

THE

VOICE

The Nebraska State Education Association ❖ March 2017



DISCIPLINE: A 'SIGNIFICANT CONCERN'

*We Asked, You Answered.
NSEA Shares Survey Results with Senators.*

Also inside:

*OEA Defends Against
Privatization*

*An Accidental
Collaboration Pays Off*



Crabtree's Influence Still Felt

Nebraska Educator Led NEA to Tremendous Growth, Change

As a Peru State College graduate, a teacher, superintendent and university professor, James William Crabtree had made quite a mark on education in Nebraska by the time he became president of the Nebraska State Teachers Association in 1897.



Crabtree

His influence also spread regionally, and, eventually, went national in ways that are felt yet today.

He was born in Crabtree, OH, in 1864. A few years later, Crabtree's parents and their 10 children moved to Nebraska, where Crabtree attended rural schools. He eventually attended Peru State Normal School, earning a bachelor's degree in 1887.

After graduation, Crabtree taught math in the Peru Public Schools and also taught math at the University of Nebraska in 1895-96. He taught in the Peru area before becoming principal/president of Peru State Normal School in 1904, a position he held until 1910. He was the first Peru State graduate to lead the college, the first to be primarily known as "president" and the first to be clean-shaven, according to the 150-year history of the college.

It was during his time at Peru State that he began to make a national mark. He was elected to serve as treasurer of the National Education Association in 1905.

Crabtree also served a term as state superintendent of public instruction in Nebraska, a post that evolved into today's Commissioner of Education.

In 1911, Crabtree accepted the position of president at the River Falls, WI, Normal School. During six years at River Falls, he established faculty committees, including groups to set forth plans for organization and administration of the college. He also secured formation of a student-led agricultural society, glee clubs for both males and females, a student council and a college yearbook.

By 1913, Crabtree had begun to attend sessions of the Wisconsin Legislature to advance the interest of normal schools and secure needed legislation. Among other things, he won funding for a second building at River Falls. The new structure included a men's gym, an auditorium, science classrooms and a training school.

He left River Falls in 1917 to become executive secretary of the National Education Association – the first executive secretary in the Association's history. The Association had just moved headquarters to Washington, D.C., and Crabtree and a staff of three worked in two rooms. Burgeoning membership, however, quickly meant more staff and more space.

Under Crabtree's leadership, the Association held the first Representative Assembly in 1920. Under his guidance, the Association also established permanent headquarters in Washington, D.C., with the purchase of a four-story mansion on a corner lot, where NEA remains today. Under Crabtree's leadership, NEA membership grew from 7,300 to 216,000, and staff grew from three to 50 by 1922.

That same year, the NEA established a research division to collect and maintain data on school systems for various legislative activities.

He retired from NEA in 1935. It was noted in the Journal of the National Education Association that "The profession owes to Mr. Crabtree more than to anyone else the building of our great National Education Association."

Crabtree was also fairly prolific as an author. He published the *Roll of Honor Word Book* in 1899 and *The Crabtree Speller* in 1908. In 1935, he published a memoir, *What Mattered Most*.

Upon his death in 1945, the editor of the National Education Association Journal called him "a great leader, a combination of Horace Mann and Abraham Lincoln." He is buried at Rock Creek Cemetery in Washington, D.C.

Morgan Founded Future Teachers

When NEA membership began growing under J.W. Crabtree's leadership, it required more staff at the new Washington, D.C., association headquarters. One of Crabtree's hires was a Nebraskan.

Joy Elmer Morgan was born in Callaway, NE, on Dec. 11, 1889. From 1911 to 1913, he served as superintendent of schools at Bloomington, NE, and from 1913 to 1917 he was superintendent at Guide Rock. He attended Nebraska Wesleyan University before transferring to the University of Nebraska, where he closed out his undergraduate studies with a bachelor's degree in 1917.

Morgan earned a bachelor's degree in library science from the New York State Library School in 1920, and was soon hired by Crabtree as editor of the NEA magazine *The Journal*, predecessor to today's publication, *NEA Today*.

In 1937, he founded Future Teachers of America. In 1954, he left NEA and founded and became president of Senior Citizens of America.



Morgan



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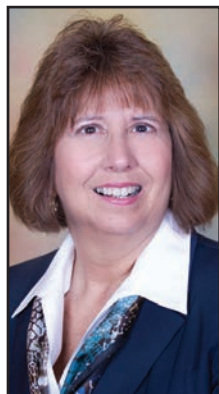
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Collaboration, Not Competition



NSEA President Nancy Fulton

“

I hope that lawmakers will collaborate fully and completely with those of us in the education family and work to improve the public schools we have.

”

The oldest – and perhaps most worn out – talking point put forth by charter school zealots submits that “competition is good for public schools.”

That misguided charter school tenet supposes that public schools operate like the free market, with consumers who benefit from more choices and lower prices. Advocates would plop charter schools here and there, and have those charters make public schools better by offering “competition.”

The free market, however, operates within certain rules and regulations that businesses must follow. For instance, the Department of Weights and Measures makes certain that every gas station gives you a gallon of gasoline – not nine-tenths of a gallon – for your \$2.27. The Department of Health makes certain eating places meet cleanliness standards. State and federal regulations set standards for financial institutions to make certain clients are not treated unfairly.

Yet charter school advocates hope to allow such schools in Nebraska, free of many of the regulations that apply to K-12 public schools. They contend that the “competition” that would result on that tilted playing field would make public schools better.

Fortunately, the Nebraska education family understands that our unique system offers plenty of competition on the level playing field of public schools. They understand that charters, some dogged by enormous financial malfeasance, provide no better outcomes than public schools.

Crete Superintendent Mike Waters, in a recent letter to the Crete News, said “Competition and comparison between school systems does not work if one group can choose who comes to school and the other system takes everyone.”

Other educational leaders have echoed his remarks, and Nebraskans are beginning to understand that charters are a dead issue in Nebraska.

LB630 currently sits in the Legislature’s Education Committee, and will be featured at a hearing on March 14. It is my hope that policy makers can move past the myth that the “competition” provided by charter schools is a panacea for the supposed failure of public schools. Instead, I hope that lawmakers will collaborate fully and completely with those of us in the education family and work to improve the public schools we have.

Same Old Problem

The late Jim Griess served 15 years as executive

director at NSEA, frequently described Nebraska’s system of taxation as a “three-legged stool.” One leg represented income tax, another was sales tax, and the third was property tax – the primary source of revenue for public schools.

If any one of those three sources of revenue got longer than the others, the stool would be unstable. Griess often noted that the stool was unstable – schools relied too heavily on property taxes because state aid dollars (funded through the general fund sources of income and sales taxes) committed to public schools was insufficient.

Griess retired in 2006, and here we are 11 years later and the problem remains.

Quality Education an Imperative

Now, NSEA has joined a coalition of more than 40 organizations urging the Legislature to work to lower property taxes. Nebraskans United for Property Tax Reform and Education was formed around two principles:

- Adequate and sustainable funding of high quality K-12 education is imperative for the future of Nebraska.

- Tax reform which reduces the over-reliance on local property taxes is necessary to ensure our tax system is fair to all Nebraska taxpayers.

A news conference at the State Capitol Rotunda was attended by more than 50 representatives of nearly 20 statewide and regional organizations. In addition to NSEA, coalition members include

the Nebraska Farm Bureau; corn, wheat, pork, cattle and soybean producers; a property owner group; school administrators; and rural and urban school interests.

In particular, the message to lawmakers is this: forego ill-advised income tax proposals from the governor’s office. Nebraskans have been begging for property tax relief for decades. Nebraska schools, it was noted, derive 49 percent of revenue from property taxes. The national average is 29 percent. That is a clear example of the fact that the state is not doing its share in funding K-12 schools.

