

The VOICE

Nebraska State Education Association • April 2022



UNCENSORED TESTIMONY

Members testify in opposition to a classroom censorship bill



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It's Personal**

THE VOICE

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Free, at-home COVID tests available for educators

As COVID-19 infections have subsided so have mask requirements in our communities and in public schools. Testing for COVID-19 is more important with mask requirements now easing—especially for educators. Free, at-home tests are available at **COVIDTests.gov**. The website allows individuals to order four at-home tests per household to be delivered by the U.S. Postal Service.

In late February, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released relaxed masking guidelines that address masking in public settings, including schools. Guidance on universal masking is only recommended in areas with high risk of spread or in areas where healthcare systems are still stretched thin.

Households that already received a package of tests from the site are eligible to request four more tests.

Orders will usually ship in 7-12 days. NSEA members are also eligible for eight individual over-the-counter (OTC) COVID-19 tests per member per month through the

Educators Health Alliance (EHA).

For a complete list of eligible tests and preferred pharmacies visit:
<https://bit.ly/EHA-OTC-Tests>.

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Would You Like to Write for The Voice?

Would you like to write an item for *The Voice*? Perhaps an opinion column or an article on what is working in your classroom? Submissions can be classroom-related, humorous, inspiring or otherwise teaching related. Submit your questions about the process, and your topics to us at:

thevoice@nsea.org

On the Cover: NSEA members testified against LB1077; a classroom censorship bill that would have a significant chilling effect on teaching and would threaten academic freedom. Read their story on page 7.

Standing Our Ground or Finding Common Ground



NSEA
President
Jenni Benson

“I bet everyone can think of a child or a student who has challenged them: A student who has caused us to reexamine all we are doing; a student who has challenged us stand our ground.”

When my daughter was born, I knew from an early age she would be the one to challenge my ability to parent. She was fiercely stubborn and even as an infant would “set the schedule” to her time frame and needs.

I spent her childhood reading parenting books. “The Strong-Willed Child,” “Love and Logic,” “Parenting Isn’t for Cowards.”

During some particularly tough times, I’d ask myself, “Why did I name this child Joy?”

I bet everyone can think of a child or a student who has challenged them: A student who has caused us to reexamine all we are doing; a student who has challenged us to stand our ground.

Finding Common Ground

Lately, I have been thinking a lot about standing our ground when challenged. We live in a divisive time. We want to dig in and take sides. As my father would say, “It’s my way or the highway.”

There are times to stand our ground as educators, as your union, as parents, as friends. However, there is also a need to find common ground.

“Finding common ground is a great strategy for handling disagreement, but it’s not always easy to do, because you have to be more willing to find resolution than you are willing to be right; you have to be more willing to solve the problem than you are anxious to win the argument.”

- Colleen Patrick-Goudreau

For the Common Good

Do we want to find resolution? Or do we want to be right? Do we want to solve the problem? Or do we want to win the argument?

As Joy grew into an amazing young woman, I am pleased to say we found common ground. In fact, we now share common ground in our home. My husband has been in the hospital with complex medical needs for nearly 50 days during COVID. I needed help with his day-to-day care, so our families now live together in a multigenerational home so we can more easily



A beautiful Nebraska sunset that I captured while traveling. The beauty of the ground I cover tells a story, a history, and a current reality.

help each other. Common ground for common good.

I cover a significant amount of ground as your NSEA president. In fact, my car has nearly 93,000 miles on it from traveling throughout Nebraska. The beauty of the ground I cover tells a story, a history, and a current reality. I talk with everyone I meet, learning, growing, and building relationships. I’m looking for and finding common ground. We all need to take the time to step outside our comfort zone and look for what we can believe in together.

For the Future

This year I have written about perspective, inclusion, and now finding common ground. None of what we do should be in a silo. Our beliefs should be related to our overall beliefs as an Association. We believe all children should have an inclusive, equitable opportunity to be the absolute best they can be. We must find common ground to build their future around. Everyone is responsible for the children of Nebraska’s future.

NSEA Delegate Assembly

This month, your representatives will meet for our annual NSEA Delegate Assembly. As these elected delegates make decisions for NSEA members across the state, they will be looking for and finding common ground that will benefit children, public education and public education employees.

NSEA U: A chance for educators to connect

The nearly six-hour drive from Scottsbluff to Nebraska Innovation Campus was worth it for NSEA member Sarah Salinas. She attended NSEA University last July.

"I'm so excited to have the opportunity to attend," she said. "This is my first time coming to NSEA U. I'm here for the professional development sessions but I'm also excited to meet everybody from around Nebraska."

Sarah Salinas is a member of the Scottsbluff Education Association and a preschool teacher at Bear Cub Preschool. The year leading up to last summer's conference was challenging for Salinas and her preschool students.

"We thought outside the box this year. So, there are some great things that we're going to keep in our classroom," she said. "And then there are some things that we want to get back to the way we used to do it."

No one can understand the challenges of teaching during the pandemic like a fellow educator. In the trenches together, educators leaned on each other for support during their toughest times in the classroom. Salinas was one of more than 130 Nebraska educators to gather in Lincoln for the three-day event last year. More than just professional development, NSEA U is a chance to connect with educators statewide.

NSEA U 2022 is planned for July 12-14 at Nebraska Innovation Campus in Lincoln. It will feature guest speakers and breakout sessions to help educators grow professionally while relaxing and networking. Learn more at:

www.nsea.org/NSEAU.

SAVE THE DATE

JULY 12-14, 2022



Sarah Salinas stands inside the auditorium at Nebraska Innovation Campus during NSEA U 2021. Salinas is a member of the Scottsbluff Education Association and a 15-year member of NSEA.

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NATIONAL WALK AT LUNCH DAY



Walk for a chance to win \$1K for your school National Walk at Lunch Day held April 27

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska (BCBSNE) invites schools to register a team for National Walk at Lunch Day (NW@L Day), which will take place on Wednesday, April 27.

BCBSNE and YMCAs across the state host the event annually to inspire Nebraskans to stride toward better health and a stronger community. Participants are encouraged to lace up their sneakers and walk for 30 minutes on the day of the event.

By registering a team and taking the pledge to participate, schools will not only walk toward better health but make a difference in the community too. If 10,000 Nebraskans take the National Walk at Lunch Day pledge, BCBSNE will donate \$4,000 to Special Olympics Nebraska, a nonprofit providing year-round sports training and competitions for children and adults with disabilities.

As a bonus, BCBSNE will make a \$1,000 donation to one lucky participating school's physical education department.

"NW@L Day is a fun, engaging way to motivate our communities to focus on their well-being and prioritize their health," said BCBSNE Health Transformation Leader Kathy Nellor.

"By uniting schools and groups across the state, this event encourages us to come together as a community and get moving—all while supporting a great cause!"

Need another reason to join in on the fun? Walking provides many health benefits.

Boost mental health

Walking has been shown to improve symptoms associated with mood disorders, such as depression, anxiety and even self-esteem. A great way to clear your head and alleviate stress, walking will leave you energized and revitalized.

Ease joint pain

Walking strengthens the muscles surrounding your joints. By keeping your joints in good health, you can lower your risk of developing arthritis as you age.

