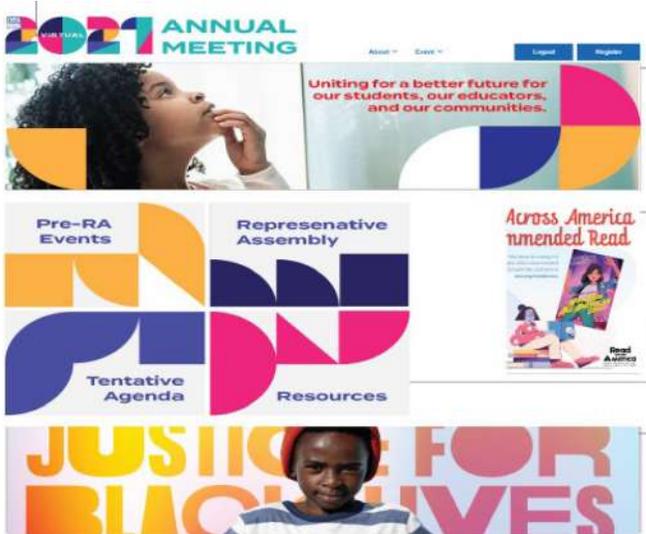




NEA is working to provide great public schools Directors' Newsletter

May 2021

Countdown to 2021 RA



NEA RA site will be updated as resources become available. Delegates should visit often to find out everything they need to participate in the 2021 virtual RA.

A New RA Format

The 2021 Virtual Representative Assembly (RA) update indicated that things will be different this year in an attempt to maximize the interactive engagement of delegates within the online platform. Freeman Technology company has provided a virtual platform that will allow for debate, voting on business items, and all other RA business. The Center for Governance has created a [video](#) that can help delegates navigate the process for submitting business items in this new format.

The theme of this year's RA will be "Uniting for a Better Future for Our Students, Our Educators, and our Community". The meeting will be held 2:00-8:00 PM EST each day June 30th through July 3rd. Delegates can find the most up-to-date materials and information at www.nea.org/ra on this site delegates will find:

- 2021 Virtual Standing Rules
- Information on Constitution, Bylaws, and Policy Amendments
- NBI's
- Annual Meeting/RA Schedule including townhalls (2), hearings, CRSJ, Aspiring Educators Conference, NCESP General Membership Meeting, NEA-Retired Annual Meeting
- Candidate Information and Resources

Since the virtual delegates will not be able to join an in-person RA

Expo this year, delegates will receive a box of RA-related merchandise. Caucuses and Councils will have dedicated meeting time during the RA that will be announced on the RA webpage as the scheduling is finalized.

The board also debated and unanimously approved NBI A, "Transformative Actions for Racially Just, Safe, and Equitable Schools". The NBI will establish a task force that will "identify the criteria for safe, just, and equitable schools, including exploring the role of law enforcement in education." The task force will look at the intersection of racial justice work throughout NEA documents and align it with work to create safe and just schools, support of our members, and the work of our community partners to further just society to create programs proven to make schools places where students can thrive and truly be safe. The text of NBI A will soon be posted on the NEA RA website and will be debated by NEA RA delegates this summer.



Equality Act and LGBTQ+ Observance

Two guests joined the board for this year's LGBTQ+ Observance. First, Eric Harrington, NEA's senior counsel on civil rights, First Amendment, and student debt issues, discussed *Bostock v. Clayton County*, a landmark civil rights case decided by the Supreme Court in 2020. *Bostock* affirmed that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects employees against discrimination on the basis of being gay or transgender. Harrington prefaced the ramifications by recalling earlier court cases where employees were terminated for being gay or transgender. In each instance, the court sided against the employee, saying Congress hadn't intended to protect members of the LGBTQ+ community. Harrington noted, "To read these opinions today, they are just dripping with dehumanization that would shock the modern eye."

The *Bostock* case also applied to healthcare. Harrington noted that treatments that were covered by health insurance, but don't cover transgender healthcare equally, would likely be considered illegal under the Civil Rights Act. He also took the opportunity to remind the Board that when NEA leaders negotiate contracts with school districts, and also in negotiations with union employees, NEA must ensure no one is discriminating on the basis of transgender status.

And while President Biden signed an executive order stating *Bostock's* application to various federal laws, explicit legislation is needed: "We don't yet have the Supreme Court decision on education, housing, healthcare, credit...you might have heard that courts aren't super-duper fast...it could take years."