One coalition member, Jerry Stahr, represented Nebraska Fair at the news conference. He built and arrived at the news conference and with a small stool – with uneven legs.

Message delivered.

Somewhere, Jim Griess is smiling.



The Story of a Stool: Nebraska Fair spokesman Jerry Stahr arrived at a coalition news conference with a three-legged stool to illustrate how out-of-whack Nebraska’s tax collection system has become.



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OEA Fends off Privatization

District Sought to Outsource Teaching Jobs

The Omaha Education Association stood for children, taxpayers and members through the late months of 2016 as it turned back an effort by the Omaha Public Schools to privatize jobs connected to the district's transitional program for middle school students.

At risk were OPS tax dollars, the quality of education of OPS middle school students, and several dozen OPS teaching jobs.

School district officials had proposed to use a "contract variance" that would have allowed the District to privatize instructional services – including bargaining unit jobs – in the "Transitional Program" for middle school students across the district.

The OPS Transitional Program serves students who have experienced behavioral difficulties in traditional classroom settings.

Donovan on the OEA's Board of Directors believed privatizing the program's teaching positions would have been an abrogation of the District's responsibility to patrons and students. She noted that the district's teachers "recognize and accept the grave responsibility we have as public school educators in working to teaching all students.

"The OEA is opposed to 'outsourcing' the responsibility of teaching of our students," said Donovan. "We do not believe it is in the best interests of our students, their parents, our community or taxpayers. We will not – and cannot in good conscience – sign over the education of the most vulnerable of our students to private profiteers or other private enterprises."

Outsourcing Failure

Board members felt that outsourcing such a critical function to a private firm might be an easy answer, but it was not the right answer for the District or, more important, for the children involved.

Donovan pointed to the hard lesson learned by the State of Nebraska when, in November 2009, the state began to shift responsibility for running the child welfare system to private contractors. State officials believed the plan would make the system more efficient and accountable, while controlling costs.

The privatization of foster care led to untrained, unskilled, poorly paid workers managing children who were state wards. Privatization left children victimized by the very people who were supposed to protect them.

\$50 Million Wasted

By the end of six months, one contractor was bankrupt and another ended its contract. A third company soon lost its contract because of financial and management problems, forcing the state to make unplanned infusions of money to keep the program operational.

More than \$50 million in taxpayer money was wasted on the failed privatization experiment.

Donovan said OEA believes students, parents, teachers and taxpayers will best be served by focusing on improvements to the current programs as opposed to attempting to contract away the District's responsibility for these students.

"The OEA stands ready to continue working with District administrators, staff and parents to ensure we are providing our students with the supports they need to succeed and our teachers with the tools they need to help those students succeed," she said.

"We have the skills, the wisdom, the expertise and, most of all the heart needed to provide excellent programs designed to meet the unique needs of our dynamic, growing urban population."

Professional Practices: Coming to a Meeting Near You

PPC on the Road, in Prevention Mode

The Professional Practices Commission is on the road!

Clerk of the Commission Kelly Muthersbaugh is ready to travel to local association or area meetings to tell the story of the PPC, with two goals in mind.

First, Muthersbaugh hopes to get the word out about the 12-member commission. Second, she hopes that a little bit of knowledge will be worth a whole bunch of prevention.

Muthersbaugh is new to the job as clerk and says the Commission sees too many cases involving social media, for instance, that result in suspension or revocation of teaching certificates. Complaints filed against a teacher land in Muthersbaugh's office. Her office also investigates – the NPPC has a fulltime investiga-

tor – and prosecutes the complaint in a public hearing before the 12-member Commission.

Commission members – a mix of teachers and administrators – then recommend action to the State Board of Education. The Commission might recommend no action, a suspension of a teaching certificate for a set time, or complete revocation of a teaching license, depending on the infraction.

"Letting members know about what we do may prevent teachers from making a mistake that could end a career," said Muthersbaugh.

Muthersbaugh is willing, depending on availability, to appear at association meetings, regional meetings or elsewhere to talk about the work of the NPPC and how it works. To schedule a visit by Muthersbaugh, contact her at 402-471-2943, or email her at:

kelly.muthersbaugh@nebraska.gov

Collective Bargaining Dead in Iowa

Legislature Acts Fast in Attack on ISTA

It happened quickly, taking just a few days.

Both Houses of the Iowa Legislature OK'd language in mid-February that bans teachers from bargaining for anything other than base salary.

In a divide and conquer approach, the new law affects all public sector employees except law enforcement and firefighters.

Provisions of the law were made public on Feb. 7. The bill sped through committee hearings before reaching the floor and being approved by both the House and Senate by Feb. 16.

Union officials filed a legal challenge on Feb. 21. If the courts uphold the law, Iowa teachers will no longer bargain for working condition issues like duty-free lunch or due process. Gone are negotiations over salary schedules and health care benefits.

The Iowa measure is similar to language passed in Wisconsin in 2011.

The measure came just months after the November General Election, when Republicans won a majority in both Iowa houses. GOP representatives overrode staunch opposition from Democrats to pass House File 291 along a mostly party-line vote.

Labor issue experts said the Iowa legislation aims to cripple public sector unions by targeting union income streams. Union membership in Wisconsin has fallen 40 percent since 2011.

Discipline: A ‘Significant Concern’

Results of Survey on Discipline Shared with Education Committee

When Jay Sears told the Legislature’s Education Committee that LB595 addressed “an area of significant concern” for Nebraska teachers, it might have been an understatement.

His story of an NSEA member’s encounter with a violent student gave senators a brief but vivid sense of the urgency behind the phenomenal response to an NSEA poll.



‘17 Nebraska Legislature

Sears said the teacher’s story was just one of many shared by NSEA members in response to the early February poll.

“I was assaulted by a student during my first year in my district,” wrote the teacher. “I was taken from my classroom to the emergency room. I missed nearly a week of work. It never occurred to me that the student would be placed in my room again. (But)...upon my return, the student was to return to my room.”

Those words, said Sears, came from a elementary school teacher who closed her remarks by saying “I’ve struggled with the physical damage to my body ever since.”

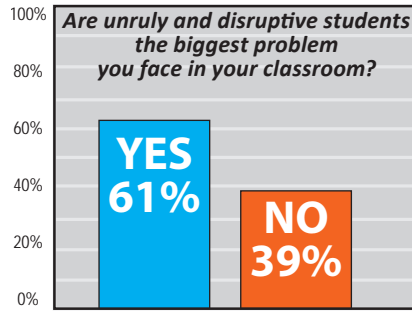
The poll response was staggering. More than 7,200 educators answered and more than 3,000 responses came in the first three hours of the poll’s delivery via email. More than 2,000 educators took time to add comments at the end of the poll.

“LB595 clearly hit a nerve with our members. The problem is real. Finding appropriate solutions is critical,” Sears told senators.

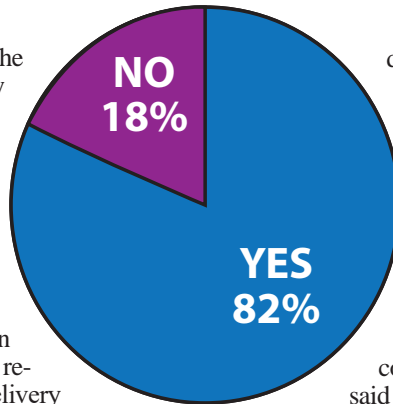
NSEA President Nancy Fulton affirmed Sears’ remarks.

“There are things that need to happen for classrooms to be safe learning environments.”

