



NEA is working to provide great public schools

Directors' Newsletter

May 2020

Details of First-Ever Virtual RA Take Shape

NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia began our virtual meeting with a discussion about the 2020 Representative Assembly that will be held virtually. The RA will be held July 2-3 for approximately 3 hours each day. Beginning on June 1, delegates will begin getting information about how the meetings will occur, the technology delegates will need to access the meetings, and any instructions they will need to participate. A schedule for open hearings and time schedules for delegate opportunities will be released. Business at the RA will be limited to recommending a presidential candidate in the 2020 general election, approving the strategic plan and budget, and electing officers. NEA is taking into consideration members who live overseas and the best schedule for all delegates to participate fully in the association's first digital RA. Also after June 1st, the NEA will release the number of at-large NEA Board of Directors seats open for election at this year's RA.

Eskelsen Garcia stated that any savings realized from the virtual RA will be used to help state affiliates in the wake of COVID-19; it will be put in a stabilization fund to help "keep the lights on." Currently, not all details have been finalized, but President Eskelsen Garcia assured the board that the most up to date information would be reported as it becomes available.



Secretary Treasurer Princess Moss and President Lily Eskelsen-Garcia Make a presentation during the virtual Board of Directors Meeting

Board of Directors members elected to the PAC Committee, Mary Bowers (VT) and Kevin Deely (PA), shared information about plans for PAC fundraising at this year's RA. They also answered questions about PAC fundraising at RA.

With a virtual RA, fundraising activities will look different, but the end goal remains the same—to create political power for NEA members and their students. Members can create custom fundraising websites, called "Go Pages" to collect money for the PAC. By using their websites, each state's delegate contributions will be counted as part of their state's total and their personal delegate total (Each delegate is asked to raise \$200, which is the same goal as last year). Each delegate who meets the \$200 PAC fundraising goal will receive the 2020 RA t-shirt. Members can raise money online from their immediate family and colleagues by going to <https://www.neafund.org/go>,

to set a goal for themselves, upload a photo, add a personal message, and get a personalized donate link. Contributions to Go Pages made up until the cutoff date prior to the RA will count towards that delegate's total.

A series of fundraising emails will be sent to delegates starting the weeks leading up to and during the RA. These emails will create competition, provide fundraising deadlines, and update delegates on their fundraising status. Since state fundraising amounts are usually announced daily at RA, a new online leaderboard will show where each affiliate ranks in their fundraising and will be a great source of healthy competition.

PAC Captains play a vital role in RA fundraising and this year will be no different. PAC Captains will receive emails throughout the planning process. There will be a Zoom meeting to go through all the details at the end of May/beginning of June. PAC Captains will also receive daily status reports and information via email and Hustle. PAC Captains who want to share information with their delegates via Hustle will be given access and training.

- **June 1:** We will know the number of At-Large seats.
- **June 22:** RA Delegates Tele-Town Hall
- **June 24:** Deadline for At-Large candidates to file
- **June 25:** Budget Hearing
- **July 1:** Board of Directors Meeting
- **July 2-3:** Representative Assembly



Phillips Delivers Uniserv Recommendations

Tracy Phillips (NV) delivered her final report as chair of the Uniserv Committee. She reported that the NEA Budget Committee has projected downward membership for next year due to COVID-19. However, an additional dollar from each member's dues would be allocated to the Uniserv Program. As such, Phillips recommended the grant for next year be \$40,481, an increase of 2.74% over the current year's grant amount.

Additionally, the committee recommended a \$1,250 rebate for affiliates. NEA was cautious in its membership projections in the wake of the *Janus* decision. However, membership remained strong and more money was set aside into the Uniserv Fund. This, combined with the new grant amount, represents a total of over \$3.8 million being returned to affiliates.

Finally, Phillips reported on the first re-write of the Uniserv Guidelines in over a decade. In addition to streamlining the guidelines, the committee made them conform to current bylaws and practices. Work was also done to ensure the guidelines align with NEA's efforts in racial and social justice. In closing, Phillips thanked the committee for taking, "major steps forward in infusing a culture of organizing into the Uniserv Program."



Phillips

O'Brien Highlights Pandemic Legislation

NEA General Counsel O'Brien discussed the effect COVID-19 is having on educators across the country and broke down the legislation already passed by Congress.

Among the key provisions of the legislation:

- Paid sick leave, for both FT and PT employees who are suffering from COVID-19, under a quarantine order, or caring for a dependent suffering from COVID-19.
- An expansion of FMLA to care for a child whose school is closed due to the pandemic.
- Expanded unemployment benefits, which last until July 31, 2020.

