

Report from the WEA-RA Floor

The Washington Education Association-Representative Assembly was held in Spokane from the evening of May 13th to the afternoon of May 15th. The members representing the Oak Harbor Education Association were Alan Bailey (OHMS), Kim Finnigan (OHE), Kathy Ridle (OHE), Duane Sisto (OHMS), Peter Szalai (OHMS), and Mike Watson (CHE).

Keynote speakers at the assembly were The Honorable Governor Christine Gregoire, Bill Gates, Sr. (speaking about Initiative 1098), and National Education Association (NEA) President Dennis Van Roekel.

During the assembly, representatives debated and voted on sixteen new business items. New Business Item (NBI) A asked WEA members to endorse and support Initiative 1098 which would establish a tax on high income, reduce or exempt certain business and occupation taxes, and direct any resulting increased revenues to education and health services. The Representative Assembly (RA) voted to approve this item. You can find information about this initiative at www.YesOn1098.com

NBI B was titled “Common Sense Education Reform”. The background stated that with the passage of education reform legislation, WEA is in a position to partner with external organizations and education stakeholders to make gains in common sense education reform. One of the recommendations was that WEA provide training opportunities for councils and locals to empower leaders, members and staff to organize and bargain as accountability and education reforms are implemented. The RA voted to approve this item.

NBI C dealt with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). It recommended that the WEA clearly articulate and advocate solutions surrounding the reform and coordinate internally with NEA and community allies to prevail over unproven “neo-reform”. This NBI was approved by the assembly.

NBI D was about transitioning from Active to Retired membership. The recommendations address the issues of transition from active membership to involved retiree membership. The RA voted to approve this item.

NBI E was titled “Awareness of VEBA Program”. The background of the item stated that many locals don’t have a Voluntary Employees’ Beneficiary Account (VEBA) plan available for sick leave cash out when an employee retires or separates from service. The recommendation was that WEA provide assistance to UnivServ Councils and their locals in obtaining information about VEBA accounts for sick leave cash out. NBI E was approved by the assembly.

NBI F dealt with the Pro Teach Support Program. The recommendation was that WEA explore an optional, cost effective support program for member candidates in the ProTeach portfolio process. This NBI was approved by the assembly.

NBI G was titled “Harkins Education Job Bill Action”. The Harkins Education Job Bill has passed the House and must now pass the Senate. It will mean three thousand education jobs in Washington state. The recommendation of this NBI was that WEA encourage members to contact our Senators and thank Senator Murray for signing on to the Harkins Education Job Bill and ask Senator Cantwell to sign on as well. The RA voted to approve this item.

NBI 1 dealt with federal forest monies. After much debate, the assembly voted to refer this item to the proper committee.

NBI 2 recommended that the WEA boycott Arizona as long as the new immigration law is in existence. The boycott would prohibit WEA from sending delegates or members to events, conferences, trainings, assemblies, or meetings that are held in the state of Arizona. This NBI was passed by the assembly.

NBI 3 passed. It dealt with electrical transmission lines passing through or near schools.

NBI 4 and NBI 5 were withdrawn from consideration by the maker.

NBI 6 was titled "First and Second Reading for Comprehensive Board Decisions". This NBI was ruled out of order by President Lindquist.

NBI 7 dealt with dues spent on initiatives and referenda. The recommendation of this NBI was that WEA e-mail the membership within three days and prominently display on the WEA website within three days any WEA Board or state officer decision to spend dues dollars to support or oppose Initiatives or Referenda, or endorse or oppose State legislation. This NBI failed.

NBI 8 recommended that WEA provide a page listing basic action items and their estimated costs included in the delegate representative packets commencing in 2011. This NBI failed.

NBI 9 was split into two parts after much discussion. NBI 9A recommended that WEA allow the Board to vote on any WEA endorsements of P-12 educational legislation that will affect members' careers. This NBI failed. NBI 9B recommended that WEA develop reforms that provide more resources to high poverty districts that are subject to educational reforms. I am sorry to say that I failed to record whether or not this NBI passed or failed.

NBI 10 dealt with reading research. The background of this NBI stated that the report of the subgroups of the National Reading Panel forms the basis for No Child Left Behind and L.E.A.R.N. The summary booklet used by Reading First contradicts the report. The recommendation was that WEA recommend all members review the reading research available at www.nationalreadingpanel.org. This NBI passed.

The RA adopted New Resolution #1. It dealt with living wages for all education employees.

New Resolution #2 which recommended that the WEA support the presence of certified medical professionals at high school athletic competitions that involve contact did not pass.

New Resolution #3 which recommended that WEA oppose legislation or regulations that restrict, prevent or eliminate education employment based on one's accent was approved by the assembly.

New Resolution #4 which states "that the WEA believes in building awareness, understanding, and acceptance which promotes peace through the use of words as an option to solve and resolve conflict" was adopted by the assembly.

New Resolution #5 which dealt with bargaining members rights also passed.

2010 Amendment to Continuing Resolution D-8 which dealt with Professional Certification guidelines failed.

The proposed amendment to Continuing Resolution E-16, which was titled "Planning and Consultation Time" was adopted.

The 2011 Washington Education Association – Representative Assembly will be held in May in Tacoma. Please consider running for election as a delegate to the assembly. Elections for this position are generally held in November. It is a great opportunity for members to take part in the “business” of our union. I highly recommend that you give it a try!

Respectfully submitted by:

Kathy Ridle

2010 WEA-RA Delegate