

# The Word

FEBRUARY  
2008



## A Message From Our President **Beth Ludeman**

### Billions and Billions of Reasons to Vote

Early next week, voters in Wisconsin will be participating in one of the most intriguing presidential elections in modern history. February 19th is the Wisconsin’s electorate’s opportunity to impact the future of our country’s highest office, and therefore, to decide the fate of public education, its funding, and its function. The next administration to occupy the White House will have a lot of catching up to do to make up for the lack of support the Bush legacy has handed the children of our nation.

While Congress has been working to reform No Child Left Behind based on feedback from educators nationwide, the Bush has stubbornly refused to cooperate. An NEA report last month indicated that “on the eve of NCLB’s sixth anniversary, a federal appeals court ruled that Education Secretary Margaret Spellings is violating the Spending Clause of the Constitution by requiring states and school districts to spend their own funds to comply with the law. Bush has left children behind every year, underfunding every aspect of NCLB. Six years

**Inside This Issue**

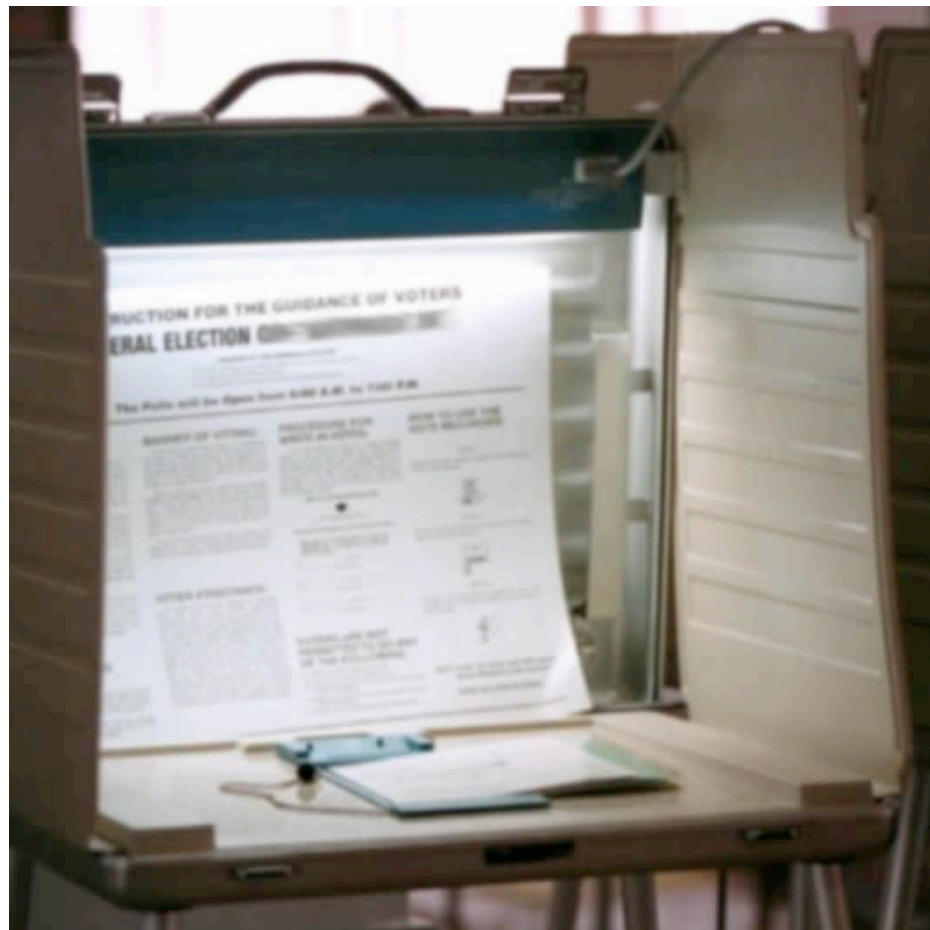
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**WAWMEA**  
Highly Qualified Teachers  
Who Care About Kids!

ago, Bush promised to fully fund the law. But the president has consistently refused to make good on his promises. Due to Bush's recent veto of the fiscal year 2008 education appropriations bill, there will be a \$14.8 billion gap in funding for NCLB programs. That is on top of the previous cumulative gap of \$56.1 billion." Yup, you read that right; funding gaps *in the billions*.

We have all felt the consequences of this lack of support in West Allis-West Milwaukee schools. Growing class sizes and increased demands for student achievement data are just two of the unfortunate hallmarks of a system that seems poised to implode at any moment. There was a time at which the decisions relative to educating West Allis' children was driven by school board members, who were elected by the community. These days, more often than not, races for board seats go uncontested. In the past, this month's primary would have included a slate of candidates for local school board to narrow down for the April general election. That, too, has repercussions for the direction our district goes.