Support heart health

Walking increases your heart rate, helps your arteries become more flexible and strengthens your heart muscle. This all contributes to lowering your risk of heart disease.


Those are just a few of the many benefits of taking a stroll. Just 30 minutes of walking a day places you one step closer to a longer, happier and healthier life!

NW@L Day is also a great opportunity to get your students moving. Teachers are welcome to have their classes walk with them on the day of the event.

If you are looking for more ways to prioritize your well-being, BCBSNE's Educators Health Alliance (EHA) Population Health care team is available to support you along your health journey. To learn more about the program, visit NebraskaBlue.com/EHAPOP.

Ready to register?

Create a team today at NebraskaBlue.com/Walk. Then, keep an eye on your inbox. BCBSNE will provide you with materials, including email templates, web and social media graphics, and printable fliers and posters, to promote the event to your school's staff and families.



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NSEA members who testified in opposition to LB1077: John Roan (left), Carol Mathias (center) and Jake Bogus (right).

In defense of learning

NSEA members fight against classroom censorship bill

A bill to regulate how public educators examine systemic inequality, racism and sexism in the classroom was met with swift condemnation. NSEA members who testified against the proposed legislation called it for what it is: censorship.

LB1077, introduced by Sen. Ben Hansen of Blair, would prohibit teaching anything that would produce “discomfort” or “any other form of psychological distress” among students based on their race or sex. The aim of the legislation is to discourage important instruction on race, racism, gender, and sexism.

This proposed legislation is a “very slippery slope,” according to John Roan, NSEA member and teacher at Blair Community High School.

A very slippery slope

“Where does it stop? Do we allow parents to sue individual teachers for teaching certain topics in schools, similar to a bill introduced in the Oklahoma state legislature?” Roan asked members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. “Do we allow parents to determine all content taught in schools and determine the curriculum, similar to a bill in the Indiana State

Legislature?”

Legislation introduced in other states points to a larger trend in which public educators find themselves caught at the center of so-called ‘culture wars.’ Roan testified that teachers in Nebraska and across the country have been vilified over the past two years.

“There is a false narrative playing out in the media, state and local legislatures and Congress that asserts educators are attempting to indoctrinate students,” Roan said. “Teachers have gone from being heroes to being what is wrong with society.”

Roan said the shift in public perception is palpable and has contributed to many teachers deciding to leave the profession. “We lose qualified and professional teachers every day,” he said.

In defense of learning

Carol Mathias has been a social studies teacher in Nebraska for 32 years. She is currently the president of the Nebraska State Council for the Social Studies and was among 40 testifiers in opposition to LB1077.

Mathias has taught economics, government and politics, U.S. history, world history and criminal justice.

“All these classes present opportunities for students to think critically and to articulate and defend their ideas,” she said. Those ideas, Mathias knows, come with controversies and classroom discussions that would be threatened under LB1077. Her students often take what they’ve learned in her classroom and continue their interest in government after high school.

“I’m proud of them even if I personally don’t agree with all of them,” she said. “I know they are using the tools they were taught to speak, write and think critically on tough issues.”

As an educator, Mathias seeks to help all her students understand and confront the challenges that they may face.

“Trust me, kids can take it. They are more savvy than LB1077 gives them credit for. Even when they learn new things that might not be ‘comfortable,’” she said.

Empathy takes time

Jake Bogus, a history teacher for Lincoln Public Schools, told lawmakers that to ban teaching tough topics in public schools “robs young people of a reality they deserve.”

Bogus believes learning is supposed to be “uncomfortable” at least for a little while.

“Education is about learning the reality of the world we live in. It’s about accepting others and trying to do a better job of understanding others,” he said. “It’s uncomfortable at first because we don’t understand. It takes time and effort to learn these things.”

Acknowledging Realities

Edward Ventura, chair of NSEA’s Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee, also testified against the bill.

“The children who are making our school systems more diverse, as well as their white counterparts, are owed an education that explains the world



Edward Ventura, NSEA EMAC Chair

around them as it actually exists,” Ventura said.

Ventura said his own experiences as a minority have influenced the way he builds relationships with his students today.

“My K-12 schooling was filled with white teachers who, at their core, were good people but their lack of knowledge, care, and love of my culture made me feel that my culture was viewed as an afterthought,” Ventura explained.

Ventura is a librarian with Omaha Public Schools. He says an essential part of building relationships with his students is acknowledging their realities inside and outside of

classrooms.

“Conversations related to racism or other kinds of oppression aren’t led by educators ‘just because.’ Educators are responding to the realities that the students in their classrooms are facing,” said Ventura.

Funding concerns

Under LB1077, the state could withhold funding if schools or colleges violate the law. Section 4, subsection 5 reads:

“If the State Department of Education finds that a public school has knowingly violated this section, the department may notify the State Treasurer, who shall withhold state funds from the institution in an amount determined by the department. Such funds shall be withheld until the department is satisfied that the institution is no longer in violation of this section.”

Roan said his fear is that this vague language could be used to harm public schools financially.

“Complaints could very likely be made by parties that do not have the best interests of students and teachers in mind and instead want to push a political or personal agenda,” Roan said.

In defense of educators

Mathias said her skill in teaching students how to engage with government was learned over many years of training.

“My teaching has evolved and so have my classrooms,” Mathias said. “We all learn together.”

When bills such as LB1077 are introduced in state legislatures it calls into question the professional nature of educators.

“Teachers dedicate their lives to their craft and are dedicated to the success of the students in their class, school and district,” Roan said. “Contrary to popular belief, educators have gone to school in some cases as long as or longer than doctors and lawyers. We are professionals and should be treated as such.”



NSEA member John Roan with former student Bobby Busk. Busk is working as a page for the Nebraska Legislature.

“Mr. Roan?”

Posing for a photo in the Nebraska State Capitol before testifying, John Roan heard a familiar voice echo down the corridor behind him.

“Mr. Roan? What are you doing here?”

Bobby Busk graduated from Blair High School in 2020. He now works as a legislative page while he attends the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He said it was a surprise to see his high school AP teacher, Mr. Roan, while working during the legislative session. After a brief side hug and a quick chat, the pair took a photo together and went their separate ways.

Roan describes Busk as an outstanding student.

“Bobby completed AP U.S. History with me. He also took AP U.S. Government his senior year,” Roan said. “He was a great student to have in class.”

Busk said the writing skills he refined while in his AP classes with Mr. Roan have helped him immensely in his political science courses at UNL.

There are efforts in 36 states to restrict education on racism, bias, the contributions of specific racial or ethnic groups to U.S. history, or related topics. Meanwhile, there are efforts in 17 states to expand education on racism, bias, the contributions of specific racial or ethnic groups to U.S. history, or related topics. – Chalkbeat.org



UNKEA President Dr. Will Avilés testified in opposition to a censorship bill that would have serious consequences for public universities.

High stakes for higher education

Classroom censorship bill would be a “disservice to our students”

Dr. Will Avilés sat in a half circle of desks surrounded by his students. On this day, in his classroom on the University of Nebraska-Kearney campus, two students were assigned to lead the discussion on the politics of globalization. During the 90 minute class, Avilés’ students engaged in respectful debate and challenged each other’s ideas on the topic. This discourse, Avilés believes, is what could be at risk in higher education if legislation like LB1077 were to pass in Nebraska.

