



**Lyon
County
Education
Association**

Steve Fargan

President

Val Friskey

Vice President

Dick Mesna

Treasurer

Jane Claar

Secretary

Email:

lcea@lcea-nv.org

Web Site:

<http://www.lcea-nv.org>

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The Tutorial Enterprise

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GPO/WEP REPEAL: New Vigor In An Old Fight!

By Ken Buhrmann, NEA Director

In December of 2008, I attended an NEA National Committee meeting in Washington, D.C. I am passing along to you the most current up-date on NEA's efforts to repeal this very unfair law – Government Pension Offset/Windfall Elimination Provision. As I reported in the past, there was little about some action taken by the 110th Congress to repeal GPO/WEP. In November of 2007 over 100,000 signatures on petitions from all states was delivered to Congress. At that time the Senate conducted hearings (lead by Senator Kerry) on the repeal and in January of 2008, the House of Representatives held hearings on the repeal as well. After that progress was slow as then President Bush let it be known that if the repeal bill came to his desk he would veto it immediately. Unfortunately there were not enough votes in the Senate to override the President's veto. Now we have a new era and administration in Washington, D.C.! Expectations are running high. Already bills are prepared and ready to be introduced into the 111th Congress to repeal GPO/WEP. Senators D. Feinstein of California and S. Collins of Maine have SB385 ready to go in the Senate. Representatives H. Berman and H. McKeon both of California have HB 352 set up and ready for introduction into the House of Representatives. At the present time all returning Representatives that have previously signed on are again on board as well as all those returning to the Senate – 300+ in the House and 40+ in the Senate.

At this time NEA is setting up various strategies for putting GPO/WEP repeal on the fast track. There are plans to start cadres to push for grassroots support in all fifty states to encourage all those congressmen who have not signed on to do so. Nevada's cadre has been set up and working for a long time now. The cadre is currently headed by your NEA Directors, Tom Wellman and Ken Buhrmann. Nevada has all its Congress delegates signed on with the exception of Senator Ensign who keeps insisting that repeal of GPO/WEP will allow "double-dipping" by public employees and teachers. Also NEA is planning a big push to recruit retirees to mass "cyber lobby" all representatives and to "spread the word" throughout states on the efforts to repeal GPO/WEP and inform individuals about the issue. More information on this will be forthcoming as soon as we hear from NEA. There is also a push to have all state legislatures that are affected by GPO/WEP to pass a resolution to send to Congress to support repeal of this unfair law.

Now for a reality check – do not expect action on this issue in Congress until approximately May. With a new Congress facing extreme economic issues and concerns, realistically this will be the first order of business. Next will come the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind, which has been postponed for a year and has to be addressed this year by law. But fear not – GPO/WEP will NOT be put on the back burner and will be running a fast second in this horse race.

Finally, I have included as an insert in this issue (see the next page) a letter from now President Obama to NEA and all its members. We have in writing his full commitment to repeal GPO/WEP as well as protecting and expanding Social Security benefits for all working Americans. NEA and your state and local leadership plan on making sure President Obama keeps his word. You will find this letter to be very interesting as well as reassuring. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me in the office either by phone or by e-mail. The future of GPO/WEP repeal looks brighter than ever. It still will take much work and patience to get full repeal, but the process has vigor and a new life filled with promise. I will keep you informed of new developments as they materialize.

BARACK OBAMA

Dear NEA Members,

I appreciate the opportunity to share a few thoughts about your retirement and what I will do to protect you and make sure you get the benefits you've earned. Nobody should be penalized for serving our children, and that's why I support repealing the GPO/WEP and will work to do so as President.

As you know, the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset have a serious detrimental impact on hundreds of thousands of educators and your spouses. That's why as a Senator I co-sponsored the Social Security Fairness Act, which would repeal these provisions. The first provision cuts the spousal benefits of some public employees, while the second cuts the Social Security benefits that some public employees earned themselves.

These provisions also hurt police officers, firefighters, and other public employees. I believe that we have a responsibility to take care of workers who have devoted their lives to public service and that we shouldn't discourage young people from working in these essential jobs at a time when so many teachers are at or near retirement age and we're struggling to replace them.

