters.

### **Legislative Dist. 35: Dan Quick**

**Where: The city of Grand Island.**

Quick has been active in politics and is very much pro-Association. The interview committee called him "genuine, very honest, down-to-earth" and appealing to the working class.

### **Legislative Dist. 37: Bob Lammers**

**Where: The southeast section of Buffalo County,**

### **including Kearney, Gibbon and Shelton.**

Lammers is both connected to education — his wife is a retired teacher — and puts a priority on education. He was judged as the best of all candidates on education issues.

### **Legislative Dist. 39: Bill Armbrust**

**Where: The western third of Douglas County, bounded on the east by 180th St and Highway 31.**

Armbrust has deep ties to ag and is a strong advocate for public schools. He understands the importance of all roles in education: parents, teachers, administrators, students. Opposes vouchers.

### **Legislative Dist. 41: Tom Briese**

**Where: Pierce, Antelope, Boone, Wheeler, Garfield, Valley, Greeley, Sherman and Howard counties.**

The interview committee was impressed that Briese is working to educate himself on issues and took extensive notes during the interview. Viewed as an "independent thinker," Briese is unopposed.

### **Legislative Dist. 43: Sen. Al Davis**

**Where: Dawes, Sheridan, Cherry, Keya Paha, Brown, Loup, Blaine, Thomas, Logan, McPherson, Hooker, Grant counties.**

After his election in 2012, Davis quickly became a leader in the Legislature. He carried legislation that increased funding for loan forgiveness for teachers seeking to improve skills and knowledge, and has been a consistent vote for public schools.

### **Legislative Dist. 45: Sen. Sue Crawford**

**Where: The eastern third of Sarpy County.**

Davis was recommended four years ago, and has been a strong vote for children and public schools. A Creighton University professor, she is active in public policy issues with many community groups.

### **Legislative Dist. 47:**

**Wendell Gaston, Karl Elmshouser**

**Where: Sioux, Box Butte, Morrill, Banner, Kimball, Cheyenne, Garden, Deuel, Keith and Arthur counties.**

Both men are well-spoken and well-connected. The interview team felt both are very knowledgeable about education, and would work to find equitable outcomes to education needs in Nebraska.

## STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

### **District 1: Patricia Koch Johns and Bob Rauner**

**Where: Eastern half and southern third of Lancaster County, including the City of Lincoln.**

Koch Johns is a former Lincoln High teacher and Nebraska Teacher of the Year and is said to "always be right for kids." She is a passionate, experienced communicator. Rauner is data-driven, well-read and goal-driven, and wants education to work hand-in-hand with the health community.

### **District 2: Lisa Fricke**

**Where: Most of Sarpy County and a sliver of Douglas**

**County bounded by 180th St to the west, Blondo St. to the north and I-680 to the east.**

A retired teacher and longtime Association member, Fricke has been a tireless advocate for public education and is well-versed in the needs of public schools and the students who attend those schools.

### **District 3: Rachel Wise**

**Where: 15 counties in northeast Nebraska, north of the Platte River.**

Wise, a former educator, has served as the president of the state board of education since 2015. She has been a leader in setting education policy that assists teachers and students.

## SECOND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

### **Congress, Dist 2: Rep. Brad Ashford**

**Where: Douglas County, south into Sarpy County including Omaha, Ralston, Papillion, Gretna, Waterloo and Valley.**

Ashford has been a solid voter for public education and has often reached across the aisle to support legislation that is right and correct.

He supported bipartisan legislation that replaced the failed No Child Left Behind Act with the Every Student Achieves Act, and also supported a bill that would give school districts greater flexibility in meal preparation.

As proof of his bipartisanship, Congressional Quarterly Roll Call recently named him the sixth most bipartisan member of the House.



Mailed By: The Nebraska State Education Association  
605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742

# NSEA Recommended Candidates

## US CONGRESS

CD 2	Brad Ashford
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## NEBRASKA LEGISLATURE

Dist. 01	Sen. Dan Watermeier
Dist. 03	Carol Blood
Dist. 05	Mike McDonnell
Dist. 07	John Synowiecki
Dist. 09	Sen. Sara Howard
Dist. 13	Justin Wayne
Dist. 15	Lynne Walz
Dist. 17	Ardel Bengtson
Dist. 19	Sen. Jim Scheer
Dist. 21	Larry Scherer
Dist. 23	Sen. Jerry Johnson
Dist. 25	Jim Gordon & Les Spry
Dist. 27	Anna Wishart
Dist. 29	Sen. Kate Bolz
Dist. 31	Sen. Rick Kolowski
Dist. 33	Sen. Les Seiler
Dist. 35	Dan Quick
Dist. 37	Bob Lammers
Dist. 39	Bill Armbrust
Dist. 41	Tom Briese
Dist. 43	Sen. Al Davis
Dist. 45	Sen. Sue Crawford
Dist. 47	Wendall Gaston & Karl Elmshaeuser

## NEBRASKA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Dist. 1	Patsy Koch Johns & Bob Rauner
Dist. 2	Lisa Fricke
Dist. 3	Rachel Wise