

F A Q for WAWMEA Membership

1) Why do we have to do sign up now? Why can't we wait until September? Why do I need to provide a check now (if I'm going to join but not do the EFT)?

There is a need to complete as much of the enrollment as possible before the end of the school year. We will be able to use the time between Friday and the end of the year to follow-up with people who have questions, special circumstances, are on leaves now or going on leaves next year, etc. It is always more difficult to try to catch people during the summer and it is not possible to enroll 98,000 members on September 1st. The problem with not providing the check now is that no one can plan on you being enrolled as we prepare budgets and staffing for next year. We must base programs, services, and staffing on the "known" membership.

2) Why do we have to sign up with a membership form right now? Couldn't we use a "letter of intent" just as the District has used with us?

WEAC and the NEA are looking into other options for the future, but at this time we have limited options and we are trying to make it as easy as possible for the majority of members. As indicated earlier, we are more than willing to address as many individual concerns about the method of payment as we can.

3) What am I really getting for my \$800? Shouldn't the Association cut its rate since we are all losing 12-15% of our income with the Memorandum of Understanding?

The vast majority of the money is used for representation, training, bargaining, ongoing labor/management issues. Like schools, the largest portion of the money is used for staffing. The Organizing Committee at your building should have a series of charts that show what the actual budget breakdown of costs/services for the UniServ, WEAC, and the NEA. The Association will actually be providing a higher level of service as there will be no contract and we will need to be bargaining/lobbying directly with the school board, state legislature, and school administrators regarding policy and using other state laws to hold employers accountable. Instead of filing a grievance that has binding arbitration as a final outcome, we will be filing prohibited labor practices which go into the court system and are very costly. Fortunately, we have WEAC attorneys who do not bill by the hour, but are salaried, so no matter how many hours, days, weeks, or months a case takes, there is no additional cost to the employee. As time permits, Sandy Nass is trying to put together a sample from the previous year that would show the types of things that the dues are used for, but all work logs have the actual issue and names of individuals which due to confidentiality, cannot be shared so she is working on a different alternative.

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4) What about liability insurance? What about the American Association of Educators (AAE)?

There are liability insurances and there are liability insurances. AAE is trying to sell people on their policy for only \$15 per month—you get what you pay for—there is no local representation, you must pay for claims/attorney fees in advance and then submit claims to them and they will decide if the claim should be covered. If they have already expended their annual maximum, your claim will not be covered. We recently had a member seek out liability insurance through an insurance agency and was told the cost would be \$1500 per year depending on the subject taught. Also, newly posted on our website is information regarding the NEA Professional Liability Insurance. You can find our website here: <http://www.wawmea.org>

5) If I go with a different liability insurance, I can get coverage right away. Why do we have to wait 30 days for representation from our Association/WEAC if we don't sign up before September 1?

The 30 day waiting period was determined by WEAC in an effort to address the individual who decides they do not need to be a member and have the benefits and representation UNTIL something happens and then they want to rush to join. Should they do so, and have their issues addressed, arbitrated, or whatever is necessary, they may then decide to quit as the union took care of them. That type of situation is unfair to other members.

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7) How much of our dues is used for political action?

Very little of dues is used for political action and that amount can be rebated. Employee representation is the number one use of dues. Unfortunately, we are in a situation where bargaining for employee rights has become a state legislature issue. This is a foreign concept to us as we have always worked directly with the School District Boards. That option has been changed to both take away some of the local options and at the same time to give Boards more power in some areas. School Board members (the employer) have a new roll and it is up to us to make sure that they are up to the job and if not, we will need to work to replace them.

8) With the MOU, is the District obligated to follow what has been laid down, or can they still do their own thing?

IF the Budget repair bill is allowed to become law, the District will have the option to modify, maintain, or delete any provision that is not addressed in the MOU. The salary for next year is known and will not change even with the BRB becoming law. The District will either have to bargain over wages under the existing contract or if the BRB becomes law over the base wage, which has not yet been defined after the MOU expires. The entire state is looking to move to either a merit pay or a performance pay system which could be a dramatic shift in how compensation is paid. We will still be bargaining over that as long as the union recertifies in the fall.

9) How can the district know what our expense will be for insurance next year, but not the deductible or co-pay amounts? Are these things not settled? Do we know who the insurance carrier will be? When we will know?

We have used the cost for this year and the renewal rate for the same plan for next year as the basis for comparison. Therefore we know what the cost will be if nothing changes. The 10% premium contribution and cost reductions are premised on those amounts. There is an insurance committee that includes Deb Rouse, Mary Capel, Jeff Sikich, Jill Miller, Eden Steigerweld, Todd Beutin, and Sandy Nass. The committee has spent time reviewing the current plan and which options are available utilizing the same carrier and plan options which would include changes as an example in deductibles, co-pays, drug card options, etc. The District has hired an insurance consultant (on a fee basis, not a commission) and we are also going to be looking at other providers. The quality of the plan is a huge issue, and cheaper is not always better, so it will be a difficult decision. Because they are getting bids from other companies, that information will not be available until June. That is one reason why there will be no change until at least October.

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10) What if I still have more questions and/or reservations about membership?

Please keep talking with us and asking those questions. They may be hard, and some answers may not be exactly what you want to hear, but that is the nature of the beast right now. A great place to start is the Association's website: <http://www.wawmea.org> We look forward to you continuing your membership with our local to grow it stronger and better than ever. We have never needed each other more than now.