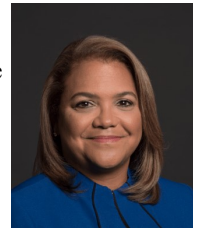
There are key restrictions on all of these provisions. For example, you could be eligible for CARES Act unemployment benefits if you are an educator whose summer job was eliminated as a direct result of the pandemic. The expanded FMLA also has restrictions that could potentially impact the annual FMLA members can already access.

In the post-*Janus* landscape, NEA has secured dismissals in 24 of the 27 cases brought against NEA and its affiliates. 17 of those currently have appeals pending. Several of the cases include dismissals against claims seeking reimbursement of agency fees before the *Janus* ruling. There are also several petitions in front of the US Supreme Court, including *Reisman v.*

Associated Faculties of the University of Maine, where the First Circuit Court rejected the plaintiff's claim that *Janus* rendered exclusive representation unconstitutional in public sector employment.

NEA Relentlessly Working Despite Closure

In her report to the board, NEA Executive Director Kim Anderson detailed the efforts NEA is making to support educators through the pandemic, strengthen the association, and lobby Congress, all without taking eyes off the 2020 election. Since the Federal Education Association alerted NEA that the first schools in South Korea closed due to COVID-19, Anderson and the officers took immediate action. They laid the foundation for staff to work remotely with the priority of supporting students and educators through the pandemic, membership organizing, and preparing for the election. In the time since the pandemic took hold of the country, NEA has successfully lobbied for over \$30 billion in education funding, flexibility in testing, and enhanced unemployment benefits. Under Anderson's direction, the organization has also worked to provide aide to prevent layoffs of over 300,000 educators. Additionally, NEA has been emphasizing the disparity of internet access between students. Lack of internet access disproportionately affects Hispanic and African American families, and families who live in rural areas. Anderson and the officers have worked to close the gap and to continue to ensure all students access.



Anderson



GLBT Observance

The Board of Directors heard from Stacey Long Simmons, who serves as the Director of Advocacy and Action for the National LGBTQ Task Force. The task force “builds power, takes action, and creates change to achieve freedom, justice, and equity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people.” Under her leadership, the task force has advocated on health care (including reproductive issues); criminal and economic justice; faith and LGBTQ rights; racial equity; nondiscrimination protections; fair housing; wage and workplace issues; and much more. Simmons shared their strategic frame, in which freedom, justice and equity for all lie at the intersection of faith, equity and democracy. She also highlighted some of the task force’s advocacy work, including “Queer the Census 2020” which emphasizes the importance for members of the queer community to have their voices counted so that, “attorneys, advocates, activists, and service providers then use those data to press decision-makers for change, to show the needs of their communities, and to enforce our civil rights.” For more information on their work in social justice, the fight for reproductive rights, voting rights, and much more visit www.TheTaskForce.org

Asian and Pacific Islander Observance

The NEA Board heard from Quyen Dihen, the executive director of Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC). Quyen shared the work of SEARAC, a national civil rights organization that, “represents the largest refugee community ever resettled in America” by, “empowering Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese American communities to create socially just and equitable societies.” Under her leadership, SEARAC has, “authored national legislation and passed Californian legislation calling for transparent, disaggregated data for the Asian American community.” In this 45th anniversary since their founding, Quyen shared their response to COVID-19. She discussed the recent increase in hate crimes against Asian Americans, and the resources they provide to support Asian Americans, including information about the CARES Act (<https://www.searac.org/covid-19-resources/>).

Plans for Human and Civil Rights Gala



Fisher

Committee chair, Valerie Fisher (Alt-ESP), reported that NEA is pleased to continue the strong legacy of the Human and Civil Rights Awards. She said that now it is more necessary than ever to ground ourselves in who we are. Despite the changed format of RA, we need to celebrate the incredible accomplishments of our 11 award winners. The gala will be held virtually on July 1. For more information, visit www.nea.org/HCRawards

Friend of Education Award Announced

Debbie Lee (PA), chair of the Friend of Education Award Committee announced to the board members that Greta Thunberg will be this year’s recipient. Lee said that Greta Thunberg represents all that we as educators hope our students become. Thunberg is not just any student; she is, in many ways, every student.

Diagnosed with Asperger syndrome, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and selective mutism, she is also passionate, fearless, engaged, and she wants to ensure her generation can enjoy a future that is, at its very least, consistent with the one it has been

born into. In short, Thunberg is a social justice warrior.

