



Summer 2018



Connections

NEWS TO KEEP YOU ENGAGED IN THE PROFESSION YOU LOVE

Maureen Ramos – Leader, Activist and 2018 WEA-Retired Member of the Year

By Kit Raney

If you have attended a WEA RA, a WEA-Retired board meeting, a WEA-PAC meeting or any other meeting with Maureen, you will know that her attendance helps us make better decisions by asking the hard questions, giving impassioned speeches and caring so deeply. Maureen has made WEA-Retired a better organization because of her presence. She is an outstanding recipient of the 2018 WEA-Retired Member of the Year. Before retiring, Maureen was a respected leader and advocate, the longtime president of the Spokane Education Association, a member of the WEA Board of Directors, NEA Board of Directors, many WEA/NEA committees and many community organizations and committees. When she retired, Maureen moved seamlessly into many of those same roles as a member of WEA-Retired.

Maureen has been the WEA-Retired Board Director for Spokane and a member of the WEA-Retired Executive Committee, the WEA-Retired representative on the WEA-PAC Board, a member of the WEA-Retired Legislative Work Team and a member of the WEA-Retired Organizing Team. In all these roles, Maureen is a leader, an active participant and someone who can be counted on to go above and beyond what is asked of her in order to move our organization forward.

One of the goals for WEA-Retired in recent years was to get active retired chapters established in every council. Maureen not only built a vibrant, active retired chapter for Spokane-Retired but, when the WEA Eastern WA-Retired chapter was struggling without strong leadership, included Eastern in her monthly meetings and communications. She not only built up one strong retired chapter, but two. Because of Maureen's mentorship, now WEA Eastern WA-Retired also has strong, involved retired leaders.

Maureen believes strongly in the importance of political involvement. She works tirelessly for our WEA-PAC-endorsed candidates and issues, increasing WEA-PAC membership and communicating important issues back to our members. She is also an active member lobbyist.



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The President's Corner

By Neva Luke

WEA-Retired President

The U.S. Supreme Court's decision on Janus v. AFSME has eliminated the public sector union's ability to collect "fair share" fees from individuals who receive the benefits of the union. This therefore results in non-members getting what some call a "free ride" -- receiving services without paying for it. This will make it more difficult for

educators, firefighters, police, and nurses to stand together to negotiate our wages, benefits, pensions and healthcare -- while continuing to protect and fight for our communities, students and schools.

Janus was brought on by the ultra-conservative National Right to Work Committee and Liberty Justice Center. They, in turn, are funded by corporate billionaires like the Koch Brothers who want to rig the system even more in their favor. You can read a thorough history of the court rulings on fair share in Barbara Galler's article in this edition, on page 5.

WEA membership gives us the strength in numbers to do things we cannot do separately. Together, we have won more funding for our students and negotiated better salaries and benefits for educators. We secured a simple majority for passing levies. We have fought off attempts to weaken our pension systems -- and, reversed cuts to our pensions and healthcare subsidies. We have partnered with like-minded groups and elected legislators that have championed our issues.

Being a right to work state is putting the WEA into uncharted waters, and the immediate unknown will be the effect on active membership. The Freedom Foundation is already targeting WEA members across the state to drop their memberships, and we have every reason to believe their efforts will intensify now.

So, what can retirees do to help counteract this assault on the middle class? WEA has asked retirees to assist in calling educators this summer who drop their membership. Many WEA-Retired members have stepped up and have already received the training. If you are interested in doing this, please email WEA Staff, Brooke Mattox-Ball at BMattoxBall@washingtonea.org.

Let's face reality, it all comes down to politics. If the June 27 Janus decision wasn't bad enough, that very same day, Justice Kennedy announced his retirement from the U.S. Supreme Court. This means President Trump and his supporters will be working hard to fill another seat with an ultra-conservative justice. We cannot be complacent. We cannot remain quiet and just wring our hands. We must stand together and do whatever we can to maintain the values our country was founded on.

Be active in WEA-Retired so we can speak with a collective voice. Join WEA-PAC and the NEA Fund for Children. Don't forget to vote when needed! And, check out WEA Our Voice at www.washingtonea.org/ourvoice/, the NEA Action Center at <http://edadvocacy.nea.org/> or www.nea.org/. We must remain united to fight against the attacks on the middle class and our democracy.