Similar laws passed in other states have generated headlines nationally for their effect on K-12 public education. Avilés believes legislation like LB1077 would have serious consequences for public colleges and universities.

Member Voices

Avilés is a professor and chair of UNK’s Political Science Department. He is also president of the UNK Education Association.

“I appreciate the fact that the union provides a voice for our members in between contract negotiations” he said. “I mean that in terms of intervening in conflicts and trying to mitigate problems members might be facing in their respective departments.”

That voice extends well beyond

just the UNK campus. It also means keeping a watchful eye on legislation that could affect higher education all across Nebraska. Avilés said LB1077 raised red flags for UNKEA members.

“It’s an important issue for our members because we view the bill as being one that would threaten academic

freedom in the classroom,” he said.

“For us it is very much a work issue when it comes to how we interact with our students, the readings that we assign and how we present a particular topic that might be controversial.”

For the vast majority of UNKEA members—especially for those members who teach sociology, history, political science and other social sciences—having a productive, substantive discussion without the possibility of evoking some level of discomfort isn’t realistic and it’s not an environment primed for learning.

Avilés made the two-hour drive to Lincoln in late February to make UNKEA’s position on the bill known to lawmakers. In his testimony, Avilés said the bill would have a chilling effect on higher education.

“In our union meetings to discuss the bill, our members said that LB1077 would absolutely lead to self-censorship. Just to avoid the possibility you might run afoul of this legislation,” he said.

UNKEA members also marked the budgetary consequences outlined in the bill as one of their top concerns.

“Why would an educator take a chance that they would be associated with an action that led to budget reductions for the university? It might



UNKEA President William Avilés pictured with several University of Nebraska at Kearney students outside of the Nebraska Capitol after testifying in opposition to LB1077.

not affect the particular educator directly, but could affect a colleague or other staff members because they were teaching a class that someone concluded was too controversial,” Avilés explained.

Respect Students

Consequences over budgeting aside, UNKEA members questioned the motives behind the legislation. Avilés said it’s unclear what problem the bill is trying to resolve.

“Nowhere have I seen the supporters of the bill or the cosponsors of the bill pointing to a real problem here in Nebraska of scores of students or employees feeling uncomfortable,” he said. “They really don’t have an understanding of what happens in a classroom, and they don’t have an understanding how our students take information and grapple with it.”

Avilés said not only would LB1077 be a disservice to students, it also shows a high-level of disrespect.

“These are adult men and women who are more than capable of hearing, listening to a controversial argument, taking it and maybe being uncomfortable with it,” he said. “Anyone who believes that a faculty member at the University of Nebraska has this power to be able to indoctrinate, to be able to convince a student exactly how to think about any one issue isn’t giving our students the respect they deserve.”

Honing Skills

The students in Avilés’ classes aspire to go on to law school, to work



Dr. Avilés takes questions from students in his Politics of Globalization class at UNK.

in private or governmental sectors, to lead nonprofit organizations or community groups and, for some of them, to work in higher education. Denying them the opportunity to learn would be a disservice to Nebraska’s future workforce.

“Ostensibly, for our Unicameral, this is a priority, right? How can we best prepare the workforce and Nebraskans to contribute to that workforce? It is not as if once students leave the campus they’re going to avoid controversial, uncomfortable exchanges with coworkers or with supervisors. Why not have them go through that process? Why not have that engagement in a classroom, so they can hone their own skills to navigate and maneuver within those types of spaces?” Avilés explained.

Keeping a watchful eye

Watching media coverage of this legislation has given Avilés hope that the bill will not make much progress this year. “But I think it’s also important for us to remain vigilant,” Avilés said.

As president of his local association, Avilés is proud of the work UNKEA has done advocating for its members.

“As individuals, we cannot improve the welfare of UNK faculty in the same way that we can collectively, as a group,” Avilés said. “From my vantage point, when I think about the union, the major objective is to try to improve morale, make sure members are enjoying their work and looking at UNK as a place where they can be productive, supported and respected.”

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Rubbing Elbows and Talking Education

NSEA members met with 23 state senators and two state board of education members at the 2022 NSEA Legislative Dinner in Lincoln. The event gives educators a chance to voice their concerns with their elected leaders on many issues affecting public education in Nebraska. Below are scenes from that evening.



From left to right: Senator John Cavanaugh (District 9) with legislative staff Mike Lee and Senator Terrell McKinney (District 11).



Senator Adam Morfeld (District 46) and Senator Steve Lathrop (District 12)



NSEA-Retired members from left to right: Liz Rea, Doreen Jankovich and Susan Kalina.



EMAC Vice Chair Nora Lenz, Capitol District Executive Committee member Gina Boltz and NSEA Board member Megan Simcs.



NSEA member Dr. Toni Hill (University of Nebraska at Kearney) with Senator Machaela Cavanaugh (District 6).



Members of the NSEA Executive Team attending the legislative dinner. From left to right: NSEA Executive Director Trish Guinan, President Jenni Benson, Vice President Robert Miller and NEA Director Linda Freye.

Stipends for school employees

Use COVID relief funds

The state has more than \$1 billion in federal COVID relief funds – and state lawmakers are deciding how best to use those dollars. NSEA supports provisions that would provide one-time retention payments, PPE reimbursement, and loan forgiveness for teachers.

Recent surveys show that educators, who have persevered through the hardest school years in memory, are beyond tired — they are exhausted, increasingly burned out, and more than half of them are indicating that they are ready to leave the profession they love. In the most recent survey of NEA members, 55% said they are planning to retire or resign earlier than planned. This is true for educators regardless of age or years of teaching.

To help address both the recruitment and retention of our Nebraska teaching corps, NSEA is supporting LB1218 with Education Committee amendment AM2213. The legislation would establish a new student loan repayment assistance program that would provide up to \$5,000 per year for five years for eligible applicants and would make changes to college education program entrance requirements.

Retention and recruiting incentives needed

A separate amendment filed by Sen. Linehan would add a \$5,000 teacher aid stipend paid annually over a five- to eight-year period, capped at \$25,000, for qualifying teachers in their first year

of teaching.

NSEA is concerned Linehan's amendment would unfairly compensate one group of teachers while disregarding Nebraska's experienced teachers. Stipends should be provided to all Nebraska educators – not just new teachers but current teachers as well.

Throughout the pandemic, Nebraska teachers have shown their strong commitment to helping their students

Retention payments would send a clear message of support to our Nebraska school employees.

thrive. They have remained flexible amidst the chaos of the pandemic – they have continued the hard work of teaching these past two years, adapting and innovating the ways they teach and interact with students to ensure all students can learn and succeed.

Retention payments would help ensure hard-working school employees are recognized for their above-and-beyond efforts and send a clear message that the state wants them to stay in education for the benefit of the students they serve. Except for administrators, the retention payment proposals would compensate school employees – from the teacher who found new ways to reach a classroom of students, to the bus driver who kept those students safe on the way to school.

The states of Iowa and Georgia have both provided \$1,000 retention pay-

ments to their teachers from stimulus federal funds.

Stem the educator exodus

Nebraska – and the nation – are on the verge of an educator exodus. Policymakers need to recognize the dedication of our current teachers as well as encourage and support prospective educators. Providing incentives to recruit teachers without incentives to retain our current educators is insufficient to address the teacher shortage crisis.