I will work to repeal GPO and WEP, but I won't stop there. We need to think now about how we provide retirement security for today's retirees and workers retiring 20 or 30 more years down the road. Let me tell you about my comprehensive plan.

It starts with protecting Social Security. It is one of the most successful social programs in American history, and we need to preserve and maintain it, without risky privatization plans. I will work to forge a bipartisan consensus that will keep the program financially secure for future generations. I will also encourage personal savings and hold companies to their pension promises by reforming the bankruptcy code so that companies do not use it to take benefits away from their workers. And since almost half of full-time workers do not have a job with a retirement savings plan, my retirement security plan will automatically enroll workers in a workplace pension plan. I will also expand the existing Savers Credit to match 50 percent of the first \$1,000 of savings for families that earn under \$75,000, and make the credit refundable. Coupled with the automatic workplace pension plan, this proposal will stimulate tens of millions of new Americans to invest for their retirement.

Improving retirement security for educators through sensible steps like these will be a high priority for me as President. I greatly appreciate the support I have from the NEA, and I look forward to working with you as President to create the changes we all want to see in our country.

Sincerely,



Barack Obama



Obama for America PO Box 8210 Chicago IL 60680
www.barackobama.com

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NEA's Read Across America, March 2, 2009

By Steve Fargan, LCEA President

For the fifth consecutive year the Lyon County Education Association Executive Board has unanimously approved an Association buy-out day in order for me to participate in NEA's Read Across America. I greatly appreciate being given the opportunity to share my love of reading with students all over Lyon County.

This year I was given the opportunity to experience an additional Read Across America event at the Nevada State Legislature when I appeared as NSEA's "The Cat in the Hat" representative in a session of the Nevada State Assembly while Assemblyman Bernie Anderson read "Marvin K. Mooney, Will You Please Go Now?" and a session of the Nevada State Senate while Senator Joyce Woodhouse read from "Oh, The Places You Will Go."

However, this was only a small portion of my day. I started in the morning delivering a couple of mini-grant checks to Brad Rowe and Heather Rogaczewski at Smith Valley Schools. Next, I visited Yerington Elementary and read "Yertle the Turtle" to mini-grant winner, Celia Higgins' 2nd grade class. I followed that up with a reading of my favorite Dr. Seuss book "Green Eggs and Ham" to mini-grant winner Holly Koscinski's early childhood students. Then, I fulfilled a reading request by Val Friskey and Cindy Darden at Dayton Elementary. After a Legislative lunch break I returned to Dayton and read to the classes of Dayton Intermediate's mini-grant winners Carol Goodfellow, Anne Jolly, and Dusti Houk. After that, I headed to Fernley Intermediate and read to the classes of mini-grant winners Arvella Jergusen and Vicki Gale. I walked next door to Fernley Elementary and presented mini-grants to Jane Claar and Shauna Ray-Ruff. I also read to Shauna Ray-Ruff's class. The next stop on my whirlwind tour of Fernley was Cottonwood Elementary where I read to mini-grant winner Sandy Goerke's class. I finished the day fulfilling another reading request by Tom Stahly at Silver Springs Elementary.

I drove well over 200 miles, read to hundreds of smiling, laughing students, and loved every minute of it. I look forward to taking another tour in my tuxedo next year.

P.S. The thank you letters from Cindy Darden's and Tom Stahly's students really warmed my heart. I greatly appreciate it.

2009 Pacific Regional Leadership Conference

By Ms. Dane McFall, Association Representative, Yerington High School

I would like to thank LCEA Members once again for allowing me the opportunity to go to the Pacific Regional Leadership Conference. I attended these sessions: The Impact of the Reauthorized Higher Education Act, Making Higher Ed More Relevant to K-12, ESEA Update, and NEA's Read Across America. Classes were very informative and they updated members with the status of changes in education with the new presidential administration. Next year, I will be implementing a project pertaining to Read Across America at the high school level.

Attending PRLC is a Learning Experience!

By Jane Claar, LCEA Secretary

This year I was fortunate in being selected at one of our quarterly UCN (Uniserv Council of Nevada) meetings which funded my travel to Seattle, Washington for the annual Pacific Regional Leadership Conference. The conference is a wealth of educational and political issues that affect our states, leaders and teachers. They have a large menu of topics of great interest in all areas for participants to select and learn. There is also a state meeting called a Caucus which every state holds during the conference. Nevada's was led by our President, Lynne Warne who updated everyone there on what is happening currently in Nevada that affects all the members of NSEA, especially what is happening in the Legislature.