The view from retirement

By Karla Craig

When I attended a class to prepare for retirement, we were instructed to fill out a form indicating what our day or week would look like in retirement. Granddaughter time, friends, tackling long dormant projects, and some travel were all I could think of then, but I suspected that I would not have any difficulty filling my now “free time.”

And it has certainly turned out that way! In addition to conducting “stack attacks” on boxes of projects that I had relegated to closets and the garage while work had consumed such a significant portion of my waking time, I have been able to take advantage of some golden opportunities to travel and visit friends and family elsewhere in the world.

Traveling to Singapore, Amsterdam, Germany, Norway, Sweden, and Belgium, I appreciated phenomenal art, music, culture, and historical monuments. Especially important to me was reconnecting with family in Denmark. I even attended an Israeli wedding! Closer to my Kirkland home, I continue to savor time with grandchildren (five of them now) and friends, while keeping my finger in special education through occasional substituting and tutoring private students.

Thus, retirement has allowed me to explore the world at large and enjoy my family so much more here at home. I continue to travel, spend time with friends, take occasional classes, and take better care of myself with walking, exercise, and then rest! Retirement has also allowed me to deal with some unexpected surprises in my life that would have not been manageable while working.

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Maureen is also a respected presenter for the WEA-Retired Pre-Retirement Seminars. Since retiring she has given up countless weekends and helped many, many members in becoming prepared for life after retirement.

Rep. Laurie Dolan (22nd Legislative District) had this to say about Maureen, “You could not have selected anyone more wonderful for your ‘Retired Member of the Year’ than Maureen Ramos. Maureen and I have worked together for years on behalf of students and teachers, and I have always known I could depend on her for her judgement, integrity, honesty, intellect, humanity, humor and friendship. More than most people, Maureen is always on the right side of history, and unafraid to speak truth to power. She is courageous in seeking new information to inform her decision.”

And from one of her students (and Rep. Dolan’s niece, Sarah Ellen Hutchison) because we are all educators first, “Maureen Ramos is one of the best teachers alive today. While creativity and questioning authority were not always welcome in the classroom ‘back in the day,’ Mrs. Ramos encouraged me to think critically, be myself, seek justice, and accept people with differences. I use these skills and live these values every day as a plaintiff’s lawyer. I am grateful for her wisdom and kindness and glad that I am just one of hundreds of kids who was lucky enough to be in Mrs. Ramos’ class.”

Congratulations, Maureen!

Thank you, Sharon White



At the end of the annual meeting on June 7, Sharon White completed her last minutes of her seven-year stint as Secretary of WEA-Retired. Sharon is a stalwart in the retired association and if you have ever been to any board meeting, annual meeting, lobby day, etc, you've seen Sharon.

Sam Hayes says of his longtime Chehalis colleague, "I know of few who have done so much for their local, council, state and national associations and still found time to be politically active as Sharon White. She has been a true leader in the good times and the not-so-good times. Few have her stamina and continued dedication."

Sharon is also president of WEA-Retired Scholarships. This year alone, Sharon along with other committee members read applications from 44 WEA members. The eight winning applicants were announced and honored at the annual scholarship banquet/auction on June 7.

Sharon is a presenter for the WEA-Retired seminars, as such she helps active WEA members prepare for retirement. She has worked tirelessly for retirement security, speaking up at the legislative committee, always attends lobby days in Olympia, and communicates with legislators. Sharon participates in Senior Lobby, which represents the needs of retired educators, as well as participates in the Washington State Alliance for Retired Americans. Sharon has attended countless WEA-RA's and NEA-RA's through the years. (Fun fact: You know Sharon is at your morning meeting when you see a box of yummy donuts on the snack table.)

Thank you, Sharon, for your years of service to our association, and for the many years to come as well!

WEA-Retired Media Award ... Congratulations to Brooke Mattox-Ball

By Mary Lindsey

The WEA-Retired Media Award highlights someone who "provides information about WEA-Retired groups and goals including publications and communication."

Who is a deserving individual who consistently advocates for WEA-Retired members and activities, is friendly, helpful, and freely gives her time and support to WEA-Retired? Brooke Mattox-Ball, from the WEA Communications Department is this year's WEA-Retired Media Award recipient. Brooke is an excellent problem solver, valued team member, excited brainstormer, and great listener. She frequently says, "Let me know how I can help. I'm just in my office." When you ask, or even mention something, she is right on it. She is consistently respectful and knows the difference between helping and taking over.