The key question is this: What must we do to make our classrooms safe places to learn?



Have discipline and behavior problems in your school increased over the past few years?



Staggering Response: More than 7,200 NSEA members responded to an email survey on classroom discipline and behavior issues. Members agreed that discipline issues are increasingly becoming a problem.

A Step Further

North Platte Sen. Mike Groene believes his LB595 offers a solution. Much of LB595 mirrors existing state law by authorizing teachers and administrators to use necessary force or restraint – short of corporal punishment – to assure physically violent students do not harm themselves or others.

Current statutes provide that teachers “may take actions regarding student behavior that are necessary to prevent interference with the educational process.” A 1999 case involving former Bridgeport teacher and NSEA member Bob Daily allows educators to use physical contact short of corporal punishment – defined as infliction of bodily pain as a penalty for disapproved behavior – to control the school environment.

The language proposed in LB595 goes a step further, however, and would require a teacher’s consent for a student to be allowed to return to the classroom. While 80 percent of NSEA members surveyed approve that idea, 70 percent of respondents also said their principal or administrator is supportive of teachers’ decisions on discipline.

NSEA members did indicate, by an overwhelming margin, that discipline problems in school have increased in recent years. They also said, again by overwhelming numbers, that unruly students are the biggest classroom problem they face (see charts, above).

Comprehensive Approach

Many respondents expressed concern that students who are removed from the regular classroom continue to be educated. “All students deserve to learn,” said one teacher.

“Our members do not want any child to miss the opportunity to learn, even those who are disruptive and need to be removed from the classroom,” said Sears.

Kids are coming to school with mental and physical trauma.

“The solution isn’t to throw them out. It’s how to get them the help they need and to deal with their issues so they can get back into the classroom,” said Sears.

Dealing with unruly and violent students requires a comprehensive approach. Extensive training in de-escalation and student restraint is

Offered: A Funding Solution for Master Teacher Program



Fennell

When state senators take testimony on legislation, they usually hear the pros or cons of a particular bill.

Offers of solutions are rare, particularly when it comes to funding woes. That changed on Valentine’s Day, when newly-minted NSEA Executive Director Maddie Fennell urged the Education Committee to support LB525 and preserve funding for the state’s Master Teacher Program.

The program encourages Nebraska teachers to pursue National Board Certification. Funding is erased in the 2017-18 budget proposed by the governor. Further, LB214 eliminates the statute housing the program. Sen. Adam Morefeld’s LB525 would use lottery pro-

ceeds to restore funding.

Fennell told senators that 63 percent of Nebraska voters approved a 1992 Constitutional Amendment authorizing the lottery, with a mandate that proceeds enhance education and the environment. Fennell said LB525 would use just one percent of lottery proceeds.

“Our students in Nebraska deserve to be taught by the highest qualified professionals; we need to use every means necessary to attract and retain those individuals,” said Fennell. “In a time when we are facing a budget shortfall, redirecting a portion of these lottery funds will provide a direct and positive impact on students while not negatively affecting the state budget.”

important for educators. Smaller class sizes and the addition of counselors and mental health professionals is also essential. Sufficient alternative placement options are needed. More emphasis on de-escalation and discipline in colleges of education would aid every educators, said respondents.

In fact, many teachers expressed a desire for additional training on how to deal with disruptive, threatening and potentially violent students. Poll respondents also emphasized the need for additional counselors, mental health and behavioral resources for students, resource rooms, itinerant assistants and more.

Interim Study Proposed

Sears told the Education Committee that NSEA hopes to work with the Legislature and other interested parties on an interim study on LB595 so comprehensive legislation can be drafted for the 2018 Legislature. Teachers are anxious to discuss classroom discipline issues. In fact, nearly 600 of the poll respondents said “yes” when asked whether they would be willing to be part of a discussion on discipline issues and solutions.

LB595 remains in committee.

Here is a look at the status of other education-related bills in the Legislature.

Master Teacher Program

While NSEA Executive Director Maddie Fennell testified in favor of a new source of funding for the state’s Master Teacher Program (see Page 6), Organizational Specialist Jay Sears urged senators to kill LB214, which would permanently terminate the program.

“One of the reasons there was an appropriation for the Master Teacher Program for 2015-16 and 2016-17 was the fact that the Legislature had earlier pulled \$30 million out of the state aid formula that went to state aid for school districts with master’s degreed teachers,” said Sears.

“Though the loss of \$30 million in state aid to schools was significant, NSEA was encouraged that the Legislature was willing to appropriate some of those funds to rekindle the Master Teacher Program,” he said.

He also pointed out that a teacher with such certification who moves to Nebraska “has absolutely no barriers to obtaining a certificate to teach in Nebraska.”

Sears called it “shortsighted and unwise to terminate this program.”

Change to Rule of 85

Sen. Mark Kolterman’s LB415 would change the Rule of 85 to a Rule of 90 for any teacher hired after July 1 of this year. Kolterman says a study that indicated

plan members are living longer than expected is having a negative effect on the plan’s health.

NSEA believes that while projections show additional contributions to the plan may be needed in coming years, this action would be premature.

The Legislature is required to conduct an actuarial cost study to determine the impact such a change would have on the plan. Once the study is complete later this year, an informed decision can be made.

Early Retirements Threatened

Albion Sen. Tom Briese introduced LB457, which would no longer allow voluntary termination (early retirement) settlements to be housed outside a school district levy limit, beginning in 2018-19.

NSEA opposes LB457, and backed that opposition with facts showing that such settlements save school districts money. Typically, school boards offer early retirement packages to teachers close to retirement age, and with higher salaries, to entice staff to retire early.

The difference in salaries of new staff to replace the salary of retiring staff saves over the long term. In 2015-16, 40 districts requested state board approval for voluntary termination agreements at a total of \$22.5 million. Thirty-five of those districts estimated a 5-year savings of \$26.5 million.

Community College Probation

LB124 would extend probationary status for newly hired community college instructors from two years to three years.

NSEA testified in opposition. While K-12 teachers in Nebraska have a three-year probationary period, community college statutes do not provide the evaluation, notice, hearing and due process requirements available to K-12 teachers.

Threats to Certification

Still awaiting public hearings are two bills that would weaken teacher certification in Nebraska.

LB568, offered by Sen. Steve Erdman of Bayard, would allow five-year teaching certificates to be issued to persons 21 years of age, with a high school diploma, and 24 hours of in-service training.

LB650 allows issuance of an adjunct teaching certificate to any candidate “who has expertise in the subject area.”

NSEA opposes both bills.

Grading of Schools

Offered by Omaha-area Sen. Lou Ann Linehan, LB662 would assign letter grades to school buildings, with the grades ranging from A to F, measuring school performance.

NSEA believes the existing AQuESTT school evaluation program

‘All Students Deserve to Learn’

In answer to NSEA’s emailed poll on student discipline, more than 7,200 members responded and more than 2,000 offered comments. Here is a sampling of the comments:

In terms of a student being allowed back into a teacher’s classroom, the teacher and the teacher’s administrator must agree to the conditions under which the student is allowed back. If a student’s behavior may be dangerous to a teacher or other students in a classroom after the student was removed, some other accommodation must be made for that student.

We need to focus on finding the right placement for every student, be it an alternative school or regular school. All students deserve to learn.

The bigger issue is what is causing the increase in behavior. We mostly notice an increase in mental health issues and are noticing our district doesn’t have the staff and resources to handle the dimensions of a mental illness. That is way beyond our academic training and capabilities.

When we are held accountable for student scores but can’t do anything when a student disrupts learning, it is unfair to the teachers and students.

THANK You for taking this on!! I have a daughter who is going into education and it is all I can do to tell her not to because of these types of issues.