The NSEA is working with legislators to provide additional student loan forgiveness contained in the Education Committee amendment and one-time teacher retention payments.

Contact your senator to support these bills at: www.nsea.org/action

LB696 (Blood) Appropriate federal funds to NDE for school employee \$2,000 retention payments. Provides retention payments to public elementary and secondary school employees excluding school administrators.

LB1217 (Walz) Provide \$1,000 incentive payments to eligible school employees at accredited public or private elementary and secondary schools.

LB1182 (Pansing Brooks) Each school employee would receive up to \$200, to cover pandemic personal protective equipment expenditures.

LB1218 w/AM2213 (Education Committee) Provide alternatives to PRAXIS exam; provides up to \$25,000 in student loan assistance to educators.

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www.nsea.org/EarlyVoter

A photograph of an older woman with grey hair in a braid, wearing a bright yellow jacket over a dark blue top. She is smiling and looking to her right, holding a small object in her hands. In the background, there is a whiteboard with handwritten notes and the back of a person's head with blonde hair.

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NSEA Delegate Assembly 2022 Tentative Order of Business

NSEA President Jenni Benson, Lincoln, Presiding

Pre-Assembly Activities

All times listed are Central Time.

Monday, April 18: Resolutions Hearing, 7 p.m. via Zoom

Thursday, April 21: Budget Hearing, 7 p.m. via Zoom

Friday, April 22, 2022

4 p.m. - 6:45 p.m. — Registration (Cornhusker Marriott Hotel Atrium)

5 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. — ESP, EMAC, New Delegates, Retired, Higher Education, NewGEN

6:15 p.m. — Audit Committee

7 p.m. — Call to Order

Pledge of Allegiance

National Anthem

Land Acknowledgment

Welcome and Announcements

Keynote by Noel Candelaria, NEA Secretary/Treasurer

Association Update — Jenni Benson, NSEA President and Trish Guinan, NSEA Executive Director

Strategic Plan Refresh Task Force Report – Chair, Robert Miller, NSEA Vice President

Committee Reports to the Assembly

Adjournment

9:30 p.m. — Marriott Cornhusker Hotel Reception, Hotel Atrium

Saturday, April 23, 2022

6:30 a.m. - 8:15 a.m. — Breakfast (Cornhusker Marriott Lower Level) & Caucus Meetings

7:00 a.m. - 8:15 a.m. — Registration (Cornhusker Marriott Hotel Atrium)

7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. — Elections Committee

8:30 a.m. — Call to Order (Grand Ballroom, Cornhusker Marriott Hotel)

Report of Credentials Committee

Adoption of Standing/Procedural Rules

Adoption of Order of Business

Keynote: Lee Perez, 2022 Nebraska Teacher of the Year

Nominations: NEA Director

Candidate Remarks

Report and Debate on Proposed Bylaws Amendments

Voting on Candidates and Bylaws

Report of the Auditing Review Committee

Remarks by Special Guests

Horace Mann Awards Luncheon

Budget Presentation for 2022-2023

Elections Committee Report (when available)

Report and Actions on Resolutions

Action on New Business Items

Action on the Strategic Plan Refresh

Action on the Dues Proposal for 2022-23

Adjournment

Parliamentarian: John Heineman

2022-23 NSEA Dues Recommendation

NSEA Active, Certificated Full-Time Staff Dues Summary

The NSEA Budget Committee has recommended a \$5 dues increase for 2022-23. NSEA dues and assessments for the current year and the proposal for next year are summarized below:

	2021-22	2022-23	Change	%
General Fund Dues	\$396	\$401	\$5	1.26%
Ballot Contingency Fund	\$10	\$10	\$0	0%
State PAC	\$15	\$15	\$0	0%
TOTAL	\$421	\$426	\$5	1.19%

Dues for Educational Support Professionals

The 2001 Delegate Assembly approved a separate dues structure for Educational Support Professionals (ESP). The action created four levels of dues for ESP members, and the NSEA Board of Directors modified the ESP dues structure to a six-tiered structure. The ESP dues structure is motivated by an effort to establish equity between the wide range of ESP salaries, while taking into consideration the fact that beginning teachers or teachers in lower-paid school districts pay full NSEA dues. In this model, the ESP member's total base salary, regardless of the hours or number of days worked, establishes the state dues for that member. The percentages are based on the lowest starting teacher salary in the state, which was \$35,000 in 2022-23. The 2022-23 proposed dues are summarized below:

ESP Dues Tier	NSEA Dues	Percent of teacher dues
Active ESP (Salary of \$34,500+)	\$426.00	100%
Active ESP (\$27,600 to \$34,499)	\$383.40	90%
Active ESP (\$20,700 to \$27,599)	\$298.20	70%
Active ESP (\$13,800 to \$20,699)	\$213.00	50%
Active ESP (\$6,900 to \$13,799)	\$127.80	30%
Active ESP (\$6,899 or less)	\$42.60	10%

Dues for Certificated Staff

The NSEA Board of Directors has recommended the following annual fee structure for Association membership by certificated staff. Delegates to the NSEA Delegate Assembly on April 23 will consider and act on this proposal. For the 2022-23 Association year, the NSEA Board of Directors recommends the dues for certificated classes of NSEA membership as outlined below:

Certificated Class	Dues
Active	\$426.00
Half-Time Active	\$213.00
Active Substitute	\$213.00
Non-Active Sub	\$106.50

State Dues

All amounts listed are for state dues only. NEA dues for 2022-23 have been proposed at no more than \$204, a \$2 increase.

As noted, the 2022-23 dues amount for full-time, active members of NSEA includes a voluntary contribution of \$15 to NSEA's Political Action Fund and \$7.50 for half-time active members and active substitute members. This contribution is refundable upon receipt of a written, individually composed request. A reminder of the opportunity to seek a refund is published in the January issue of the NSEA Voice.

NSEA Dues History		
Budget Year	NSEA Dues	Percent Increase
2022-23	\$426	1.19
2021-22	\$421	1.20
2020-21	\$416	0.72
2019-20	\$413	1.45
2018-19	\$407	0.002
2017-18	\$406	1.75
2016-17	\$399	3.10
2015-16	\$387	0.78
2014-15	\$384	1.05
2013-14	\$380	1.06
2012-13	\$376	1.08
2011-12	\$372	4.20
2010-11	\$357	2.00



Celebrate Education with New License Plate

NSEA is in the process of creating a specialty Nebraska license plate to celebrate our public schools! The plate design will be submitted to the Nebraska Department of Motor Vehicles for review and approval. Watch for the design at Delegate Assembly. Each plate will cost \$70 and 250 pre-orders will be required before production begins. Additional information will be posted at nsea.org.

2022-23 Proposed Bylaw Revisions

Current Bylaw

SECTION 2. The term of office of the President and the Vice President shall be three years. The term of office of each such officer shall commence on September 1. No person shall be elected to the office of the President or Vice President for more than two consecutive terms.

Proposed Bylaw Amendment 1

■ Article II: Officers

SECTION 2. The term of office of the President and the Vice President shall be three years. The term of office of each such officer shall commence on September 1. The election for the President and Vice President shall not occur in the same year. The Vice President shall be elected at the 2023 Delegate Assembly. The President shall be elected at the 2024 Delegate Assembly. No person shall be elected to the office of the President or Vice President for more than two consecutive terms.