Brooke is invaluable to us in the digital age. She is the last one to perfect the Connections newsletter in print and email editions. She updates the WEA-Retired website, membership forms and brochures and has mentored leadership on NEA360 and Facebook. Brooke is also a great photographer and has willingly taken pictures of individual WEA-Retired Board Members.

We wish to thank Brooke for her optimistic outlook, her unflappable demeanor, and her very inclusive attitude about WEA-Retired members and events. Thank you, Brooke, our 2018 WEA-Retired Media Award recipient!

A supreme undoing of fair share. The long and winding road to Janus

By Barbara Galler

As we have long expected, on June 27, the Supreme Court (SCOTUS) ruled in *Janus v. AFSME* that the collection of representation fees is no longer permissible in public sector unions. How did the court upend 41 years of law established in the 1977 *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education* case? *Abood* established that only defined costs for negotiating contracts -- agency fees -- were to be charged to non-members so that they could be sure that political advocacy would not be conducted with their dollars. Since that decision, anti-union coalitions, backed by corporate and family wealthy donors, focused on states' Legislatures to create so-called "right-to-work" laws that discouraged union membership in public sector jobs. The Economic Policy Institute, a non-profit think tank, found the funding behind anti-union groups from organizations, including the Center for Individual Rights (CIR), the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation, and the Liberty Justice Center. Right wing billionaires like Charles and David Koch, the Walton Family Foundation, the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, and the Dunn Foundation fund these groups.

In 2010 their anti-union efforts picked up speed with the *Harris v. Quinn* SCOTUS case. This case involved an Illinois home care worker, Pamela Harris who sued the state's Governor, Pat Quinn. She contended that, her 'supervisory authority' rested not in state control, but in her patients/clients' wishes. Thus, she was not a true/full state employee and so did not have to pay into the state's public workers' union agency fee program. She held that her First Amendment rights were abrogated by paying those fees, the argument that the *Abood* decision had countered as a 'free-rider' excuse to have the benefits of union representation without paying for them. A narrow 5-4 decision held that Harris, et.al., whose job was not fully governed by the state authority, didn't have to be represented by the public-sector union.

Two years later, Rebecca Friedrichs and nine fellow public school teachers took the California Teacher Association to court arguing that the very bases of collective bargaining (salary, benefits, etc.) are inherently political because schools are funded by tax dollars and that as public employees, "the terms and conditions of their employment are inherently political decisions." (The Economic Policy Institute.)

Then, the conservative Center for Individual Rights coalition developed a unique strategy by agreeing that *Abood* had already addressed the Friedrichs' case, so they quickly plowed through the lower state courts in favor of the union. In so doing, they deprived the union of "calling witnesses, taking testimony, and conducting discovery and review of documents" to rule in favor of the union based solely on *Abood*. Why? "The lack of a trial record deprived the union of the opportunity to introduce evidence demonstrating the importance of fair share fees to the union's ability to collectively bargain and enforce the contract. The union asked the court for an opportunity to develop a factual record in Friedrichs, well aware that the court in *Harris* essentially said that a union must prove that fair share fees are necessary, which involves evidence of the effect of free-rider problem."

CIR opposed that request. The union was now without the ability to cite evidence to prove its arguments. The case went forward and was argued before SCOTUS in January 2016, but due to the death of Justice Scalia, the court tied 4-4. *Abood* was not overturned, but "the tie decision left the door open to continue the attack on fair share fees."

Which brings us back to Illinois, the setting for *Janus v. AFSCME*. Acknowledging that lower courts stood for *Abood*, Mark Janus, backed by the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation, took the tact of asking SCOTUS to review its previous decision. On June 27, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Janus and in favor of taking away the freedoms of working people to join together in strong unions.

Highlights from the Annual Meeting

By Neva Luke

Sixty-five retirees, the largest number of delegates ever, attended the WEA-Retired annual meeting June 6-7 at WEA Federal Way headquarters. The annual meeting's agenda includes business, visits from special guests, and fun.

Officers and Elections: One of the most important business items is the election of board directors, officers, and the executive committee. Delegates bid adieu to these Board Directors: Shirley Hickey (Kent), Karen Adlum (Rainier), Erma McKoy (Spokane), Jeannette Marquardt (WEA Cascade), and Evelyn Horne (WEA Riverside). We owe a huge debt of gratitude to these folks who were instrumental in organizing lunches, growing the membership, and so much more in their councils.