We need more teachers in this world. They need a discipline management course in college. They need training on how to react in certain situations. They need to know how to defend themselves and other students that are in immediate danger. No one wants to teach unruly students, but they need to know how to manage a class and earn the respect of the students so that they can effectively teach and have productive classes.



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is working, and opposes LB662.

Payroll Deduction Threat

Sen. Tom Brewer, Gordon, offered LB503, which prohibits public employers from allowing union members to have association dues deducted from paychecks. NSEA opposes the bill.

Tax Proposals a Threat to Property Tax Relief

One of two of the governor's tax proposals would further strain the state's ability to provide property tax relief through state aid to education. The other would hamper a school district's ability to use property taxes derived from agricultural land. NSEA testified in opposition to LB337 and LB338.

Despite consistent and widespread calls for property tax relief, LB337 cuts the top income tax rate from 6.84 percent to 5.99 percent, depending on forecasted growth. If growth for the upcoming year is greater than 3.5 percent, a reduction in the top rate is "triggered."

"Triggers typically are not responsible tax policy," said NSEA Director of Government Relations Jason Hayes. "Triggers put tax policy on autopilot and prevent lawmakers from being able to respond to downturns in the economy, natural disasters and other needs."

If the proposal had been adopted in 2001, income tax cuts

would have been triggered in 2008, 2012 and 2016. State aid to education was underfunded in both 2008 and 2012, and was held at a zero-growth level in 2016.

LB338 limits agricultural land valuation growth. A 3.5 percent growth cap in aggregate property valuation would be applied only to agricultural property types. The resulting property tax shift, assuming the local levy rates could change, would amount to a 3.8 percent property tax reduction for farmers and ranchers, but a 2.1 percent increase for homeowners and businesses.

The bottom line: if LB337 and LB338 had been in place years ago, the Legislature now would be trying to resolve a much larger budget deficit than the current \$800 million gap. Instead of tax cuts, additional revenue should be sought through eliminating current exemptions or by finding new sources of revenue to cover this budget gap.

Stay in Touch Via Texts!

NSEA is watching more than 100 education-related bills that will affect your salary and your rights. You can stay on top of the latest news through NSEA's text messaging service.

With the tenor of bills introduced in the Legislature, won't you join NSEA's text message service? To do so, provide the requested information at:

nsea.org/text

What We Can Do: 'Get Active' Says Ralston Teacher

Ralston NSEA member Dan Boster had sound advice for educators miffed over the recent appointment of Betsy DeVos as federal secretary of education: organize.

Boster posted this letter on his Facebook page, and within short order had more than 100 'likes' and nearly six dozen 'shares':

Dear Nebraska Teachers Concerned About Betsy DeVos:

First, there are clearly many reasons to be upset about the confirmation of Ms. DeVos to Secretary of Education. I won't rehash those here, but, from now on, I believe that more teachers, including me, need to be informed and involved all of the time, not just at presidential election time.

We could also remember that education policy is largely established in Nebraska by our local officials. And, while we've all been watching what's going on in Washington, D.C., Nebraska lawmakers are getting ready to consider more than 200 bills that will affect our schools — the ones where we teach and send our children.

So, what to do?

First, if you're a teacher, you might consider joining NSEA. Even if you're not a "union person," your support helps them advocate for you and your students.

Then to get more involved, I've decided to do the following:

■ Sign up to be a "cyber-lobbyist" with NSEA at:

nsea.org/cyberlobbyist

■ I am going to read NSEA's legislative updates. There are a few especially troubling bills up for consideration. I want to know what they are and what they do. Find them at: nsea.org/legislative-updates

■ I will continue to contact my state senators. (Yes, I'll keep doing it even when it doesn't seem to work and is frustrating.) Find your senator here:

nebraskalegislature.gov/senators/senator_find.php

■ I will do my part to take back the conversation about education in Nebraska. I will use social media to celebrate what goes on in my school. A lot of people believe schools are "broken" because those who would profit on the backs of our children control the conversation about education in this country. I will brag about my school and my

students every chance I get.

■ Most importantly, I will be engaged and energized about my job as a teacher. I will be mindful of the fact that students need us now more than ever. I will band together with my colleagues to create the best school we can, student by student, day by day.

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#Gottigher

Tax Dollars for Private Schools: A Bad Idea

Two New Bills Would Drain K-12 Funding, Conflict with State Constitution

When NSEA Director of Research Larry Scherer testified in opposition to LB118 and LB295 before the Legislature's Revenue Committee, he made two clear points.

First, Scherer said the two bills likely run afoul of the state's constitution. LB118 would allow annual tax deductions of up to \$2,000 per child to assist parents with the expense of attending public, private or parochial schools.

"The clear benefit of this bill supports tuition at private schools," said Scherer.

The second bill, LB295, would create the Opportunity Scholarship Act, giving individual and corporate taxpayers a tax credit for donations to groups that provide scholarships to attend non-profit, private schools. Scherer noted that Article VII, Section 11, of the Nebraska Constitution prohibits the appropriation of public funds for sectarian education.

"Clearly, the real impact of LB295, although somewhat circuitous through the use of a tax credit, is an expenditure of public funds to benefit parochial schools," he said.

Both bills, said Scherer, also raise questions about the willingness of the Legislature to subsidize private entities, in this case private schools, while at the same time failing to provide adequate funding for public schools.

Scherer used that connection to make his second point: that the Legislature has rarely provided adequate and full funding for schools. Scherer knows state aid: as an attorney working for the Legislature 30 years ago, he assisted with the creation of the original state aid formula.

"Over the last 15 years, the Legislature has fully funded the needs of public schools under then-existing law only three times. In addition to threatening the quality of public education, the result of the state not keeping up with its end of the bargain through state aid is higher property taxes," said Scherer.

State analysts estimate the deductions allowed by LB118 would cost the state \$8 million in revenue the first year, and more every year after that. The credits allowed by LB295 are estimated to cost the state \$10 million annually in the first year, increasing each year thereafter.

"Even if there were not constitutional problems with these bills, there is the more pressing issue of the revenue shortfall and projected structural future deficits of a reported \$900 million," he said.

"How responsible is it for the state to start new, \$8 million and \$10 million programs when we're making cuts to nearly every other program in the budget?"

Scherer urged the committee to kill both bills.

"How responsible is it for the state to start new, \$8 million and \$10 million programs when making cuts to nearly every other program in the budget?"

— Larry Scherer,
NSEA Research

Vouchers Divert Funding, Shortchange Kids in Poverty

LB608 is Scheme to Take Tax Dollars From Public Schools

When addressing vouchers, NSEA delivered two messages as the Legislature's Education Committee considered LB608.

Both messages were clear: vouchers harm public schools.

Retired Omaha Education Association member Cheryl Goodwillie said the voucher plan in LB608 would drain funds from an already shallow public school revenue stream.

NSEA Organizational Specialist Jay Sears told senators that diverting public tax revenues to private and for-profit schools circumvents the clear intent of Nebraska's Constitution.

Goodwillie taught for 33 years in Omaha, with 15 years at Western Hills University Partnership Magnet School, where 65 percent of students were in the free and reduced lunch program.

"Many of these students need enrichment to build background knowledge and vocabulary that children from wealthier backgrounds receive at home through their many trips to zoos, museums, family trips, and, especially, exposure to books and reading," she said.

Public magnet schools and academies provide that enrichment for children in poverty, she said. However, siphoning public school tax revenues to private schools through a voucher program would stymie the ability of public schools, especially those meeting the needs of low-income populations, to provide the extra help such students need.

Sears agreed, but took a slightly different approach.