One of the sessions that I selected to attend was what is happening in the legal and political areas of our judicial system. The expert at this session was a Washington State representative who was very knowledgeable about not only the Legislative Representatives in Washington State, but also in the Judicial areas there. She informed us that the Right Wing Conservatives who traditionally attack education with the false stories about what is happening in education are now going after judges. They try to get someone elected who has not supported education in the past and take the place of a judge who seems to be very fair minded and probably looks at all sides of an issue. They have been successful in removing good judges who have been blind-sided, so to speak, and not in the position to pay for a big campaign because they didn't know they were being targeted. These organizations in Washington band together and focus on someone as a group, thus being able to finance with a lot of money an unknown candidate who will be prone to support their way out causes. The presenter warned us that if it's happening in Washington State, it will move to other states soon.

Another great session I attended was about technology. One of the interesting things I learned there was that the reason many companies out-source their technology to foreign countries was not only that it's cheaper, but the students in foreign countries are taught to communicate better than our students and also write better. Even if our graduates were hired for the technical jobs that are out there...they can't do as good of a job as what the companies are hiring in the foreign countries for less money. They can go in to a foreign country and change a whole school system there. Here in America, schools can only be changed one at a time. The system isn't set up to change it all together.

One of the last sessions that I attended was a very good overview of a new program that NEA has initiated because of a New Business Item (or NBI as it is called at RA) that was passed at one of the Representative Assemblies in the recent past. A training program has been set up for teams to be trained in each state to go out and give free trainings to ELL or ESL teachers in states that have high populations of English Language Learners. This program is now in place, but must be funded in future budgets of NEA programs and will only be funded if we as NEA members and staffing in schools, ask for the program to be funded. It's our organization, and they listen to what members ask for, but only if the members let them know what they want. We can't sit back and wait for things to happen if they don't have our input. This training for the Team Trainers will take place this summer of 2009 here in Nevada if it is funded at RA this summer in San Diego. I put in my Budget request at the Budget hearing that was held at the PRLC in Seattle by our Treasurer, Becky Pringle.

Anyone can go to PRLC if they want to pay for the registration next year. It will be held in Reno, Nevada at the Peppermill. Early registration is around \$175-\$200 per person, and includes all your meals during the conference. That is Friday night dinner, breakfast on Saturday and Sunday, and lunch on Saturday. Saturday night is always on your own for the meal. It's a wonderful opportunity to learn a lot about what is happening in education all around the United States. You can learn more about your state's plan for better conditions for all teachers and students, and you can meet and collaborate with teachers all throughout the Pacific Region. The states that we meet with are Hawaii, California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Nevada, and Alaska. Next year President Warne has advised us that those attending all sessions at the PRLC will receive one hour Nevada State Department credit for no additional cost in their registration. It's a great opportunity for everyone to participate. Plan to attend!

2009 NEA Pacific Regional Leadership Conference

By Steve Fargan

I attended the NEA Pacific Regional Leadership Conference in Seattle, Washington, the weekend of February 13-16, 2009.

On Friday night we were welcomed to the conference by the keynote speaker, NEA President, Dennis Van Roekel, getting us off to a great start.

On Saturday I attended four sessions. Two sessions were held Saturday morning and two sessions were held Saturday afternoon.

The first session I attended on Saturday morning was “Identifying, Recruiting and Involving New Leaders.” This session had two presenters from the California Teachers Association, Bill Fisher and Joe Krause. They gave many examples of how to get more members more involved in the Association.

“Using Election Successes to Shape a Better Policy Agenda” was the second morning session I attended. This session had two presenters from NEA Campaign and Elections, Tricia Bosak and Trish Welte. Hearing about the electoral victories of NEA endorsed candidates in the Pacific Region and across the nation gives me hope during the challenging times we are currently in.

The first Saturday afternoon I attended “NEA’s Read Across America: Tips and Tools for Mobilizing Members.” This session had three presenters, Karen Watters, NEA Board of Directors, Oregon, Anita Merina, NEA Public Relations, and Karle Warren, NEA Board of Directors, Washington. This session was full of great ideas, resources and participants sharing activities they have had success in. I was further inspired for my upcoming Read Across America school visits in Lyon County on Monday, March 2nd.