We congratulate and welcome these new Board Directors: Debby Strayer (Rainier), Maureen Ramos (Spokane), Bob Aline (Summit), Larry Nakatsu (WEA Cascade), and Gloria Smith (WEA Riverside).

Sharon White complete seven years as secretary (read more about Sharon on page 4 in this edition.) Congratulations to Pam Fuelling who will be taking over as secretary of WEA-Retired.

Kudos to Sam Hayes, Shirley Hickey, and Evelyn Horne who are our outgoing executive committee members. Delegates elected three new executive committee members: Linda Lease, Karen Quinn, and Maureen Ramos.

To all the outgoing folks, there are no words to express the gratitude that you deserve for your service and hard work. To all the incoming, I want to thank you and assure you that I and the other officers and board directors will support you in any way that we can.

Guests: Delegates were honored to have many special guests!

- Rep. Kristine Reeves, 30th LD (Federal Way), is a great supporter of education and has been very strongly outspoken in support of fully funded education.
- Rep. Mike Sells, 38th LD (Everett), was president of the Everett EA for 18 years, and served as the secretary-treasurer of the Snohomish County Labor Council since 1976.
- Tom McRoberts, WEA-Retired representative on the Public Employees Benefit Board, reported that containing the rising cost of drugs is one of the main concerns that the PEBB is grappling with. His main goal at this meeting was to listen to the delegates' concerns regarding health care and the insurance the PEBB provides. He and Julie Salvi, our WEA lobbyist, also answered questions posed by delegates.

- Julie Salvi, our lobbyist, reported that Plans 1 will receive a 1.5% increase on the first \$50,000 of their pension beginning this July. Participants in the Medicare Supplement will have an increase from \$150 to \$162/month beginning Jan. 1, 2019. She also reminded delegates to vote in the primaries and in November for education friendly legislators so we can continue to make gains in retirement and education.

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- Aimee Iverson, WEA General Counsel, reported that the Washington State Supreme Court found that the Legislature had completed its obligations in the McCleary case. However, it is clear that there is still a lot to do to make sure that students' needs are really met. She also urged delegates to participate in the elections, and lobby during the legislative session.
- Other guests included Kim Mead, WEA president, Stephen Miller, WEA vice president, and Pam Kruse, Franklin Pierce EA president and NEA board director.

When you see any of these individuals, please extend our WEA-Retired appreciation for their work!

Other highlights:

Delegates voted to donate \$250 to the WEA Children's Fund in memory of the WEA-Retired members who passed away during the past year. This has been a tradition of WEA-Retired for many years.

Karle Warren, seminar co-chair, reported that the volunteers of the pre-retirement seminars presented 49 workshops during the 2017-18 school year benefitting over 1,120 WEA active members.

WEA-Retired works in coalition with other groups that represent retirees including Retired Public Employees Council (RPEC), Washington State Alliance for Retired Americans (WSARA), Public Employees for Pension Responsibilities (PEPR), and the Senior Lobby.

Auction and banquet: Every year the Scholarship Committee has a banquet with an auction to raise money for scholarships and announces the current year's winners. This year there were eight \$1,000 scholarships awarded to WEA active members. There were 88 attendees, including several WEA actives and staff, who enjoyed a scrumptious dinner served by the Renton Technical College. There were many beautiful items available at the auction. Thanks to Ruth Nelson-Wright, and her daughter-in-law Jade Cooper for a very special donation of an original watercolor painting from the Cauthorn Collection. Jess Cauthorn (1923-2005) was born and educated in Seattle. He ran the Burnley School of Professional Art with his wife Colleen until it became the Art Institute of Seattle in 1982. His artwork is in permanent collections in the Seattle Art Museum, the Frye Museum, and the National Infantry Museum in Fort Benning, Georgia. Please visit their Facebook page to learn more about the Cawthorne Collection: www.facebook.com/pg/thecauthorncollection/posts/?ref=page_internal.

Next year, the Scholarship Committee plans to award 10 \$1,000 scholarships. You do not have to be a delegate to the Annual Meeting to attend the banquet.

Please watch for information on becoming a delegate and/or attending the scholarship banquet/auction! You can also keep up with information on the WEA-Retired website www.washingtonea.org/retired and the Facebook page www.facebook.com/groups/144705085545287/.