Message Delivered: Retired Omaha educator Cheryl Goodwillie, left, and NSEA Organizational Specialist Jay Sears, right, delivered a clear message to senators in February: vouchers harm public schools.

"Whether it's so-called parental choice scholarships, opportunity scholarships, tuition tax credits or deductions, or education savings accounts, the public tax dollars to cover all of these voucher programs has to come from somewhere," said Sears. "It's usually taken away from the vast majority of students – more than 307,000 of them – who attend Nebraska's public schools."

Sears pointed out that the state's constitution allows the Legislature to "provide for the education of other persons in educational institutions owned and controlled by the state or a political subdivision thereof."

Nowhere in the state's constitution, said Sears, does it say the state shall provide for the education of students in private or for-profit schools.

"LB608," he pointed out, "would divert state and local public tax dollars to private schools."

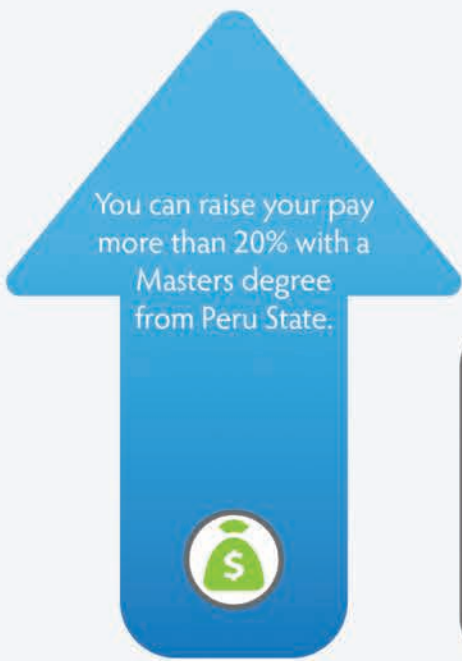
Sears also noted that the state requires accountability for public schools.

"There is no such accountability system for private schools," he said. "There is no guarantee that the public school funding that would follow a student to a private school would go to a high performing school."

Goodwillie closed by asking senators to ensure every Nebraska child has access to a quality public school.

"Taking public funds and giving them to a private school only serves to hurt students and our public schools," she said.

Sears urged senators to kill LB608.



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EDUC 605	Cognition and Learning	Sept 2 - Sept 29, 2017	3
EDUC 553	Using the Internet	Sept 30 - Oct 27, 2017	3
EDUC 540	The Master Teacher	Oct 28 - Nov 24, 2017	3
EDUC 600	Sociology of Education	Jan 6 - Feb 2, 2018	3
SPED 500	Inclusionary Practices	Feb 3 - March 2, 2018	3
EDUC 552	Introduction to Multimedia Authoring (or elective or Graduate Transfer Credit)	March 3 - March 30, 2018	3
EDUC 621	Curriculum Development	June 4 - July 27, 2018	3
EDUC 602	Statistical Methods and Data Analysis	June 4 - July 27, 2018	3
EDUC 569	Teachers as Collaborative Leaders (or elective or Graduate Transfer Credit)	Sept 1 - Sept 28, 2018	3
EDUC 623	Assessment of Instruction (8-week capstone)	Sept 29 - Nov 23, 2018	3

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A photograph of a classroom scene. A female teacher with brown hair, wearing a light blue button-down shirt over a white top, stands at the front of the room, smiling and pointing towards a young girl. The girl, wearing a red shirt with white polka dots, has her right hand raised. Other students are seated at wooden desks in the foreground, seen from behind. The background features a green chalkboard and a whiteboard.

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A Different Look for Delegate Assembly

Friday Night Gala a Dress-Up Affair; Saturday to be Busy Dignitaries Invited

A Sesquicentennial Celebration is a Big Deal.

That is why NSEA will celebrate 150 years with an invitation-only Gala celebration at the Association's Delegate Assembly. For those planning to attend, there are some key points and dates to remember.

First, this Delegate Assembly will be unlike any of the 155 Delegate Assemblies that have preceded the 2017 event.

The Friday evening, April 21, Gala will be devoted to a celebration, complete with dignitaries, a great meal and music.

Saturday's schedule will be a whirlwind. Members will elect a president, vice president and NEA director. Two years of work by a Governance Review Task Force will be considered, with proposed changes to Association Bylaws the result. Members will also consider a proposed new strategic plan, as well as New Business Items, Resolutions and other business.

Delegates will also set the membership dues amount for 2017-18.

Gala Details

In the meantime, there are several items to know regarding the Friday eve-

Delegates to Pilot edCommunities Effort

Delegates to the 2017 NSEA Delegate Assembly are asked to create a personal account through the NEA edCommunities website ahead of the April 21-22 event.

Delegates will be approved for participation in the edCommunities NSEA Delegate Assembly page as they register.

The NEA edCommunities site allows educators to converse, share and discuss ideas. Delegate Assembly details will be updated on a regular basis. To create an account, go to:

www.mynea360.org/login



ning Gala:

■ All delegates must RSVP to gain entrance to the Gala. Local Association delegate rosters must be received at NSEA no later than Friday, March 24. Invitations will be mailed to individual delegates, as delegate rosters are received.

Once a delegate receives an invitation, they must RSVP, using the website address on the invitation. Space is limited at the Lincoln Station site of the Gala.

■ Cocktail attire is recommended.

■ Chartered buses will be available for transporting delegates between the Cornhusker Marriott Hotel and the Lincoln Station, both before and after the Gala.

There will also be changes to the usual Friday evening Delegate Assembly activities. The traditional schedule of Friday evening hearings after the close of Delegate Assembly has been altered. The Budget and Resolution hearings will be held as WebEx experiences in advance of Delegate Assembly. The schedule:

■ Resolutions Hearing: Tuesday, April 18, at 7:30 p.m.

■ Budget Hearing: Wednesday, April 19, at 7:30 p.m.

As a reminder, Bylaw amendments alter NSEA's governing documents. Proposed amendments are due at NSEA 30 days in advance of Delegate Assembly, or by midnight Tuesday, March 21.

New Business Items, Resolutions or changes to Standing and Procedural Rules may be introduced early in the Saturday morning, April 22, business session. However, in order to be included in the printed delegate workbooks, these items must be submitted to NSEA by Friday, March 31. Here are details:

■ A New Business Item calls for action. For example, "The NSEA shall ask the Legislature to address mental health funding for schools."

■ A Resolution is a belief statement. For example, "NSEA believes all students should have a safe learning environment."

■ A Standing or Procedural Rule governs Delegate Assembly.

Forms for submitting these items can be found at:

www.nsea.org/delegateassembly

Those interested in serving as delegates should register intent quickly, as NSEA cannot expand the block of reserved hotel rooms.

Blomstedt Announces Listening Tour on ESSA; Members Encouraged to Speak Out

Nebraska Commissioner of Education Matt Blomstedt has announced that the Department of Education will host an ESSA Stakeholders Listening Tour at seven sites across the state in March.

ESSA is the Every Student Succeeds Act passed by Congress in 2015. ESSA replaces the No Child Left Behind Act.

NSEA members are encouraged to attend and to add testimony about the needs of classroom teachers. The schedule includes:

■ **Scottsbluff:** Tuesday, March 7, 6:30 p.m., at the Harms Advanced Technology Center at Western Nebraska Community College, 2620 College Park Rd.

■ **North Platte:** Wednesday, March 8, 6:30 p.m., at Mid-Plains Community College, 601 W. State Farm Road.

■ **Norfolk:** Tuesday, March 14, 6:30 p.m., at Norfolk Public Schools Central Administration Building, 512 Philip Ave.

