

WEST ALLIS-WEST MILWAUKEE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER
 September 2004

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Lynn Herbst

Welcome back to the 2004-05 school year!

And a special welcome to all of the new teachers who are beginning their careers in our school district. This is the time for our seasoned teachers to reach out to our new folks as they begin the school year. Anticipate their questions, include them in social events and bring them along to an RA-- always held on the second Wednesday of every month. Many of you may not have involved yourselves in any Association activities before. This is a critical time to get active! With an important presidential election coming up, along with many other local elections, every single teacher needs to be informed and involved. Do you know your legislator's voting record on legislation that impacts public education? You should.

So what can you do to become better-informed? Visit the Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC) website at www.weac.org. If you haven't registered, it's easy to do and allows you to access Members Only information. The Members Only Resource Page on Election 2004 includes articles about candidates and listings of recommended candidates who support quality public education. Articles will be added to this page throughout the election season. Visit the National Education Association (NEA) website at www.nea.org. You can find out NEA's position on all of the issues that impact public education, including ESEA, accountability and testing, school safety, and charter schools. You can learn about the education-related issues that Congress is currently considering and take action at the Legislative Action Center. And you can access a ton of useful information designed for educators. These are just a few of your member benefits, so take advantage of them!

And if you don't believe that your vote can make a difference, consider this: A statewide WEAC survey of school district superintendents reveals the harm school districts have suffered since revenue controls went into effect in 1993. Every year since then:

- **50%** of districts have delayed or reduced the purchase of computers and other technology
- **61%** delayed building maintenance or improvement projects

- **54%** limited programs for at-risk or gifted and talented students
- **42%** delayed or reduced textbook purchases
- **35%** increased class sizes
- **35%** offer fewer staff development opportunities for teachers

Governor Doyle's Task Force on Educational Excellence has made several important recommendations that they believe will be necessary to reverse this negative impact on our public schools. They believe that our state must do the following:

- **Move toward adequacy within the existing equalization system.** This may have the most long-term impact in the classroom. It would include increasing categorical aids for students with disabilities, students who are English-language learners, and students in schools with concentrations of poverty.
- **Increase state responsibility for education and reduce the school property tax.** This proposal involves three components: increasing the state sales tax rate from 5% to 6% and expanding the tax to cover a range of consumer and business services; using about \$1.4 billion of the sales tax revenue to reduce school property taxes; and using up to about \$100 million of the sales tax revenue for sales tax credit, targeted at lower-income taxpayers in order to offset the regressive nature of the sales tax increase.
- **Free teachers from the Qualified Economic Offer (QEO).** The QEO restricts the bargaining rights of teachers. Eliminating it would encourage a new bargaining environment which would make it easier to reach two goals: to hold down the rate of increase in health insurance and to link increases in teacher compensation more to acquisition of demonstrated teaching skills than to seniority and graduate education.

This is the time for all of our members to support candidates who will work to create and maintain great schools in the November elections. WEAC President Stan Johnson has stated that "This is the most important election of our lifetime. The future of our great schools is at stake. Support candidates who know what makes schools great: small class sizes, quality teachers and staff in every classroom, and up-to-date textbooks and materials."

Important Dates

- September 1** – Executive Board Meeting at UEP @ 4pm
- September 6** – Labor Day
- September 8** – RA Meeting at UEP @ 4pm
- September 13** – School Board Meeting at Adm Bldg @ 7pm
- September 20** – Communication Model Training with Principals & Head BRs at Adm Bldg @3:30pm
- September 22** – Labor-Management Meeting at Adm Bldg @ 4pm
- September 27** – School Board Meeting at Adm Bldg @ 7pm
- October 6** – Executive Board Meeting at UEP @ 4pm
- October 11** – School Board Meeting at Adm Bldg @ 7pm
- October 13** – RA Meeting at UEP @ 4pm: *Special Guest* WEAC VP Terry Meyer
- October 15** – Statewide I SEE RED Day
- October 25** – School Board Meeting at Adm Bldg @ 7pm
- October 28-29** – Teachers' Convention

Professional Rights and Responsibilities Report

Cathi Probst - Middle and High School Chairperson
 Gary Stewart – Elementary School Chairperson

It is imperative that all teachers understand their Professional Rights and Responsibilities as outlined in our Master Agreement. It can't be stressed enough, **please read your contract.** Case in point... A number of people brought forth the Tentative Agreement to the Negotiations Team and wondered why they had made changes or additions to contract language. In many cases, they referred to things there that had been in the contract for years. *No changes were made at all.* This is a perfect reason to read the document you agree to adhere to when you sign your contract.