The fourth and final session I attended on Saturday was one of the most eye-opening sessions I have ever attended at a Pacific Regional Leadership Conference, “ESEA Update: What’s Up? What’s Down? What’s Ahead?”. This session had three presenters, Theresa Montaño, NEA Board of Directors, California, Joel Packer, director, NEA Education Policy and Practice, and Christy Levings, NEA Executive Committee. They went over the efforts put forth by NEA concerning the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the reasons why it may still take some time for the reauthorization to occur, and addressed questions and concerns from the members in attendance. They also shared a PowerPoint that included the following slide:

Bush Implementation Strategies

- **Former Assistant Secretary for EI/Sec (under Paige) Susan Neuman in December publicly said Bush Administration used four initial strategies on NCLB implementation:**
 - No Excuses
 - Fill a body bag – find a failing school, close it down, threaten other schools
 - The “shame game” – focus on the failures
 - The “blame game” – blame the teachers

This was the eye-opener that confirmed my previous suspicions about how the so-called “No Child Left Behind” has been used against educators. I asked the presenters permission to share this information with others.

On Sunday morning I attended the NEA Legislative Hearing. During this hearing I submitted the following request:

I would like a response from NEA to follow up on a previous request to have NEA investigate the conflicts of interest initially created by the Obey/Porter Legislation. I am deeply concerned when federal funds for the research on scientific research-based educational programs are given to companies that also receive federal funds through public schools to purchase programs that these same companies also sell. This illegal “inbred” research needs to be replaced by genuine independent research.

I also met and had discussions with many other teachers from the eight states of the Pacific Region throughout the weekend.

I appreciate the opportunity I was given in being able to attend the NEA Pacific Regional Leadership Conference. I would be happy to share more details about the conference with interested teachers.

Know Your Negotiated Agreement

By Steve Fargan, LCEA President

Article XXIII of the Negotiated Agreement covers the terms of the agreement. Included in this article is language known to some as an "Evergreen Clause." This means that the current agreement remains in effect until the next negotiated agreement has been completed. Any changes must be mutually agreed upon and this process is covered by Nevada Law (Chapter 288 of Nevada Revised Statutes.) The next Negotiated Agreement also must be ratified by both parties. This involves a vote of LCEA's members as well as a vote of the Lyon County School District Board of Trustees. The Language for Article XXIII can be seen below.

ARTICLE XXIII TERMS OF AGREEMENT

23-1-1 This agreement shall become effective July 1, 2007 upon acceptance by the School District and the Association and shall remain in effect through June 30, 2009, and will continue in full force and effect for an additional period of two (2) years unless negotiated amendments, changes, or modifications are ratified by both the District and the Association, providing the Association continues to meet the requirements specified by Chapter 288, Nevada revised Statutes.

REVISED 2001
REVISED 2005
REVISED 2007

23-1-2 The parties acknowledge that during the negotiations which resulted in this Agreement, each has had unlimited rights and opportunity to make demands and proposals with respect to any subject or matter not removed by law from the areas of mandatory bargaining and that the understanding and agreements arrived at by the parties after the exercise of that right and opportunity are set forth in this Agreement. No additional negotiations on this Agreement will be conducted on any item, whether contained herein or not, except by mutual consent.

23-1-3 This contract is not binding on either party until ratified by both parties.

23-1-4 This Agreement is the result of collective negotiations between the District and the Association, which have been conducted under the requirements of and directive Statute law.

For the 2008-2009 contract year, the Association and School District shall only address the District's contribution per month for qualified participants in LCSD Health Care Plan and mutually agreed upon article(s).

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For the 2009-2010 contract year, the Association and the School district may each introduce a maximum of eight (8) table topics in addition to articles 16, 21, 22, and 23. A table topic is defined as proposed changes in an Article. Additional items beyond eight (8) may be placed on the table by mutual agreement.

REVISED 2007

Dated articles, miscellaneous corrections or renumbering will not count as table topics. Dated articles are those in which only the dates need to be changed or in which language is no longer relevant. Any change in the intent of the article other than dates disqualifies it as a dated article.

REVISED 2001
REVISED 2005