Thunberg has done more to elevate the discussion about science – climate science, in particular – with our younger generation than anyone since Bill Nye. What began as one voice skipping school on Fridays to protest climate change, became a global movement inside 12 months. On August 20, 2018, 15-year-old Thunberg sat by herself outside Sweden’s Parliament; on August 14, 2019, 16-year-old Thunberg was joined by 3.6 million friends across 169 countries.



Lee

Greta Thunberg, who has had audiences with some of the most powerful entities in the world, has managed to elevate the level of discourse surrounding climate science far more than many actual scientists. Furthermore, she has engaged an entire generation of young people in a cause that may lead to tangible change – either through action by elected leaders or by electing leaders predisposed to taking action. Additionally, her actions and movement have actually moved schools around the world to ramp up education on climate science. At her essence, Thunberg has not only created a movement focused on climate science she’s also done more to develop the subject’s curriculum development than any publishing company could hope.

Feedback Sought on Ethnic Studies Report

Executive Committee member, Robert Rodriguez, presented the NEA report on ethnic studies compiled from existing NEA work, resources, and policies. Rodriguez stated that the report includes hyperlinks to the advocacy and resources that NEA has developed with its affiliates and partners. He also emphasized that this is a living document and, it needs member feedback.



Member Benefits Transitions to Non-Profit

During her Member Benefits Report, Vice President Becky Pringle, who also serves as the chair of the Member Benefits Board of Directors, called for the board to approve a change in the structure and name of NEA Member Benefits. Member Benefits as it existed as a for-profit corporation for more than 50 years developed to market economic benefit programs to members of the NEA that help them make the most of their money and also to help state affiliates attract and retain members. NEA MB has also been providing member benefits programs to the members of the Service Employees International Union as SEIU Member Benefits since 2016. NEA's MBC also provides administrative and marketing services to the NEA Members Insurance Trust, which provides life insurance benefits to members who die during their membership terms.

Despite the name "NEA Member Benefits Corporation", the NEA MBC has never operated as a typical corporation. It has only had one member, the NEA. The MBC Board of directors has been composed of Chairperson, NEA Vice President (currently Becky Pringle), Vice Chair – NEA Secretary/Treasurer (currently Princess Moss), NEA President or designee (currently Brent McKim, President of NCUEA), two state Executive Directors (currently Martin Powell (FEA) and Mark J. Simons (GAE)), one state President (currently Noel Candelaria (TSTA)) and two NEA Board members (currently Ami Prichard (CO) and Linda Estrada (TX)). The earnings of NEA's MBC have only been used to provide program enhancements, or held in reserve for program development or budget shortfalls. In October, the Member Benefits Board of Directors started exploring the option of changing from corporate to non-profit taxable D.C. membership corporation status, which more accurately reflects the mission and function of the organization. It was determined that the change would not result in any change to operations, contracts, privacy laws, and would have no tax consequences to Members

Benefits or NEA. With this change, a name change was also recommended from "NEA Member Benefits Corporation" to "NEA Member Benefits". Multiple stakeholder groups were consulted, and both the Member Benefits Board and Executive Committee approved the change in March.

Members Benefits has also been working to support members during the COVID 19 crisis. Members have been required to determine beneficiaries to access the complimentary life insurance benefit provided by the NEA Members Insurance Trust. Until the end of May, benefits will be provided to those members who have not designated a beneficiary. Please contact the Members Benefits field staff to get more information about this program and all the other ways Member Benefits provides for educators in your state and local association.



Moss Presents Budget Recommendation



Moss

Princess Moss reported that overall membership has increased, citing the organization's commitment to organizing. She described how members are "meeting the moment", using electronic platforms such as Hustle to reach out to current members to ensure their well-being. Additionally, members are reaching out to prospective members and connect them with various resources. Looking ahead, many districts are facing the possibility of new hire orientations being done virtually, so NEA is working with affiliates to integrate that into their recruitment plans. In summary, Moss highlighted how engagement will drive our growth in a post-COVID era.

Separate from her report, Moss presented the recommendation from the budget committee on the 2020-2022 budget cycle. The budget includes a dues increase of \$4 for active members and \$3 for active members employed in education support professional positions. In addition to the current programs and services NEA funds, money will be allocated to assist members and affiliates navigate the pandemic, including staving off as many layoffs as possible for ESPs, and addressing the disparities faced by the immigrant community.