Remaining sections stay the same.

Rationale: Restructuring the expiration of officers' terms will ensure the loss of leadership experience will be spread across multiple years; thus, preserving stability for the governance of NSEA.

Proposed Bylaw Amendment 2

■ Article II: Officers

SECTION 2. The term of office of the President and the Vice President shall be three years. The term of office of each such officer shall commence on September 1. No person shall be elected to the office of the President or Vice President for more than three ~~two~~ consecutive terms.

Remaining sections stay the same.

Rationale: Restructuring the expiration of officers' terms will ensure the Delegate Assembly of the NSEA has the opportunity to better affect the balance and the capacity of the officers of the NSEA Governance with the capacity of the NSEA Management; thus, strengthening the voice of membership regarding the overall operations of the NSEA.

Keynote Speakers: NEA Secretary & Nebraska 2022 Teacher of the Year

National leadership will join Nebraska educators for the NSEA Delegate Assembly April 22-23.

Noel Candelaria, NEA secretary/treasurer, will give the keynote address during Friday evening's session.

Candelaria is the immediate past president of the Texas State Teachers Association. Prior to his election as TSTA president, Candelaria served three years as TSTA vice president after a distinguished tenure as president of the Ysleta Teachers Association in El Paso, Texas, where he worked as a teacher's aide and special education teacher in the Ysleta Independent School District, teaching subjects ranging from Algebra to World History.

Throughout his career, Candelaria has emphasized the importance of relationships built on trust – in the classroom, the community and the political arena. He believes our public schools should provide every student



Candelaria

Perez

the best opportunity to fulfill their individual potential.

At the national level, he has worked with the National Teachers Hall of Fame and while acting as the chair of the Memorial to Fallen Educators, legislation was passed to designate the monument as a National Memorial site.

Candelaria has been appointed to be a part of multiple national committees and task forces including the NEA Human and Civil Rights Committee and the NEA Member Benefits Corporation

Board.

Nebraska's 2022 Teacher of the Year, Lee Perez, will address delegates on Saturday. Perez, who is originally from North Platte, is an English as a second language teacher at Omaha's Buffett Magnet Middle School.

Perez said his father's family immigrated to the U.S. from Mexico and were migrant field workers who eventually settled in Nebraska. His family's own immigration story allows Perez to empathize with his students, many of whom have come from trauma, war, famine or political destabilization.

Perez has said he wasn't the best student growing up and that he "barely graduated high school." Even so, teachers were like a second family to Perez. They fed him and they talked to him when he got into trouble. So when it came time to pick a career, he chose teaching to help students the way his teachers helped him.

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Subject	Catalog #	Course Title	Start Date	Stop Date	Session
EDAD	629	Fundamentals of School Administration	June 6	July 29	Eight Wk 2
EDAD	632	Supervision of Instruction	June 6	July 29	Eight Wk 2
EDAD	633	School Administration and Leadership	June 6	July 29	Eight Wk 2
EDAD	634	School Business Management and Finance	May 9	July 1	Eight Wk 1
EDAD	638	Personnel Administration	May 9	July 1	Eight Wk 1
EDCI	631	Research Design and Data Analysis	May 9	July 1	Eight Wk 1
EDCI	631	Research Design and Data Analysis	June 6	July 29	Eight Wk 2
EDCI	633	Educational Philosophy	May 9	June 3	Four Wk 1
EDCI	635	Curriculum Development	June 6	July 29	Eight Wk 2
EDCI	638	School Law	May 9	July 1	Eight Wk 1
EDCI	639	Systemic Change: Process for School Improvement	June 6	July 29	Eight Wk 2
EDUC	534	Technology in Instructional Strategies	July 5	July 29	Four Wk 3
READ	532	Reading in the Content Fields	May 9	July 29	Sixteen Wk
READ	635	Diagnosis and Correction	June 6	July 29	Eight Wk 2
READ	638	Seminar in Reading: Issues, Trends and Programs	June 6	July 29	Eight Wk 2
SPED	532	Survey of Special Education	June 6	July 1	Four Wk 2
SPED	555	Characteristics of Learning Disabilities	June 6	July 29	Eight Wk 2
SPED	630	Characteristics of Behavioral and Emotional Disabilities	May 9	July 1	Eight Wk 1

Summer course listing is accurate as of March 7, 2022.

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Preparing for Spring Storms

Spring storms have the potential to wreak havoc on your home and property, but with the right preparation, you can be sure that your home and family are ready. Follow these preparation tips to be sure you are spring storm-ready:

- **Be Weather Aware:** You can sign up for a number of free weather alert services provided by national or local agencies, weather channels, and power companies. Usually, alerts come to your phone via text message or app, but many have multiple delivery methods. And remember, radio is the old standby, especially in a power outage (so set your emergency radio to the correct station ahead of time).
- **Trim the Trees:** Trim low-hanging limbs, as well as any branches hanging near your home or power lines that could snap off in high winds and cause damage.
- **Free Your Gutters:** Remove leaves and other debris from gutters, drains, and downspouts (best done each spring and fall). This ensures that rainwater is quickly diverted away from your home and foundation rather than potentially flooding it. Take the opportunity to check gutters for leaks, damage, and sagging; also make sure they're securely attached.
- **Check the Sump Pump:** If you haven't had to deal with a flooded basement, thanks are due to your hardworking sump pump. To keep it in good working order, test it a few times a year, including before spring storms. Clear any debris and make sure it's working and draining properly. Consider adding a battery-powered back-up pump, or a standby generator, in case of power outages.
- **Get Ahead of Leaks:** Leaks are sneaky and can cause damage quickly. If you've had any leaks in the past, now's the time to seal them up—before the big rains start. Also do a preventive check on the sealing around your doors and windows (inside and outside), as well as in the garage and basement. Fix any gaps or cracks.

- **Secure Items:** As soon as storms are forecast, bring items like patio furniture into the garage (or secure them in place outside). Anything that can become a projectile should be moved inside. Close and secure shutters around your home. Drawing interior blinds and shades provides yet another layer of protection against flying debris and broken glass.
- **Storm Safety Plan:** Create a safety plan with your family, and make sure everyone understands it and is on board. It should cover things like shelter-in-place locations in the home, evacuation routes, communication protocols if you're separated, and a plan for your pets.
- **Emergency Kit:** Regularly check your kit and add, replace or discard items as needed. Prepare the following for storms: first aid supplies, flashlights with new batteries, two gallons of water per person, a hand-crank or battery-powered radio, a three-day supply of non-perishable food for your family and pets, and a two-month supply of any necessary medications.
- **Be Ready for a Power Outage:** Charge all phones and electronic devices ahead of time. Make sure your generator is operational and ready to go. Fill your car's gas tank (and some cans for your generator). Finally, remember to use surge protectors when the power is being restored.

As the saying goes, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." When it comes to safeguarding your home, implementing the steps above can go a long way toward preventing costly damage, headache, and hassle. And there's no time like the present to start!

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Motivated in Millard

Growing membership: Christy Hodge, an office paraprofessional for Millard Public Schools, turned to MEA for advice during negotiations. Now, she's leading a push for ESPs to join MEA.