The Board then heard from Sam Long, a Chinese-American-Canadian, Transgender science teacher in Colorado. Long leads the Colorado Transgender Educators Network, which works to protect trans educators so they can teach openly. Long recalled his own experience coming out as trans in high school as his source of passion in advocating for trans students and educators. "I didn't have a lot of support from my teachers or my parents...I really needed to finish high school... move on with my life and find a better place for myself."

Long understood that students today are dealing with the same issues and felt and urge to push for change. In 2008 Colorado passed legislation prohibiting discrimination due to sexual orientation, but not explicitly regarding gender identity. This, he reasoned, is why we need The Equality Act. He recounted an experience this year when he applied for a job and was passed over for an interview for a straight, cis-gender applicant that he actually mentored to be-

come a teacher. He said, "Under the Equality Act, that would be hard for an employer to justify. It would be a clear cut situation there."

Long also talked about the significance of educators who share their experiences and identities, "When I talk about how I struggled to finish high school, my parents who just said, 'Hey, why can't you just be a girl?' every student can relate. Every student has had a moment where their parents couldn't see them for who they were. These stories of identity unite us all."



Sam Long, transgender teacher activist from Colorado accepting one of his many honors for advocacy.

Long asserts that trans educators are being pushed out of public education and that ultimately students will suffer for that. The Equality Act, he believes, will put experienced, diverse educators in front of students. Beyond hiring, the Act would also have implications in the curriculum.

"Schools are in need of standards of quality for the way we teach about gender, sex and sexuality...if we teach in a way that erases, misrepresents, or marginalizes our LGBTQ students, that is an act of discrimination."

In closing, Long remarked that the Equality Act would put a stop to a myriad of state legislation focused on marginalizing LGBTQ students and that the Act would give an opportunity for educators and students to thrive.

UniServ Review Committee Report

Uniserv Review Committee Chair, Brian Kerekes (FL) gave the committee's recommendation for the Uniserv Grant for 2021-2022. The impact of the pandemic and the Janus decision on NEA membership were not as dire as projected, and as such, Kerekes recommended to the board a grant amount of \$41,166. This represents an increase of 1.7% over this year's grant amount.

Additionally, the committee recommended a rebate of \$1,050 per grant for this

fiscal year. Combined, this means that over \$4 million of additional funding is being returned to affiliates.



Report of the Executive Director

Executive Director, Kim Anderson's report to the NEA Board focused on securing the environment. Securing a pro-public education environment enables NEA to advance its agenda, but more importantly, NEA can inspire and aspire to achieve hopes and dreams for students, members, public education, and the country.

NEA is working to secure the environment through cyclical fundamental leadership or competence of advocacy. The first step is to identify an issue that is important to NEA members. Then members, state leaders, and NEA's Government Relations team must advocate to influence the decisions being made. Advocacy influences policy. Once the policy is in place, NEA makes sure the implementation of policy goes well and is consistent with the views of NEA. NEA then holds leaders accountable to uphold their decisions and votes. NEA must drive the narrative and ensure members know what NEA's collective power accomplished, including how NEA's efforts improve their lives, the lives of the students, and improves communities and the nation overall. The final step in securing a pro-public education environment is to make sure that friends of education get re-elected and opponents get defeated.



Anderson

vaccinations and getting kids back to school safely. The president has also focused like a laser on restoring and expanding the power of unions to collectively bargain across our country. He also reiterates in each speech he gives, his commitment to racial and social justice. The first 100 days have been a success in creating a country that works for our students.



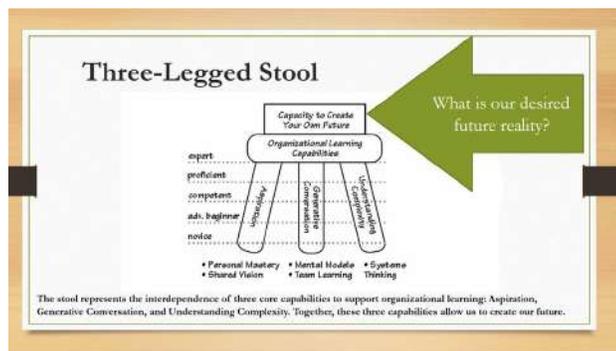
Pringle

- Reopened ACA enrollment, providing health care access for those that lost it during the pandemic
- Signed an Executive Order to Expand Access to Voter Registration
- Prioritization of educators for vaccination
- Signed an Executive Order to end discrimination based on sex and gender identification in education
- Expanded the child tax credit
- \$175 billion for education
- \$7 billion for the digital divide
- Canceling 1 million in student debt
- George Floyd Justice in Policing Act
- Nominated a Diverse Slate of Justices