So wouldn't it be great to change the course we have been struggling with for the last several years? Get out there and vote – for a candidate that represents your interests and ideals when it comes to education. See you at the polls!



## PR&R

### Peggy Oberbeck - Secondary

- Issues at WMMS - The building staff and the Association have requested that we reconvene the committee from last year.
  - Realignment - Joan Delaney is meeting with staff and will continue to get answers to their questions. We are aware of the anxiety that exists for our members.
  - Traveling teachers - Deb Rouse has indicated, "You can just attach a memo to the mileage reimbursement form that shows the number of total days in the year, less days absent, multiplied by the daily mileage, multiplied by the mileage rate. Remember to separate mileage between 2007 (48.5 cents) and 2008 (50.2 cents) because the IRS reimbursement has changed."
  - Personal Rights and Responsibilities - Discussion at the RA will address some of the following questions: Many of us just wish to know what actions are deemed inappropriate. Our membership needs to know what the parameters are when in such a situation. We need to tell the membership what the district expectations are, and what their legal responsibilities are.
  - Role of the Association in a disciplinary situation - Discussion at the RA will address questions about disciplinary procedures beyond the building level: What happens in the Superintendents office? Secondly, can a union member ask for legal representation at disciplinary meetings and have that representation covered by our union dues?
  - Dress Code - A notice has been sent to the Central HS Administration that a dress code for teachers is a mandatory subject of bargaining.
  - Changes in the Unit Approval Process for MA District Units - If the course was already described in the catalog for the MA, it does not need to be submitted for approval again. Unless they are electives that are not included in the approved MA program, then it is assumed that the person will submit them for units. A transcript or final grade report will be verification of the course for the Final Record of Units For Advancement on Salary Schedule.
  - Sally Ride Courses - Teachers do not need course approval for Sally Ride courses that are offered in West Allis (not Waukesha or West Bend). For other districts offering Sally Ride, course approval still WILL need to be submitted. A transcript or final grade report will be verification of the course for the Final Record of Units For Advancement on Salary Schedule
  - Did you forget to have a course approved in the past? Contact the Human Resource office with a course description and verification of the grade. There is a possibility that courses may be granted retroactive approval.
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## The Buck Stop Greg Wall Treasurer

Thought you might like to know:

Educator Expense Tax Deduction - Eligible educators can deduct up to \$250 for expenses on 2007 tax form.

Internal Revenue Service - Look for the "Educator Expense" line item when you prepare your taxes for 2007. You can deduct qualified expenses up to \$250 even if you do not itemize deductions on Form 1040, Schedule A.

If you are an eligible educator, you can deduct up to \$250 on the 2007 federal tax form for unreimbursed expenses you paid or incurred for books, supplies, computer equipment (including related software and services), other equipment, and supplementary materials used in the classroom.

For teachers in health and physical education, expenses for supplies are qualified expenses only if they are related to athletics.

You can deduct these expenses even if you do not itemize deductions on Form 1040, Schedule A. This deduction is for expenses paid or incurred during the tax year. The deduction is claimed on line 23 of Form 1040.

You are an eligible educator if, for the tax year, you meet the following requirements:

You are a kindergarten through grade 12:

Teacher - Instructor - Counselor - Principal, or Aide

You work at least 900 hours a school year in a school that provides elementary or secondary education, as determined under state law.

Qualified expenses are deductible only to the extent the amount of such expenses exceeds the following amounts for the tax year:

- The interest on qualified U.S. savings bonds that you excluded from income because you paid qualified higher education expenses,
- Any distribution from a qualified tuition program that you excluded from income, or
- Any tax-free withdrawals from your Coverdell Education Savings Account.

For additional information regarding personal credits and any alternative minimum tax (AMT), refer to [Publication 17](#), Your Federal Income Tax.

## "You"-nion News Angela Bina

We will be hosting a "Coffee Talk" contract-review session on Thursday, March 6 from 4:00-5:00; the place still needs to be determined. "Coffee Talk" is intended to be a review session of our current contract (05-07) hopefully covering areas where there are many questions (i.e. the salary schedule). It is NOT intended to be a forum for complaints. We will do our best to answer individual questions, but we will go over most areas in a general way. Look for a special email (or two) about this event. We hope to see you there.