Growing ESP membership at MEA

In August 2020, office paraprofessional Christy Hodge was tapped to serve as the vice president of the Educational Paraprofessional Association of Millard (EPAM).

"I said 'sure, I'll do it because it's not the president. I can just help out,'" Hodge laughed. "Two months later our president left."

Higher ESP Wages

Hodge, now president, found herself leading the EPAM negotiations team over the summer of 2021. Even as a first-time negotiator, she had some goals in mind. Hodge said she wanted to increase wages for paraprofessionals to \$15 an hour.

"I just saw all these food and retail jobs in our area raise wages to \$15 an hour," she said. "The district was floored when we presented our hourly wage increase. At the time, it would have meant a 28% increase."

As Hodge explains it, negotiations did not go well. They met with the district 11 times over the summer.

"You know, we're a group of paraprofessionals with no training in negotiations. We were up against a lot."

Hodge turned to Millard Education Association President Tim Royers for support and advice.

"I would generally call him before meetings for negotiations and again

afterward," said Hodge.

Royers explained the help began as an act of solidarity between the two associations and then expanded into a membership push to encourage ESPs to join the MEA.

"They aren't affiliated with a larger union," Royers said. "They have no resources to speak of whatsoever.

port from MEA's membership.

"We surveyed our membership about what our advocacy priorities should be and the number two priority for our certificated members was working to support the district's paraeducators," Royers said. "Everybody was excited that we were making this push to get paras into MEA because everybody recognizes the critical role they have in our public schools."

Grant Assistance

Working with NSEA, Royers applied for an NEA grant to help reduce membership dues for ESPs. The grant allows new ESP members to join at a reduced rate then gradually increase to full dues over three years.

"We've managed to recruit about 50 new ESP members to MEA, which is roughly half of what EPAM had," Royers said.

Members who have joined MEA are now realizing the added benefits of NSEA membership, including liability insurance and access to a local organizational specialist.

"I fully believe that we're in the best hands we can be in," Hodge said.

Royers and Hodge believe that increasing ESP membership in the MEA will benefit paraeducators, as well as certificated teachers and MPS students.



They don't have the kind of bargaining support that we get from NSEA."

Hodge and her negotiations team eventually settled for a pay increase of 5.62%. It was the largest increase paraprofessionals have ever received but still much lower than what they believed paras deserved. Hodge wanted MEA's help with negotiations but needed to take the idea to EPAM members.

"I stood in front of our members and said, 'I can't negotiate again. It was horrible. It took up an entire summer and we got very little for it,'" she said.

Royers said there was a lot of sup-

What does unrivaled support and development look like?



Dr. Kim Snyder,
Director,
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“Teachers are complex thinking, feeling, and behaving human beings performing in one of the most complex and stressful situations – the classroom. The assumption that simply telling teachers what to do differently will bring about lasting and transferable change, without aligning those new behaviors with the teacher’s thoughts, feelings, values, and belief systems, is seriously flawed.” — Art Costa and Robert Garmston in a letter to Educational Leadership

What does a system of unrivaled support, development, and teacher efficacy look like? Two award-winning teachers in Nebraska offered to share their thoughts on what it means, and what might be necessary to create unrivaled support and development in Nebraska’s schools.

Laurie Smith, Nebraska Rural and Community Schools Outstanding Elementary Teacher of the Year (2020-2021), and the current National Rural Education Association Rural Teacher of the Year, has spoken widely about “bricks students have in their backpacks”—the unseen trauma students might bring to school everyday. Laurie’s priority as a teacher is to build relationships that allow her students to remove the bricks and “just be a learner and a kid.”

Help Carrying Bricks

When asked how that same system of support could help educators who might have some of the same “bricks,” she stated, “Unprecedented support in a school is one that sees their teachers as people, not just a teacher on the payroll,” Smith said. “When we as a school are more of a community that supports the whole teacher... it makes it so much easier to do what we love when we have a school helping us carry those bricks.”

Smith relates to the fact that many educators say they are fine, when in truth they might be struggling. She herself has grown to recognize that having support and prioritizing self care is necessary to succeed. She explained unrivaled support means allowing time for teachers to collaborate so that all teachers know they “aren’t in a boat rowing alone” and everyone is headed in the right direction with “colleagues

taking turns rowing.”

Paul Timm, a science teacher at Lyons-Decatur Northeast Secondary School and the Nebraska 2021 Teacher of the Year, was asked what it would take to foster a culture of unrivaled support and development for educators, similar to that which he fosters for his own students.

Timm said that in his 18 years of teaching experience, he has seen few systems that contain “both the flexibility for adapting to an ever changing educational landscape, while at the same time allowing for vision framing to take place where teachers are empowered to sit down with administrators and encouraged to establish short-term, intermediate and long-term developmental growth goals for themselves and their departments.”

“For such a system to be effective across any department or school district, teachers must have a sense of identity and ownership in plans created,” Timm said. He described the ideal environment as one in which leaders and teachers respect each other, and assume “the best in each other’s actions and motives.”

Timm expressed excitement about the S.E.E.D. Educator Effectiveness System because he can see it assisting educators to “be professionals and grow in their craft.” Timm cautions, however, right now, “it seems what the general teacher needs is affirmation from the public that it believes in them and has their backs in the tasks they’re trying to do to help educate children.”



Laurie Smith



Paul Timm



Dr. Julie Downing,
NDE Educator
Effectiveness
Specialist



Ryan Ricenbaw,
NDE Leadership
and Learning
Network Specialist

Resources:

Visit the Educator Effectiveness site at www.education.ne.gov/educatoreffectiveness. The standards are available at bit.ly/330g138.

Reduction in Force Notice? Call NSEA

Notification Deadline is April 15



It happens every year: Some Nebraska teachers receive Reduction in Force (RIF) notices informing them that their teaching contract may not be renewed for the coming year. The statutory deadline for school districts to hand out RIF notices is April 15.

However, thanks to legislation proposed by NSEA years ago, there is a statutory procedure that allows a teacher to ensure that the Reduction in Force process is followed correctly and fairly. In some instances, the process can result in saving the teacher's job or in creating other options for the teacher.

The best way to deal with a RIF notice is to be prepared. The moment you receive a RIF notice, a countdown begins.

To preserve your rights when facing a RIF you must always request a hearing. The hearing must be requested within seven days of receiving the RIF notice (five days for community college faculty). While your situation may never reach an actual hearing, immediately calling NSEA will give you and NSEA's Advocacy department time to determine what steps are in your best interest.

Important Steps to Follow

- 1 If you receive a RIF notice, call your NSEA Organizational Specialist immediately (1-800-742-0047).
- 2 Email a copy of the notice to your NSEA Organizational Specialist. (Find your Organizational Specialist at www.nsea.org/field-staff-units)

Once a copy of the RIF notice is received at NSEA headquarters, members will be encouraged to request a hearing to preserve their rights.

"The only way to preserve the rights of the teacher affected is to request a hearing. Doing so gives us time to sort out the issues and help the member make the best possible decision on how to proceed," said NSEA Director of Advocacy Isau Metes.

"Teachers receiving settlement or buyout offers in lieu of a hearing should contact the NSEA before agreeing to anything," she added.

If you have questions, contact your NSEA Organizational Specialist or Metes by calling 1-800-742-0047.