■ **Lincoln:** Thursday, March 16, 7 p.m., Southeast Community College, Lincoln Campus, 8800 O St., 7 p.m.

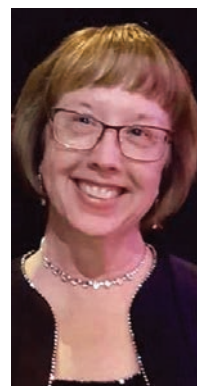
■ **Grand Island:** Monday, March 20, 6:30 p.m., Grand Island Senior High School, 2124 N. Lafayette.

■ **Beatrice:** Wednesday, March 22, 6:30 p.m., ESU No. 5, 900 W. Court St.

■ **Omaha:** Monday, March 27, 6:30 p.m., Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center on the campus of the University of Nebraska-Omaha, 6400 South, University Drive Road North.

Look for more details at:

www.education.ne.gov



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NEA Director

Fundraisers for Children's Fund on Upswing

Waverly EA Gives \$1,500; Jeans Day a Success at Bellevue, Papio-LaVista

Members of the Waverly Education Association have donated \$1,500 from the Association's treasury to the NSEA Children's Fund.

The Board of Directors of NSEA's Elkhorn District has pledged a gift of \$560.

Bellevue Education Association members held a successful Jeans Day, and raised \$6,130. Members of the Papillion-LaVista Education Association scheduled a Jeans Day as well, had similar success and raised \$3,821.

Those gifts are important, as the Children's Fund cash-flow has been stretched to the limit in recent years. NSEA's district presidents have set a goal to raise \$150,000 in honor of the Association's 150th anniversary celebration, underway through October. The campaign surpassed \$43,000 by mid-February.

The drive to collect \$150,000 is designed to keep the cash flowing to children in need, even as those needs continue to grow. From Sept. 1 to Dec. 31 last year, for instance, member contributions to the fund totaled \$20,500. In that same time period, the fund provided \$18,019 in assistance to Nebraska children in need.

"We've really struggled to break even the past few months," said NSEA President Nancy Fulton. "If we can reach the campaign goal, it will give us a small cushion and make a difference for hundreds of children in the coming years."

Since 1994, the Children's Fund has helped hundreds of Nebraska children in need. Every day in their classrooms teachers see a child who may need new shoes, a warm coat, eyeglasses – any one of scores of necessities that might help that child perform at a higher level.

Teachers are more than willing to help – but it is impossible to help every child in need. That is where the Children's Fund comes in: all a teacher-member needs to do is contact NSEA, explain the child's need, and NSEA staff will assist with arrangements.

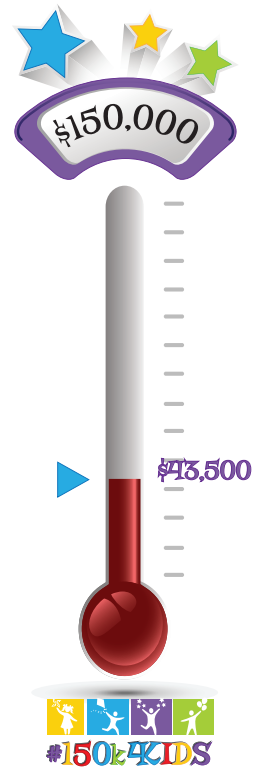
Local associations are encouraged to collect change; host a jeans day fund raiser; or consider other fund-raising options. Individual members may also donate at any time. All donations are tax deductible.

To make giving easier, the Children's Fund now accepts gifts through PayPal. Find the PayPal link on the NSEA website at:

nsea.org/childrensfund

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

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An Accidental Collaboration Pays Off

'Tremendous Opportunity' Builds Skills, Knowledge

By Patsy Koch Johns,
Nebraska Teacher of the Year 2006;
and John Heineman,
Nebraska Teacher of the Year 2000

It was a happy accident that brought three teachers together to experience the collaboration of a lifetime.

In one of the most diverse schools in Nebraska, John Heineman, a longtime teacher from a large urban school; Patsy Koch Johns, a veteran teacher from a rural Class B school in central Nebraska; and Chris Maly, a young teacher from a very small Class D school; came to teach in the same classroom at Lincoln High School. Their circumstance was caused by construction and overcrowding.

What could have been a disaster turned out to be the experience of a lifetime where each of us observed, cooperated, and improved our teaching as we learned from one another, shared insights into each other's teaching content, and grew through the sharing of our individual expertise.

These three confident, Type-A teachers, each with a resume of individual accolades and teaching awards, could have easily resisted the opportunity to grow or change their teaching. Instead, we were energized and challenged by the others to bring about a great experience for ourselves and for our diverse students. On the surface, that diversity could have easily divided us. Instead, it united us.

What might have been a command from the principal or an extra duty assignment turned out to be an exercise in overcoming tragedy, extreme poverty and extraordinary diversity.

Laughs, Hugs and Tears

We were all teaching the same lessons, for the same class, in the same classroom.

At first, each of us left the room after our class to find somewhere in our overcrowded building to go for solitary work time. Gradually, that changed. We began to recognize each other's attention. We began to capture each other's attention. We began to recognize our differences and find admiration for each other. We had the rare opportunity to observe each other and add the best of the shared pedagogy to our own classes. The conversations between classes, after classes, and on social occasions were filled with compliments and friendly chiding about our moments of dismal failure, not only in lesson plans but also in classroom management.

Being able to ask each other why a lesson didn't go well or why it was a stunning success, why a student was challenging or disinterested, evolved not only into incredible friendships but into the best professional development any of us could



Koch Johns



Heineman



Maly

have dreamed of, wanted or needed.

Lunch became a time for reflection and evaluation. We laughed, hugged, complained, analyzed, yelled and sometimes cried together. Understand, we did not become each other in the classroom. Our styles remained unique. Once one of us demanded that we rearrange the desks in our classroom. The new arrangement did not work for all three of us. We now roar at the thought of the masking tape we placed on the floor marking where the desks would be situated for the next teacher before the bell rang. The five minutes between classes became a set change, an exercise in chaos. However, we were willing to experiment and take risks knowing that two other trustworthy confidants, with thoughtful and sympathetic eyes, were there to give constructive feedback and insightful suggestions.

The relationship and trust we developed led to many extraordinary experiences. The youngest teacher was directing *The Mouse That Roared* in the fall of 2001. This comedy about a small country invading the United States was frequently staged in schools across the country. When 9/11 struck three weeks into re-

hearsals, it was clear that the show was no longer humorous or appropriate. The three diverse teachers, who had already built strong ties by working together in the same classroom, took on the challenge of finding a new script, recasting, and producing a new full production in two and a half weeks. We were focused on making this a positive experience for our students. The youngest of the three took the lead as the director; the other two of us supported, aided and encouraged him to bring about a successful performance. This was only the beginning for our trio. We continue to mentor each other in the classroom and in our future educational endeavors. Collaboration and trust made it all possible.

Forever Grateful

In time, rooms became available. We left Room 240 for classrooms where we would own our space. Funny, we ended up wandering back into our original "home room" seeking that same camaraderie. Today we talk about it as the pinnacle of our teaching experience. The conversations and memories are still poignant, nostalgic, and we are forever grateful.

Opening your classroom to other teachers is a tremendous opportunity that should be experienced by all teachers. We encourage you to take a planning period and share time observing each other no matter if it's your best day of teaching or that lesson you struggle with each year. Willing collaboration with a fellow teacher where reflection, and not evaluation is the main goal can strengthen teaching in all of our schools.

All three of us wish you that same opportunity. Don't be afraid of it. Embrace it.