There is still more to do. NEA members must convince Congress to pass Biden's proposed \$20 billion Title I increase, \$2.6 billion to increase funding for IDEA, and \$430 million for Community Schools.

Pringle ended her report by discussing the work NEA is doing to create safe and just schools for all employees and students. Find out more about how members can stand against hate at <https://neaedjustice.org/lgbtqi-pledge/> to support LGBTQ+ students and educators and <https://educationvotes.nea.org/> to urge Senators to pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act.

Anderson used the American Rescue Plan to identify specific ways in which NEA can advocate to ensure the environment for members and students.



President Pringle's Report

President Pringle explained how important the work NEA has done working with the new presidential administration. We have never in the history of the NEA had a partner like we have in the White House. We have never been so clear in our mission and how we outlined it to the candidate we endorsed and now those promises are coming to fruition, especially when it comes to



Choimorrow Inspires in AAPI Observance



Sung Yeon Choimorrow

NEA welcomed Sung Yeon Choimorrow, Executive Director of the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum as the speaker for the Asian Pacific Islander Observance.

She is a first-generation immigrant and working mom, who is passionate about building power to create change so her daughter can live in a more just world than the one she inherited.

Choimorrow wants the story of Asian Americans to be taught and learned within the history of America because the Asian story is part and parcel of the American story.

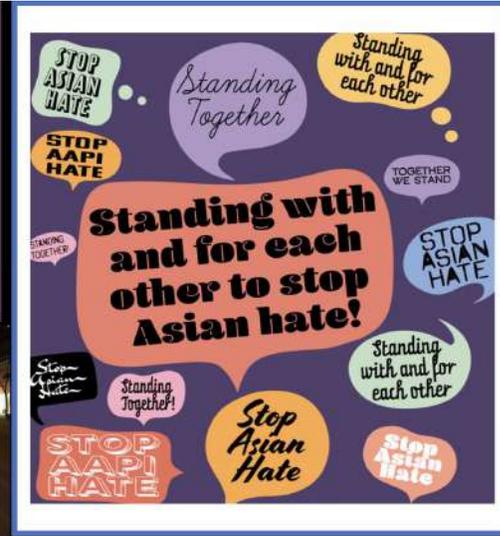
Choimorrow initially came to NAPAWF as its National Field Director with a vision to build infrastructure to create a robust base of community leaders who are most affected by the policy issues that NAPAWF works on, namely immigrant rights, economic justice, and reproductive and health rights, using the social justice framework.

Choimorrow has continued to lead NAPAWF with the vision of building power with Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women and girls as she took on the role of Executive Director at NAPAWF. Under Choimorrow's leadership, NAPAWF has gone from one organizer, her, to a team of nine on the organizing team. Choimorrow deeply believes that policies should be made by the people, for the people, and when the people are equipped with tools to build power and create change. If those conditions are

community organizations, unions, and faith communities on worker organizing and worker justice. Prior to IWJ, Sung Yeon was a Community Organizer at Asian American Institute where she helped organize the pan-Asian American community in Chicago to work together on presidential and mayoral elections, immigration reform, the state budget, and redistricting.

Choimorrow was born in South Korea and spent her childhood in Singapore and India.

Choimorrow came to the U.S. at the age of 18 to study Political Science and Urban Studies at Wheaton College in Wheaton, IL and earned an M.Div from McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago. Choimorrow is an Ordained Minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Choimorrow is a board member of the Hana Center, a Chicago-based



met, her job will be done.

Before working at NAPAWF, Choimorrow was the Director of Organizing at Interfaith Worker Justice (IWJ) leading collaborative public policy change led by

organization that builds power with Korean Americans, immigrants, and multi-racial communities for just policies that impact immigrant families.