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Trish Guinan

“
Member voices give us the best path forward to create an insurance plan that is tailored to the needs of you and your family.
”

I was standing beside my friend, supervising on lunch duty, when she first told me she had multiple sclerosis (MS). We were both teaching at Fremont Public Schools at the time. I remember being shocked. Having a family history of MS, I know that the disease affects everyone differently. I was reminded that you can't always tell the health battles people are facing by their outward appearance.

When I was a teacher for Fremont, the district negotiated with insurance carriers for our health care. With such a small pool of people, around 300 teachers at the time, insurance companies would often spike our premiums after only a few years on any individual plan. This triggered a costly and time-intensive search for a new insurer.

For my friend, these changes brought an onslaught of stress over whether her doctor would be in-network on a new plan. Consistency in care is critically important for MS treatment and having a trusted team of health care professionals is essential to identifying any advancement in symptoms.

Because I spent time as the Fremont Education Association president and as a negotiator representing our members at the table, I've had a front-row seat to just how personal health care is to my colleagues and their families. It was a huge benefit for members when Fremont Public Schools eventually joined the Educators Health Alliance in 2004.

Educators Health Alliance

The Educators Health Alliance is a non-profit corporation representing the Nebraska Association of School Boards (NASB), the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA) and the Nebraska State Education Association (NSEA). Together, we procure quality, affordable health care insurance for Nebraska education employees and their families. There is strength in unity and working collaboratively with school board members and administrators. Working together as the EHA, we have been able to be responsive to the

requests of educators. A great example of this is our work advocating for lower out-of-pocket cost for our members who are insulin dependent. In September, the EHA plan implemented a zero-cost share for insulin prescriptions on EHA's preferred insulin list. Now, the vast majority of insulin prescriptions are at zero cost for our members. It was a huge win for our members, and it was spear-headed by NSEA President Jenni Benson and our members who had reached

out to EHA and requested this benefit. Member voices give us the best path forward to create an insurance plan that is tailored to the needs of you and your family.

Power in Numbers

As a member of the Educators Health Alliance, you are part of the largest insurance pool in the State of Nebraska. This statewide pool provides long-term stability and significant bargaining power to negotiate with our health insurance provider. EHA now provides health insurance coverage to more than 97,000 participants

– Nebraska education employees and their families. In fact all but four school districts in Nebraska participate in EHA.

The EHA plan evolved from a statewide health care plan the NSEA founded in the 1960s. NSEA remains an influential majority on EHA's board. Six of the 12 voting members on the EHA board are NSEA representatives, including myself. It takes at least seven votes for any motion dealing with health insurance policy changes to pass. There are three members each from the NCSA and NASB. NSEA Associate Executive Director and Comptroller Sheri Jablonski chairs the EHA board.

Health Care is Personal

Having seen the stress that accompanied bargaining for a health care plan at the local school district level, I find having the Educators Health Alliance extremely reassuring. Health care is personal. As a member of the EHA board, I will continue to listen to and advocate for our NSEA members and their families.



Remembering beloved coach, longtime NSEA member Jerry Stine



Throughout his career, Jerry Stine, 76, dedicated time and energy to his students, colleagues and to his local association. Stine coached and served as athletic director at Wheeler Central High School and Bertrand Community Schools for 37 years before retiring in 2004. He was president of the Nebraska Coaches Association (NCA) in 1990.

In memory of 55-year teacher Stacia Steensnes

Stacia Steensnes, 101, taught for 55 years and was active in the NSEA and the Platte County Rural Teachers Association. A 1939 graduate of Newman Grove High School, she earned her bachelor's degree in education from Wayne State College.



Conversations on RACE & BELONGING

NSEA's Conversations on Race and Belonging will be back this summer as a virtual six-session program. The sessions are designed to encourage participants to improve their personal racial understanding based on self-examination and awareness.

Introductory Session

The 2.5-hour introductory session will be held virtually on April 30, 9:30 a.m. to 12 noon CT. It is designed to provide a preview of the full six-part summer program.

Summer Course

The six-week course will be held virtually on Wednesdays, 9:30 a.m. to 12 noon CT. It is tentatively scheduled to begin May 25.

Participants will have the opportunity to gain empowering skills to initiate meaningful conversations on race and to approach such opportunities as bridges into relationships and connections with

others. All assignments, including the podcasts and videos, generally run less than one hour.

Sessions include opportunities to journal or take notes, so come to the sessions with pen and paper. The format will include pair shares, small group work and full group work. Since the pandemic hit in 2020, this program moved to a virtual format. While participants may join the Zooms on a smartphone, a computer is encouraged to make shared material more easily visible.

Deeper Dive

Members interested in learning more about the Conversations on Race and Belonging program will have an opportunity to participate in an introductory session as well as two "deeper dive" sessions, scheduled for April 9 and June 11, 9 a.m. to 12 noon CT.

These sessions are open to NSEA members, but space is limited. Apply at www.nsea.org/Conversations



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Dr. Michelle Warren, Associate Professor of Spanish at UNK, traveled to the State Capitol to encourage lawmakers to re-evaluate how to measure basic skills for future teachers.

Combating Teacher Shortages

Teacher colleges identify hurdle in teacher recruitment

Dr. Michelle Warren, a 30-year educator who is currently preparing future educators to teach Spanish, believes the state of Nebraska needs to eliminate an unnecessary barrier that is keeping students from becoming teachers.

During her nine years working at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, Warren has seen many undergraduate students experience difficulties with the Praxis basic skills tests.

Even before the stresses brought on by COVID-19, Warren would regularly receive calls from school districts searching for Spanish teachers.

“The fully bilingual graduates usually get offers even before they begin student teaching, and rarely do we produce enough graduates to fill all vacancies,” she said.

The Nebraska Department of Education reports that 14% of teacher positions across 143 school districts were unfilled during the 2021-22 school year.

“Now that many of our in-service teachers are feeling burned-out by having to adapt to the demands that COVID-19 has created, it is more important than ever to encourage, not discourage, our young professionals and get them in the classroom,” she said.

Warren argues that part of the solution is to reevaluate how

institutions measure basic skills for our future teachers.

Testifying to the Legislature’s Education Committee, Warren encouraged lawmakers to consider legislation that would change the Praxis test requirement.

“I have watched dozens of students become frustrated as they fail the Praxis basic skills exams time and time again,” she testified. “Please let us re-evaluate how we measure basic skills for our future teachers and stop creating roadblocks, such as the Praxis, to those talented people reaching their classroom goals.”

An advertisement for BlueCross BlueShield of Nebraska. It features a person in a purple sweater holding a pill bottle. The text "SAVE ON YOUR PRESCRIPTIONS" is prominently displayed. Below it, it says "EHA and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska work together to keep your medications affordable." There is a QR code and the text "Scan to learn more:". The BlueCross BlueShield logo is at the bottom. The EHA logo is in the top right corner of the ad. Small text at the bottom right says "Health benefits for EHA are provided by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association."

NSEA-Retired Spring Conference: It will be wild!