### February

22 - 24

WEAC Winter Conference

25

WAWM Board of Education -  
ADM BLDG 7:00 pm  
Irving School

### March

10

WAWM Board of Education -  
ADM BLDG 7:00 pm  
Central High School

12

WAWMEA RA UEP 4:00

## Upcoming Items of Interest

Lynn Herbst

### Public Relations Chair

Celebrate Black History Month - February is Black History Month, and to help you celebrate African-American history and culture, the NEA website has put together a collection of websites that provide educational materials, lesson plans, and other helpful resources. Visit

<http://www.nea.org/webresources/blackhist05.html>.

Mark Your Calendars: Read Across America Day is March 3, 2008 – Have you considered creating a Read Across America event? Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Consult your principal and obtain approvals. Most will not only support your efforts, they will become actively involved. If your principal hasn't heard of the program, refer him or her to this website. Then look at your school's calendar and choose a date to celebrate. The official day in 2008 is March 3. If this conflicts with another event, feel free to pick a different day. Some schools celebrate the week before or after.
- Consult with your school librarian. It's likely that he or she is already familiar with Read Across America and may have ideas to offer. Reserve books in advance - there may be a run on Dr. Seuss titles!

- Ask other teachers if they are making plans. Consider coordinating your efforts for a school-wide event.
- Invite guest readers to come to your class on March 3 and read to your students. By far, this is the most popular activity. There is something powerful about a policeman, firefighter, mayor, radio personality, pastor, high school quarterback, or grandmother sharing their love for reading. Be sure and ask your guests to talk about why reading is important in their lives, and about their favorite books when they were kids. Afterwards, have your students write thank-you notes.
- Make certificates of participation for your students. Children appreciate tangible acknowledgement of their efforts. You can download a pre-designed certificate from NEA's materials area, plus other fun things.
- Send information home to parents, along with parent reading tips, also available at NEA's website. Some parents may offer to help, and a few may volunteer to be guest readers.
- Don't forget to contact the WAWMEA to let us know about your plans. Digital photos and articles can be forwarded to this newsletter.

Go to

<https://www.nea.org/readacross/resources/basics.html> and start planning!

Teach But Don't Touch – Practical information is offered to all school employees for avoiding false allegations of improper conduct with students at

<https://www.nea.org/membersonly/news/images/tbdt-bw.pdf>.

This article provides some common sense pointers for avoiding false allegations, including the following:

- Whenever possible, never be alone with a student.
- Always maintain a professional demeanor and distance.
- As a general rule, avoid physical contact with students.
- Avoid using physical force to enforce discipline.
- Be particularly wary of troubled students.

Also discussed is the importance of facing down false accusations: One student, one accusation, and a teacher's life can be changed forever. It also offers some ideas about what to do if the unthinkable happens.

Technology Tools for Engaging Diverse Students Workshop – The University of Wisconsin-Madison Office of Education Outreach will present a one-day workshop entitled "Technology Tools Engaging Diverse Students in Meaningful Learning Activities that Enhance Academic Achievement" on Tuesday, February 26 in Madison. The workshop will focus on a variety of technology tools that teachers can use to support and engage diverse students in learning activities that have traditionally been difficult to complete. The context for the workshop will be established by reviewing WKCE and federal student achievement data and discussing the implications of adequate



Teachers take advantage of PDP Verification Team Workshop offered by WSC on Saturday, February 9, 2008.

yearly progress monitoring. Participants will be introduced to resources that outline effective, research-based instructional strategies and will be able to access state and federal student achievement data to discuss the implications of using learning outcome data. The registration fee of \$150 includes lunch, refreshments and workshop materials. Register online at [www.education.wisc.edu/outreach](http://www.education.wisc.edu/outreach) or by phone at (608) 262-0810. For more information about this workshop, contact Sue Schroeder at (608) 263-0951 or [sueschroeder@education.wisc.edu](mailto:sueschroeder@education.wisc.edu).

Teachers as Park Rangers – The Teacher to Ranger to Teacher (TRT) Program offers an opportunity for all Americans to connect to their national heritage through the national parks by linking National Park units with teachers from low income school districts. Selected teachers will spend the summer working as park rangers. They will perform various duties depending on their interests and the needs of the park, including developing and presenting interpretive programs for the general public, staffing the visitor center desk, developing curriculum-based materials for the park, or taking on special projects. During the school year, these teacher-rangers will bring the parks into the classroom by developing and presenting curriculum-based lesson plans that draw on their summer's experience. In April, during National Park Week, teacher-rangers will wear their NPS uniforms to school, discuss their summer as a park ranger, and engage students and other teachers in activities that relate to America's national parks. For additional information about the Teacher Ranger program go to [www.nps.gov/wupa/forteachers/trt.htm](http://www.nps.gov/wupa/forteachers/trt.htm).