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Vice President



An active, dedicated, passionate Association advocate! I would appreciate your vote!
Tracia Blom for NSEA Vice President



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■ **Organizing your finances:** Tips to help you save money and stretch your paycheck all year long.

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'Buy-lights' for March 2017

Don't forget: NEA Member Benefits offers real deals through the Click & Save program. The 'Buy-Lights' change on the first of each month.

This month's bargains include offers from Lenovo, PlowHearth, WarbyParker, Wrangler, GapKids and more.

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*Susan Estes is Nebraska's
NEA Member Benefits representative*

How to Fix Errors on Your Credit Card Bill

Start with the Merchant in Question

By Lisa Gerstner

As card statements roll in this post-holiday season, keep your eyes peeled for errors, such as a duplicate charge or one for an item you never received. If you suspect that a thief has used your card, call the issuer right away. Otherwise, many card issuers let you initiate a dispute through their websites.

The most efficient way to resolve a billing error may be to ask the merchant to make amends. If you still need to contact the card issuer, be sure to put the dispute in writing within 60 days of the time the bill containing the error was sent to you. Doing so triggers your protections under the Fair Credit Billing Act—although major card networks often honor disputes for at least twice that long, says Sean McQuay, of NerdWallet.

While your case is under investigation, you won't have to pay the charge or any in-

terest that accumulates on it, and the issuer can't report you as delinquent to the credit bureaus. If you want to be sure of a paper trail to back up your dispute, send a letter by certified mail and request a return receipt, says Chi Chi Wu, staff lawyer for the National Consumer Law Center. The creditor has to settle your case within two billing cycles (and no longer than 90 days) of receiving the notice.

If the card company decides in your favor, you're home free. But if the issuer finds no mistake—say, the charge is a legitimate one whose label you didn't recognize—you'll have to pay up. Still feel as if you've been wronged? File a complaint with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, at consumerfinance.gov/complaint. It will forward your complaint to the issuer, which must respond within 15 days.

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If Not Now, When?



**Executive Director
Maddie Fennell**

“
Can you imagine what your salary, benefits and working conditions would be if you had no choice but to accept what your school board offered?
”

During my first weeks at NSEA, I have spent a lot of time reading, asking questions and listening. In fact, I met with every member of our staff individually to learn more about them personally, the work that they do and the ideas they have to strengthen our Association.

I have been humbled by the level of passion and commitment our staff has to each of you as members, to our students, and to our mission of a great public education for every student.

We are in very challenging times as a union and as educators. While we are going to need the skills and talents of our committed staff, the staff alone will never be enough. We are going to have to leverage the collective voice, leadership and power of every one of our 28,000 members if we are going to beat back those who seek to tear apart not only our Association, but our profession and our public school system.

While much has been said about what is facing education nationally with our new secretary of education, it is important to realize that we have critical issues within our own state borders that could affect your classroom and your compensation much more quickly than any decisions made by Secretary DeVos.

How Would it Hurt Students?

The REAL threats to Nebraska's public education system and our profession in our legislature include:

- A proposal to replace the retirement Rule of 85 with the Rule of 90 for new school employees (LB415);
- A plan to essentially allow high school grads to serve as substitute teachers (LB568, LB650);
- Voucher (LB608) and charter school (LB630) schemes;
- A plan to require every third grade student to pass a reading proficiency test before advancing to fourth grade (LB568);
- A proposal to eliminate the only state-funded program designed to enhance K-12 teacher professionalism (LB214);
- The potential elimination of the payroll dues deduction option for Association membership for teachers, police and firefighters (LB503); and
- A plan to grade K-12 schools on a 'A' to 'F' basis (LB662).

To every member of NSEA, I ask a question and offer a challenge: have you contacted any state

senator about these toxic bills? If not, please do so. Your message need not be long. It can be a phone call or an email; tell your senator how the bill would hurt you and your students.

No Time for Complacency

Take it a step further: combat the negative stereotypes of teaching and public education by inviting elected leaders into your school. Show them the tremendous work being done in spite of daunting challenges. We will never change the narrative unless we get people into our schools to see and experience what we are doing. In that way, they can personally attest to the learning that goes on in Nebraska's great public schools every single day.

This is no time to be complacent or to think "Someone else can do that stuff; I just want to teach." Just last

month our colleagues in Iowa LOST collective bargaining rights and dues deduction in a matter of days (see page 5). Can you imagine what your salary, benefits and working conditions would be if you had no choice but to accept what your school board offered?

Can you imagine what it would be like to have no voice at all at the negotiations table?

From the bills mentioned above, to the national movement against unions and collective bargaining pushed by groups like ALEC and Americans for Prosperity, you can understand why every one of our members must exercise their rights and hold our elected leaders accountable. To be an educator means to advocate; that advocacy must occur inside and outside of the classroom.

An Early Lesson

One of the first things I learned as a Student Education Association of Nebraska (SEAN) member was "Every decision in education is a political decision." That still rings true. We can't bury our heads in our classrooms and hope that someone else will stop the tidal wave against our profession and public education. That someone is YOU.

Rabbi Hillel the Elder is largely credited with formulating the Golden Rule. He also said "If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, then what am I? And if not now, when?"

NOW is the time for you to speak up and lead. NSEA and every child in Nebraska is counting on you.

"If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, who am I? If not now, when?"

*— Hillel the Elder,
Jewish Religious Leader,
110 BC -10 AD*

Everest Climber to Keynote Spring Conference

Speaker List Includes Antarctic Adventurer, Solar Eclipse Update

The NSEA-Retired annual meeting and spring conference will be held at Wilderness Country Club in Lincoln, on April 20, beginning at 8:30 a.m. The keynote speaker will be Robert Kay, who will share details about his climb of Mt. Everest.

Breakout sessions will follow the keynote. Tentative sessions are: EHA, BCBS and Medicare; Antiques: Trash or Treasure?; The Great American Total Solar Eclipse; Herb Gardening; The Transformative Power of Music; and It's Never too Late for Fitness. Other breakout sessions are pending.

The Spotlight on Nebraska feature will follow the luncheon and business meeting, with Shannon Fickes sharing her story of "Adventures in Antarctica." A desert reception and drawing for door prizes will wrap up the afternoon.

To register, or for details, check the website at:

www.nsea.org/retired

Annual Lobby Day Another Success

More than three dozen retired teachers gathered at NSEA's Lincoln Headquarters in early February to become informed about the issues the legislature will be considering this session.

The retirees then assembled at the State Capitol to witness the Legislature in action, and later delivered important information to each senator or his or her aide highlighting issues and concerns most important to Nebraska's retired teachers and the educational profession in our state.

Several bills are being considered that will make significant changes to the way retirement benefits are handled. Of particular interest is LB415, which has several changes that are targeted to encourage members to work until they are truly ready to retire, and to reflect the recent findings by an "experience study" that indicates that retirement plan members are now living longer.

Of most importance, LB415 would change the existing Rule of 85 to a Rule of 90 for school employees hired after July 1, 2017. NSEA opposes LB415.

The state's retirement plan for teachers is already bifurcated, with recent hires receiving slightly lower benefits than earlier hires. Passage of LB415 would essentially



The Hand Off: NSEA-Retired members, from left, Rhonda Burbach and Gretchen Terpsma of Lincoln; and Gene Martin, Beatrice; hand-deliver legislative information to an aide to Sen. Roy Baker. At right, Sen. Mark Kolterman of Seward pauses for a photo with NSEA-Retired member Kathy Spahr, also of Seward.

create three levels of benefits, or would "trifurcate" the retirement plan.

This bill makes it clear, more than ever, that active voices are needed in the political arena. Retirees can take action that will affect the state of public education for current, past and future educators, not to mention the effect a chorus of unified voices can have on the students in public schools.