The NSEA-Retired Spring Conference will be held on Thursday, April 21 at the Lincoln Children's Zoo. The program will include a "behind-the-scenes" experience at the Zoo, an update on the renovation of the Cascade Teachers' Bicentennial Fountain, and traveling Nebraska with "The Better Half: Nebraska Hidden Treasures" presented by Matt and Sarah Hansen, and a bit more on the impact of Crop Art. Of course, prizes, food and great conversations will be part of the event.

Retired members attend for free while the cost for guests to attend is \$10. Register online at nsea.org/retired under Calendar/Events/Registrations.



New Chapter Official in Wilber

It's official! The Wilber-Clatonia-Retired chapter of NSEA-Retired became officially affiliated in February 2022 when the group approved the bylaws, elected officers and welcomed a new member into the group.

After several get-togethers, developing a solid base of participants and receiving a grant from NSEA-Retired to establish a new group and recruit new members, the WCEA-R group fulfilled the requirements of group formation, becoming the first group in the state to welcome retired ESP members.

Elected to office are Sarah Brown as President and Nancy Fulton as Secretary/Treasurer. Elaine Burda, a retired cafeteria manager at Wilber-Clatonia became the first ESP member.



New Officers and Member of Wilber-Clatonia-Retired L-R: Nancy Fulton, Secretary/Treasurer; Sarah Brown, President; and Elaine Burda, ESP Member.

The Wilber-Clatonia-Retired chapter plans to meet quarterly for meetings and meals, participate in state activities and

are planning to expand their membership/activities. Since some colleagues are still working other jobs, some have moved and some were on vacation, not everyone was there but those who were learned about the many benefits of being members of NSEA-Retired and are looking forward to being more active in the state association. One element that emerged unanimously is the desire for social interaction.

The group hosted a March get-together that included dinner and contacting any Wilber-Clatonia retirees.

Brown encourages others to begin the process. "Start gathering names and friends. Take those steps towards on-going friendships. It's worth it!"

Awareness first step in stopping sex trafficking



I'VE GOT A NAME
END SEX TRAFFICKING WHERE WE LIVE

"I've Got A Name"
Director Paul Yates
and Street Outreach
Director Megan
Johnson-Cook.

LEA-Retired hosted more than 50 members at its February meeting.

The program was presented by representatives from a non-profit organization working to generate awareness and take action against sex trafficking in Nebraska. "I've Got A Name" Director Paul Yates, and its Street Outreach Director Megan Johnson-Cook, shared several facts with the group, including the following:

- The average age of a child entering the commercial sex trade in Nebraska is 13;
- Every month at least 200

individuals are sold for sex, often multiple times, in the Lincoln area and 900 in Nebraska;

- Sex trafficking exists throughout Nebraska, along I-80 and our rural communities;
- Most victims do not believe they are victims. Most believe their "owner" loves them.

For more facts, visit

www.ivegotaname.org/facts

LEA-Retired also has several groups that meet throughout the month—a reading, a travel, and a wine group.

Enhancing Excellence in Teaching

You may be eligible for a \$3,000 forgivable loan!

Are you a Nebraska teacher enrolled in a graduate program? You may be eligible for a \$3,000 forgivable loan!

The Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program (EETP) provides a limited number of forgivable loans to Nebraska teachers enrolled in an eligible graduate program at a Nebraska institution. Eligible students may apply, on an annual basis, for funds of \$175 per credit hour, up to a maximum of \$3,000. Students can apply for EETP loans annually for up to five (5) consecutive years. Eligible graduate coursework includes classes that begin during the period of July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023.

Who is eligible?

To be considered for an Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program forgivable loan, you must:

- Be employed as a certificated teacher in an approved or accredited public or private PK-12 school in Nebraska;
- Be a resident Nebraska student; and
- Be enrolled in an approved graduate program at an eligible Nebraska institution; which meets one of the following categories:
 - A graduate degree in a shortage area;
 - A graduate program for an added Endorsement in a shortage area;
 - A graduate degree in curriculum and instruction;
 - A graduate degree in a subject area in which a teaching endorsement is already held; or
 - A graduate degree that will result in an additional endorsement not considered a shortage area which your school administrator believes will be beneficial to the students of the school.

How does it work?

After you accept the offered loan by signing the NDE contract, provide proof of registration for your classes and \$175/credit hour (up to the amount of your award) will be sent directly to you. Once you complete your graduate program and teach in Nebraska for two years, for each additional year you teach in Nebraska:

- \$1,500 of your loan balance is for-



- given each year; or
- If you teach in a very sparse school district or in a 40% or higher poverty school building, \$1,500 of your loan balance is forgiven the first year of loan forgiveness and \$3,000 each year of loan forgiveness thereafter.

Important notes

- Applicants must be requesting funds for approved classes that BEGIN on or after July 1, 2022 through on or before June 30, 2023.
- Requires that an individual apply for the award each year that funding will be requested.
- Only Nebraska institutions are eli-

gible for this funding program.

- Completed application materials are sent to the institution per the instructions on the website.

Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program forgivable loans are awarded annually through the Nebraska Department of Education. For more information, visit the EETP page on the Nebraska Teacher Education website at:

www.bit.ly/Neb-EETP

**Application opens
Friday, April 1, 2022**

Speaking of Education

“Good ideas are not adopted automatically. They must be driven into practice with courageous patience.”

— **Hyman Rickover,**
(1900-1986) *US Navy Admiral*

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

Ag Sack Lunch Program Teaches Ag, Feeds Students

The 12th Annual Ag Sack Lunch program, designed to increase awareness to fourth-grade students and their families of the importance of agriculture to Nebraska, heads into the spring semester offering both in-person and virtual presentations to schools across the state.

The in-person version of the program is offered to classes visiting the State Capitol Building in Lincoln as part of their curriculum.

This spring many schools have resumed their Lincoln visits, so in-person reservations are almost full, according to Karen Brokaw, program coordinator, “While a few in-person reservations are still available, many virtual presentations are open,” she

said. “Teachers who do not plan to bring their students to Lincoln for a field trip are encouraged to schedule a virtual presentation.”

For fourth-grade classes that are able to make the trip to Lincoln to visit the State Capitol Building, the program provides free sack lunches to the students while they listen to a short presentation about the importance of agriculture in Nebraska. They also receive fun card games that feature Nebraska agriculture facts to take home to play with their families. The



sessions are led by “Ag Ambassadors,” students from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Agriculture.

Teachers who have had their classes participate in the program, both in-person and virtual, say the presentations are very informative, and their students learned about the importance of agriculture in the state.

The Ag Sack Lunch Program is sponsored by the Nebraska Corn Board; the Nebraska Soybean Board; the Nebraska Pork Producers Association; Nebraska Beef Council; Midwest Dairy; Nebraska Poultry Industries; and Nebraska Wheat Board.

For more information, call Brokaw at (402) 432-2299.

35 years later...

The illustration to the right perfectly encapsulates the fervor with which calls for book bans have been popping up in public schools nationally. Here is the kicker — award-winning Nebraska cartoonist Paul Fell conceptualized and published this particular cartoon nearly 35-years ago to the day. Just below his signature line at the bottom of the illustration shows the year: 1987.

The push for book bans is not new to American schools. NSEA’s fight to rally against those who want to censor literature isn’t new either. Your association stands with all educators—especially librarians—who are pushing back. We believe students have the right to learn about their own cultures and identities. We believe all public school students should have access to books that help them better understand the experiences of people who are different from them.