If you feel that any of your rights are being infringed upon it is always best to go to your building principal first. If you feel uncomfortable doing so, please contact your Head Building Rep. Head Building Reps and Administrators throughout the District have been trained in using the Communications Model to resolve conflict. As this is a new method of dealing with conflict, we ask all of you to please work through the established system of steps. Attempting to address problems at the building level can alleviate many concerns. If you feel your efforts are in vain, then please contact one of us...via email at probst4wawmea@wi.rr.com / voice mail at Hale (3200 – x6722) or garystewart12@hotmail.com / voice mail at Jefferson (4100 – x2334) and we can assist you with any problems or situations

LINKS!!
As you begin your year, here are a few more resources for educators:
www.dpi.state.wi.us/pubsales is a great source for K-12 curriculum planning materials, offering a comprehensive assortment of online publications. If you want to receive the latest inside information about Wisconsin education and libraries in a weekly e-newsletter, you can subscribe by sending an email to: majordomo@badger.state.wi.us, leave the subject line blank, and enter "subscribe seachange" in the body of the message. And for more ideas for getting our kids to read, go to NEA's Read Across America website at www.nea.org/readacross/resources/bactoschool.html NEA 2004

that require more attention.

The following are some helpful hints as this year begins...

- Check your paychecks for accuracy
- Check your sick day accumulation document (this comes out quarterly)
- Make sure to document all parent contacts. It's a good idea to keep a logbook near your phone.
- If a parent teacher conference becomes negative, you have the right to stop this conference and request it continue in the presence of your administrator
- District email, Internet service and voice mail are the property of the School District and are open to scrutiny. Keep this in mind.
- It is our professional responsibility to maintain accurate records at the administration building. An item to pay special attention to is your teaching license. Last year, the printing of our seniority list was held up due to over 300 licenses that were not updated. Sanctions can be taken against a teacher who is not appropriately licensed or against a district for not having accurate licenses when audited by the state. Please remember to reapply for your license when you are nearing your expiration date and provide a copy of this updated license to the district as soon as possible.
- **Did we mention, please read your contract?**
- Special pages to pay attention to in the contract:
 - Prep time
 - Class sizes
 - Class size/EEN students
 - Duty free lunch
 - Faculty meetings

We hope each and every one of you has a healthy and happy start to 2004-2005.

Negotiations Report

Beth Ludeman,
 Negotiations Chair

On behalf of the Negotiations Team, I extend heartfelt thanks to the membership for ratifying the 2003-05 contract by such a large margin. We are gratified that the provisions bargained have been embraced on such a large scale, which really just bears out the professionalism for which West Allis-West Milwaukee educators are known. We are mindful that

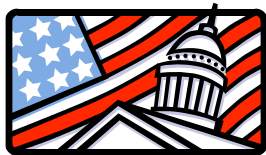
Other items to think about as we look forward to October/November:

Stop in and get retirement information at Teacher's Convention
Prospective retirees should contact Sandy Nass soon
Protection of Teachers – Its always a good idea to review this information
Students' Medical Needs – Make sure you have a copy of this document and are well aware of the special needs of your students
Evaluation Goals should have been set by October 1
Weingarten Rights – Remember, if you are having a meeting with an administrator that turns disciplinary in nature, you have the right to stop such a meeting and request representation from the Association.
If you are involved in a parent teacher conference that goes bad, you have the right to stop the conference and request that it resume in the presence of an administrator. Remember not to enter into an argument with parents.
A special notice to hunters: Please be aware that the districts' policy regarding weapons extends to you, and your hunting paraphernalia
Make sure to review the Board Policy about Sexual Harassment

there will be ongoing questions about the new District units, particularly during this practice year, and we look forward to shaping and refining the process via the Labor Management table. That refinement will only be meaningful if we are hearing from you about what is or is not working well, so we encourage your input. Don't forget that the red folders which were distributed during our initial inservice days in August contain the (cont. next page **Negotiations**)

(**Negotiations** cont.) procedures and examples for accumulating and documenting units. If your concerns are not addressed there, see your building reps for more clarification. They will have further training on these issues as the year progresses. You will want to know that the team has changed somewhat since last school year. With Barry Thompson retiring, and with an additional seat on the team that was still open, two members have been added to the negotiations team, which now consists of the full complement to which our local Constitution and Bylaws entitles us: Kathy Popa, a physical therapist for the District and a WA-WMEA Director, home school Irving Elementary and traveling to Central HS, West MS, among others; Chad Lehman, now a media specialist at Longfellow Elementary and Madison Elementary, also a WA-WMEA Director; Jill Miller, a social studies teacher at Central HS, and WA-WMEA's new Vice President; Cathi Probst, a social studies teacher at Nathan Hale HS and WA-WMEA's Secondary PR&R Chair; Lynn Herbst, a special education teacher at Franklin Elementary and WA-WMEA's President; Sandy Nass, West Suburban Council's Executive Director; and Yours Truly, a social studies teacher at Nathan Hale High School.

Welcome to both Jill and Cathi, who will make great additions to our team!



Legislative Report

Michelle Knaflie 8/17/04

Wisconsin News TABOR Update

At the end of July, the Senate was unexpectedly called back into session to consider a new version of TABOR. The Senate Joint Resolution was unveiled for the first time about an hour before it was sent to a hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee. (Thankfully, we have my very own, Tim Carpenter on this committee.) This new form of TABOR (SJR 76) was then voted down in committee and the bill subsequently died. So the possibility of passing the Taxpayer Bill of Rights has ended...for

this year anyway. The Senate will not vote on TABOR and therefore ends the possibility of passage before next January. The next session which is expected to open with debate on this issue begins in January. (Side note, TABOR must pass both houses during consecutive two-year legislative sessions before moving to voters in a statewide referendum...the earliest a constitutional amendment could be sent to the voters is now April 2007...lets not let that happen.)