VP Pringle Cites Strength of Members



Pringle

NEA Vice President, Becky Pringle's report outlined the continued work of the NEA's programs including: CAPE Grant-in-Action; Education Voice Academies; Leaders for Just Schools; the Great Public Schools Fund; the ESP Guidebook; the "Everyone Counts" Campaign for Census 2020; the work of our Aspiring Educators; and Racial Justice in Education. Pringle shared the many virtual meetings held, virtual conversations had, and virtual webinars recorded through this time of sheltering in place. The work of the NEA goes on despite obstacles or logistics. The hot topic through all of these? Equity in this COVID-19 Season.

The NEA Board took action on two action items. The first action included adopting the NEA racial justice in education language review committee recommendations. Pringle advocated for the work done and the work yet to do: "We must collect racial/ethnic membership data, educate members on the meanings and uses of these specific group terms, and engage white members to identify themselves racially." The second action involved converting NEA's Member Benefits Corporation to a Nonprofit Corporation. The NEA Board of Directors adopted both motions without objection.

PAC Council Gives Recommendation

The NEA PAC Council voted that NEA recommend Joe Biden for President of the United States. NEA Vice President Becky Pringle explained this recommendation.

"Our fingerprints will be all over this campaign. NEA has influence we've never had. We are helping him to craft policy that we know we need for our educators, our students, our schools, and our country."

To support this point, Pringle announced that President Lily Eskelsen García has been appointed to his education task-force. Pringle also emphasized that Biden is the current front-runner, and that all of his former competitors are supporting him, and that it is necessary to unify.

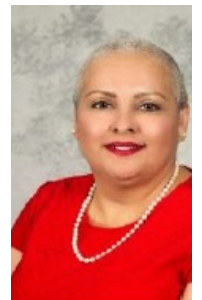
"Vice President Biden is aligned with the core values of our Association. We can unleash the full power and strength of three million strong. We can be the America we know we can be."

The NEA Board of Directors overwhelmingly voted to send the PAC recommendation to the NEA Representative Assembly.

Celebrate a Diverse Nation of Readers

At February's Board meeting, Read Across America Chair Linda Estrada enthusiastically announced this year's theme for the program, "Celebrating a Diverse Nation of Readers." Although Read Across American Day was on March 2nd, you can still celebrate year round at www.readacrossamerica.org.

At their site, members can order free calendars or use the digital calendar provided. The calendar provides recommended titles for readers of all ages, as well as monthly themes to make all children feel valued and welcome. Estrada says that you can also find ways to tie-in featured books and activities to existing events on your school calendar and your curriculum. Additionally, you may use these titles and resources whenever and however it works best for you. These books and activities can fit anywhere, anytime of year.



Estrada



Resources for Members

National LGBTQ Task Force

www.TheTaskForce.org

- Queer the Census: Making are members of the LGBTQ+ Community are informed about and participate.
- Reproductive Health, Rights and Justice

NEA RA Website:

ra.nea.org

- General Q & A on the 2020 RA
- Delegate Resources
- Temporary Standing Rules

Educating Through Crises: COVID-19

<https://educatingthroughcrisis.org/>

- Know Your Rights
- Digital Supports
- Meeting Students' and Families' Needs
- Wellness Tips

We Count: NEA Census Campaign

<http://neatoday.org/2019/11/13/2020census/>

- Lesson Plans on Census
- Graphics and Social Media Engagements
- Toolkits to raise viability of the census.

Collaborating for Student Success

<http://myschoolmyvoice.nea.org/collaborating-for-student-success/>.

- Learn how to foster lasting partnerships to boost student success.

NEA Fund

<https://www.neafund.org/go>

- Find candidates NEA supports
- Find out the latest election news
- Learn how to receive training if you are running for public office.

Strong Public Schools 2020

<http://strongpublicschools.org/>

- Organize for Public Education
- Register to Vote
- Find Local Events

Human and Civil Rights Awards Program

<http://www.nea.org/hcrawards>

- Learn about this year's award recipients, and how the HCR Committee Plans to honor them during this year's virtual RA.

Southeast Asia Resource Action Center

<https://www.searac.org/covid-19-resources/>

- SEARAC provides region-specific toolkits, samples of social media and graphics, support and mutual aid networks for those who have been the victim of a hate act, especially relating to COVID-19.

Read Across America

www.readacrossamerica.org

- Order or Download a Calendar
- Summer Reading Guide
- Find Free Books



Great Public Schools for Every Child