There are two ways to keep up with the business that takes place at the State Capitol. First, sign up for the Unicameral Update, published weekly by the Clerk of the Legislature's office and sent out each week in the mail. To get on the mailing list, call 402-471-2788 or e-mail:

uio@leg.ne.gov

Second, NSEA provides legislative updates and calls to action by sending out updates to your e-mail address. If you would like to receive emailed updates, sign up to be a cyber lobbyist at:

nsea.org/cyberlobbyist

NSEA-Retired Elections are Underway Now!

Elections are now underway for



NSEA-Retired president and vice president as well as District Directors for Capitol, Elkhorn and Sandhills Districts. In addition, delegates will be elected to represent the retired membership at NSEA Delegate Assembly and NEA Representative Assembly. Ballots for the election were mailed out Feb. 20. Ballots should be returned no later than Friday, March 10.

Ballots will be counted on Wednesday, March 15.

— Renae Kelly, Editor
renaekelly@gmail.com



Playing the Role: Participants in the 2016 Leadership Institute made the most of role-playing opportunities. Here, Lincoln Education Association member Kate Wilcox and Gibbon Education Association member Cassey Schaefer discuss a member rights issue while their “administrators” — Lincoln Education Association member Erika Bruening and Anselmo-Merna Education Association member Thane Lewis — await their decision.

Develop Your Skills at NSEA’s Leadership Institute

NSEA’s 30th Institute Offered at No Cost

Applications are now being taken for NSEA’s superb, once-a-year program to develop association leaders.

The 30th edition of NSEA’s Leadership Institute promises to be another success, as Institute planners continue to monitor the needs of members and the evaluations from past participants. In nearly every case, those evaluations have been positive.

“As a veteran teacher but new union member, this was enlightening and I learned so much,” said one participant from 2016.

Another said a highlight was “learning how much the organization can do for me, seeing the strength of NSEA and being proud that Nebraska has one of the leading organizations in the nation.”

If you’re a new leader in your association, or if you’re thinking about becoming a leader, you should consider registering for the 2017 event, scheduled for Monday afternoon, June 12 though lunch on Wednesday afternoon, June 14 at NSEA Headquarters in Lincoln.

There is no registration, lodging or meal cost for members.

“This is a great opportunity to network and learn from colleagues across the state, as well as NSEA staff,” said NSEA President Nancy Fulton.

Participants will learn about resources available to local associations, and will identify areas of focus for their local unit. Time will also be set aside to allow participants to plan a successful 2017-18 for their local association.

In particular, a session on NEA Member Benefits and another on social justice drew high marks from members attending the 2016 event.

One member had this comment: “This was great! Can I come again?”

The institute is open to current and future leaders, elected or otherwise, but the number of attendees is limited, so don’t delay.

Register your intent to attend the 2017 NSEA Leadership Institute by calling NSEA at 1-800-742-0047.

There’s good reason to register. As one participant said last year “I am so glad that I was part of this event. I feel empowered to share my learnings and to engage others.”



Advocacy Dates Set for Sept. 29-30

Columbus will Host at River’s Edge Center

Mark your calendar now: NSEA’s statewide Advocacy Conference will be held Friday and Saturday, Sept. 29-30, at the River’s Edge Conference Center in Columbus.

The conference is the best chance for local association negotiators to learn new skills, keep abreast of changes in the world of negotiations, and collaborate with colleagues from other local associations. Watch for more details in future issues of *The Voice*, or online at

www.nsea.org

Questions? Call your local NSEA organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047.

NSEA Conference for ESPs set in April

Two Members to Attend NEA Confab in Dallas

The spring NSEA Education Support Professionals Conference is scheduled for Saturday, April 29, at the Holiday Inn Express in Norfolk.

Registration is scheduled to open at 9:30 a.m., with the conference agenda to run from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

A full conference agenda will be available soon. Members with questions should call NSEA Organizational Specialist Judy Roach at:

judy.roach@nsea.org

The National Education Association’s annual ESP Conference will be held March 10-12 in Dallas. Two Nebraskans will represent NSEA at the event. They are South Sioux City’s Amy German, and Louisville’s Shelly Smith.

Have You Ordered Your Free Magazines?

NSEA/NEA Membership Includes Two Subscriptions

Have you ordered your two free magazine subscriptions from the NEA Member Benefits program magazine service? If not, now is the time to order.

Get your two free subscriptions at this link:

www.neamb.com/Get2

‘Bridges’ Features Nebraska Photos Resource Aids Teachers as They Celebrate State Sesquicentennial

As Nebraska enters its 150th year, the Hildegard Center for the Arts (HCFA) offers instructional resources developed to assist teachers celebrate the sesquicentennial with their students.

Working with the Nebraska State Historical Society and Nebraska Tourism Commission, HCFA conducted a photo call to gather images from all of Nebraska’s 93 counties. HCFA used the images and narratives to create a traveling Sesquicentennial photo exhibit entitled “Bridges — Sharing our Past to Enrich the Future.”

The instructional resource offers:

- Photos from each of 93 Nebraska’s counties, with accompanying narrative;
- Applicable Nebraska social studies standards for fourth grade students;
- A story map that allows teachers and students to access the instructional resources of a county via a virtual Nebraska map;
- “Quick Facts” about each county;
- Discussion points for each county to promote creative thinking;
- Additional resources such as links, suggested books and possible art projects.

Although “Exploring Nebraska” is ideal for use in teaching about Nebraska in fourth grade curriculum, it can be used by all ages. The resource can also be used by history buffs as well as an inspiration for writers and those who enjoy the Arts and culture.

The instructional resources may be accessed through the Hildegard Center for the Arts website. Click on either “Current Events” or “Bridges” at the top of the Main Menu to access the “Instructional Resources” and/or “Story Map.” The website is at:

www.hildegardcenter.org

“Exploring Nebraska” is supported in part by Humanities Nebraska and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment and these sponsors: The Nebraska Sesquicentennial Commission; Nebraska Tourism Commission; Johnson Hardware Company, the Ethel S. Abbott Charitable Foundation; and the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Speaking of Education

“You never know what that child may become.”

— *Dr. Steve Joel, Superintendent, Lincoln Public Schools*

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



EMAC Leaders: Members of NSEA’s Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee met at NSEA Headquarters in Lincoln recently to discuss issues and plan for the year ahead.

From left are Manny Andazola and Karla Andazola, both of Lexington; Susan Townsend, Lincoln; EMAC Secretary Susan Loney, Omaha; Broderick Steed, Umo’ho Nation; and EMAC Chair Isau Metes, Lincoln.

Not pictured are Vice President Jose Hernandez, Norfolk; Tracy Hartman-Bradley, Omaha; and Sharon Rhodes, Omaha.

Balanced Behavior

Provided by Pam Carroll, a third grade teacher in North Carolina:

“I use a balance scale, along with the small blocks that come with our math kit, to reinforce positive group behavior. When students receive a compliment from another teacher, or when I see them following directions, I give them a positive block on the left side of the balance scale. When students misbehave as a group, I drop a negative block on the right side of the balance scale. When the positive side touches the table, we have a Positive Party.”

“Recently my students voted to have a Teddy Bear party. I was surprised that the boys voted for this type of party, but it was a hit! To make sure this party was not a distraction to the curriculum, I had the students read to their Teddy Bear during reading, make flash cards for their bear during math, and write a letter to their bear during writing.”

“When the negative side hits the tabletop, we just empty the bucket and start again. It does not take the students long to see that when they misbehave, it takes longer to make the bucket drop the positive side all the way down to the tabletop.”



Sign up for Works4Me at: nea.org/tools/Works4Me.html