Read Across America's Year Long Celebration

NEA Director Christina Bohringer (VA) presented the Read Across America report to the NEA Board of Directors on May 5th. Read Across America is a year-long celebration of diverse books, not specific characters, and Read Across America Day was celebrated across the nation on March 2nd. Educators can access titles and resources for young, middle, and young adult readers every month of the year on the [NEA Read Across America calendar](#).



Bohringer

Digital engagement with the Read Across America campaign was high in the weeks leading up to March, as the Read Across America website had nearly 650,000 unique page views from January 4th to March 4th. Strong email and social media promotion helped drive some of the increased traffic as compared to earlier years, but the announcement that Seuss Enterprises was

halting the publication of six titles sparked additional interest.

May's theme for the Read Across America calendar is "Develop Passion & Perseverance." The featured elementary book is *Magic Ramen: The Story of Momofuku Ando* by Andrea Wang, the middle-grade book is *When You Trap a Tiger* by Tae Keller, and the young adult book is *Frankly in Love* by David Yoon. Educators can find resources for these books--and much more--at nea.org/readacross.

For a limited time, [First Book](#) is offering matching funds to help educators double the number of books and educational resources they can distribute to under-served students and families in their communities. This opportunity is available as funding allows. Fill out the [brief interest form](#) and First Book will follow up with more details.



NEA's Friend of Education Awarded

The NEA Friend of Education Award is bestowed upon an individual each year who has significantly contributed to the advancement of public education, education employees, and/or students on a national level. The NEA Board of Directors has awarded the 2021 Friend of Education Award to Judith "Judy" Heumann.

Heumann is recognized internationally as a leader in the disability community. A lifelong civil rights advocate for people with disabilities, she contracted polio at the age of 18 months and has used a wheelchair for most of her life. She was denied admission to her local elementary school, with the district claiming she was a fire hazard due to her inability to walk. Initially given home instruction for 2 hours weekly, her mother never stopped fighting for her to attend her local school, though she was sent to a special school in the fourth grade for disabled children. Due to her mother's advocacy, Heumann entered her local high school in 1961.

As a student of speech therapy at Long Island University, Heumann organized other students in rallies and protests to gain equal access and rights for people with disabilities. Students with and without disabilities joined the action demanding Heumann ramp access to her classrooms and her right to live in a dorm like every other student. In 1970, she was denied a New York teacher's license because the Board of Education believed she would not be able to get her students, or herself, out of a building in the event of a fire. She sued the Board on the grounds of discrimination. After the judge recommended that NYC's Board of Education reverse its decision, as it became very likely they would lose, they settled out of court. Heumann became the first wheelchair user to teach in New York City.

In 1970, Heumann co-founded Disabled in Action (DIA), an organization that focused on securing protection for people with disabilities under civil rights laws through political protest. In 1972, DIA demonstrated in New York City with a sit-in protesting a veto of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Led by Heumann, 80 activists staged a traffic-stopping protest on Madison Avenue.

In 1975, Heumann moved to Berkeley, California and served as the Deputy Director of the Center for Independent Living from 1975 to 1982. She was an early adopter of the Independent Living Movement. While serving as a legislative assistant to the chairperson of the US Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare in 1974, Heumann helped develop legislation that became the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).



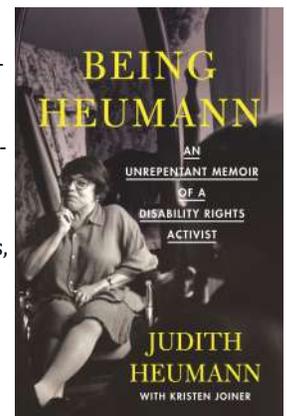
In 1977, when the US Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare refused to sign regulations for section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which included the requirement for buildings to have accessible bathrooms, Heumann led the 504 sit-in at the San Francisco office of the US Department of Health Education and Welfare. The sit-in lasted 28 days from April 5th to May 4th, with the participation of more than 150 people with disabilities. Heumann's other accomplishments include:

- Co-Founder, World Institute of Disabilities
 - 1st Director of Disability Services for Washington DC
 - Assistant Secretary for Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services for the Department of Defense; Clinton Administration, 1993-2001
 - Advisor of Disability and Development, World Bank, 2003-2006
 - Special Advisor on International Disability Rights, - Obama Administration, 2010-2017
 - Senior Fellow at the Ford Foundation, promoting intentional inclusivity in philanthropy
- She is featured in the Oscar-nominated 2020 documentary *Crip Camp*, which tells the story of Camp Jened, a camp for youth with disabilities in New York in the 1960s and 1970s. Along with Heumann, several campers later became activists in the disability rights

movement. Part of the Oscar-nominated movie *Crip Camp* documents the 1973 protest, in which a 29 year old Heumann says, "I shouldn't have to be grateful for an accessible bathroom," after accessible bathrooms had been deemed too costly by the HEW Secretary. The Education for All, Handicapped Children and Section 504 Act were signed into law on April 28th, 1977, due in part to the advocacy highlighted by the film.