National News Election '04

Both WEAC and NEA members have named six legislative priorities for candidates running for any office, and wanting our support. The issues are:

- ☞ Increasing funding for critical education programs
- ☞ Fixing and adequately funding the Elementary and Secondary Education Act
- ☞ Providing \$50 billion in unrestricted fiscal relief for states
- ☞ Opposing the use of public money for private and religious school vouchers and tax credits
- ☞ Repealing unfair Social Security offsets, and
- ☞ Providing guaranteed full funding for special education.

On Wednesday, June 30th, 2004, WEAC and NEA members completed the selection process of recommending Wisconsin candidates for U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate. The following recommendations have been made:

- U.S. Senator Russ Feingold
- Congressional District 2 - Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin
- Congressional District 3 - Congressman Ron Kind
- Congressional District 4 - State Senator Gwen Moore
- Congressional District 7 - Congressman David Obey.

Delegates to the NEA 2004 Representative Assembly, voted to accept the recommendation of Sen. John Kerry for U.S. President. The list of legislator recommendations is extensive, to see it in full. <https://www.weacm.org/content/Election2004/auto.cfm>



Pub Crawl or Golf Outing Anyone? Bridget Helfenstein

Now that I have your attention, as a new director to the executive board, I have taken on the daunting task of leading the fundraising activities for our association scholarship. Every year our association provides a five-hundred dollar scholarship to a senior graduating from both Central and Hale who is pursuing a career in the field of education.

Over the past couple of years, we have been raising money by the sale of spiritwear. Many have supported this effort by purchasing clothing with our association logo and we appreciate that. We still have a ton of coffee mugs available for sale to supplement our scholarship fund but we still need to do more.

This year I need several of you to join my committee to help organize a couple of FUN-fundraisers. So far possible ideas for hot money-makers are a pub crawl, golf outing or bowling benefit. These are not by any means set in stone. Please consider the fact that I do not golf, nor do I spend much time in bars at this point in my life. I also have never scored higher than a 100 in bowling...so, I NEED YOU to help raise money for the scholarships. I need your opinions about pubs to crawl to (or out of) and especially I need some golfers to help set up what this benefit would look like. Please contact me at rbhelfy@sbcglobal.net to come on board this worthwhile, not to mention, fun committee!

NEA Convention Chad Lehmann

This summer, I had the opportunity to attend the National Education Association Convention in Washington, DC. as a first-time delegate for the WAWM Education Association. Lynn Herbst, Beth Ludeman, and Cathi Probst also attended as delegates. The Convention was (cont. next page **NEA**) (**NEA** cont.) held July 2nd through July 7th in the nation's capitol and spending

time in DC over the 4th of July was quite an experience. Each day started at 7:00AM with a 2 hour caucus meeting to discuss the upcoming issues. Then we were off to the convention center for the NEA meeting which ran from about 10:00AM until about 4:30PM. Talk about some long days! Despite the schedule, it was quite a learning experience for me particularly in the area of how NEA generates its goals and statements, as well as its policies. Walking into the convention center on the first day was incredible. An enormous room held over 9,000 teachers and ESP's from all over the country all standing and cheering for public education. It was pretty amazing. Each state had its own location in the room, with Wisconsin's in one of the back corners. Throughout the convention, we discussed and voted on many new business items as well as set policies for the upcoming year. Elections for a number of NEA Executive Committee positions also took place with Wisconsin's Mark Cebulski of Cedarburg, winning a spot on the NEA Executive Committee. A couple of highlights from the convention included a speech by the National Teacher of the Year, Kathleen M. Mellor of Rhode Island, a surprise visit and speech from Senator Hillary Clinton, and a live speech via video conferencing from Presidential-hopeful John Kerry and his running mate, John Edwards. Attending the conference was certainly a learning experience for me and I'm thankful I was elected to represent our Association. Reg Weaver, the NEA president, had a strong message in his keynote to us on July 4th regarding education when he said, "Team NEA, we are the foot soldiers for democracy's foundation -- public education -- and we are on the move! Defend democracy, defend public education, and defend the opportunity for all children to have access to a quality public education."

Volunteers Needed!!

You are your association! You can make a difference! Building Reps will frequently be making face-to-face contact with all of you during the next two months. They will be focusing on getting membership information from all the new and veteran members during the month of September, as well as collecting money for the recommended candidates during the month of October. Therefore it is imperative that we get more volunteers within each building who will distribute (face-to-face) the "Get out the Vote" packets on October 14, as well as the palm cards on November 1. This distribution needs to happen during the 30 minute duty-free lunch or better yet, as teachers exit the building after school on November 1st. If you have not done any political activities to hopefully change the political climate for the better, please give your building reps a hand by stepping up and getting involved with this most important task!



From the Editor:

Articles for the newsletter can be submitted to me at sandhill@centurytel.net or via interdepartmental mail to Irving School. Deadline for the next newsletter is October 11, 2004.

Kathryn Popa