Currently, Heumann is an author, having recently published *Being Heumann: Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist*, and hosts a podcast, *The Heumann Perspective*, where she interviews guests from the disability community.

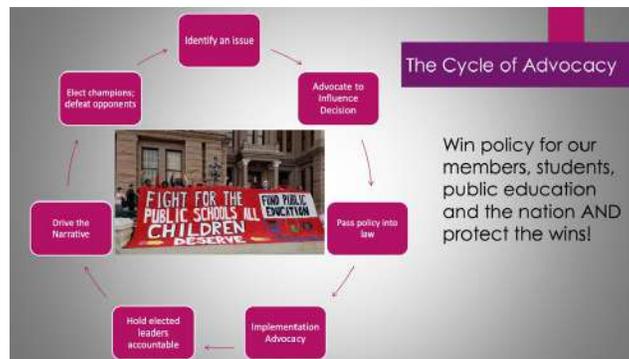
Her tireless, indefatigable advocacy and voice for people with disabilities, and specifically her work ensuring the passage of Section 504 and IDEA most certainly identify her as a Friend of Education.



The American Rescue Plan opens opportunities for Affiliates



O'Brien



NEA General Counsel Alice O'Brien's report to the NEA Board discussed highlights of the American Rescue Plan (ARA), how it benefits education, and how we as public education advocates need to work within our states and districts to realize those benefits for our members and students.

One of the key requirements for ARA funds is that educators and their unions must be included in planning how the money is spent. O'Brien pointed out that it is important to remember that charter and private schools are probably already sending in requests for the money, so the time is now to demand that the funds are spent in a meaningful way to improve our students' learning conditions. NEA has provided template letters for affiliates to use at the state and local level to demand real inclusion in the planning process. The ARA also mandates that states need to have their plans submitted to the department of education by June 7th and publicize those plans by June 21st.

Various affiliates petitioned the department of education to provide guidance and strategies to ensure ARA funds are used to address racial disparities when it comes to delivering special education services in our communities. O'Brien said we needed to, "make sure that special education services are provided to all students equally, and not in a way that exacerbates existing inequalities."

The legislation states that at least 20% of funds must be used on learning recovery. That means addressing achievement gaps in our schools and responding to students' academic and social-emotional needs. It would make sense to respond foremost to students who were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The funds could be used to provide social-emotional learning programs, as well as culturally responsive practices, or to provide high-quality professional development to educators about trauma-informed instruction. O'Brien reminded the board of the short timeline and how important it was to speak with

districts now to make sure this funding is properly distributed to meet the needs of our students.

Additionally, there were key provisions within the law that ensured states don't use these funds to cut back education funding in the future. The first required that for FY 2022 and 2023, states fund education proportionate to the average from 2017-2019. The second prohibited cutting state funds in FY 2022 and 2023 to levels below what they were in 2019 in communities serving the highest percentage of low-income students.

O'Brien closed by reminding board members that the department of education invited states to waive the requirement that 95% of students take state standardized tests for full federal funding to be granted. She said that plenty of states could still apply. She underscored the importance of lobbying our states to make sure they've applied for the waiver and pointed out that waivers are coming from the federal government, while penalties related to testing (including but not limited to teacher evaluations) come from state and local governments. Waivers for those provisions dependent on testing must be negotiated within states.

Board Supports Changes in the NEA Legislative Program for RA

Director Shannon McCann (WA) presented the proposed changes to the legislative program that will be submitted to the Delegates of the NEA RA.

McCann explained the extensive work over two years that the Legislative Committee put in to create the document that can be found on the [NEA RA webpage](#). The Legislative Committee will hold an open hearing for delegates on June, 24th to discuss the proposed changes in the legislative program prior to the RA where delegates will have a chance to discuss specific changes.

