

NEA Board of Directors' Report
February 5, 6 & 7, 2009
NEA Building- Washington, DC
Tom Wellman and Ken Buhrmann

NSEA/NEA-Legislative Lobbying Day on Capitol Hill-(Thursday, February 5, 2009)

Nevada's NEA Directors traveled to Washington, DC on Wednesday, February 4, 2009 to attend a legislative briefing scheduled for the next day, February 5. Congress was working on the President's economic recovery package. The proposed language and legislation provided lots of potential for direct support to public education. This support provides new dollars to education. Before moving on to discuss this legislation in depth, we talked about the first legislation passed in the new presidents' administration. The first bill signed into law by President Obama was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. This bill restores the basic protection against pay discrimination threatened by the 2007 US Supreme court ruling. The passage of this law was viewed as a very positive move for women and the American worker. After months of work behind the scene, the House and the Senate were able to come together and pass the SCHIPS bill. This bill will cover over 4 million more children that are currently uninsured. This bill was expected to move to the presidents' desk in the very near future. We also discussed the Social Security offsets and the Presidents commitment to repeal of these offsets. The Social Security Fairness Act was reintroduced in the House, H.R. 235. As of this meeting over 130 bipartisan cosponsors had already signed on to the bill. The Senate bill is expected to be introduced shortly. As a board we were cautioned to remember that the full repeal of these bills carried a high price tag and we need to be aware that if repeal occurs it may be in increments to start.

As we moved back into our discussion of the House version of the Economic Recovery Package, we learned that this bill carried over \$150 billion in new funding to public education.

These funding provisions included:

1. Flexible funding through existing state education formulas
2. School modernization grants
3. Increases to Title I and IDEA
4. Significant increases to Pell Grants
5. Health care, nutrition assistance and unemployment insurance

Tax Provisions included in the recovery package included:

1. School modernization bond tax credit
2. "Making Work Pay" tax credit
3. "American Opportunity" education tax credit
4. Senate bill only - \$300 payment for retirees

Why Is This Recovery Package A Good Idea?

1. Reaches every community in the nation
2. State formulas are designed to provide assistance to those areas most in need (this was done to provide more direct impact of the aide, so that it was not tied up in new complex formulas)
3. Ripple effect through the community
4. No need to create new mechanisms
5. No federal mandates

The next step in the package process can be very complex and possibly even derail the bill. The following steps can be expected:

1. Senate debate on the package and votes on the package. Many amendments can be expected during this process:
 - A. watch out for vouchers, and
 - B. teacher incentive funds
2. After the Senate votes on their final package proposal, the House and Senate hold a conference on the two versions to reach a compromise on a “final” package.
3. A vote is scheduled on the final version of the package.
4. Congressional leaders want the final package on the President’s desk by President’s Day recess.

We were asked to go to Capitol Hill to lobby members of our delegation for their support the Economic Recovery Package. We were asked to lobby and gain information on the following questions:

1. Did the Member vote for or against the economic recovery package or does the Member plan to vote for or against the package? (Senate if vote has not yet occurred)
2. If the Member voted against the package or plans to, what is the reason for the vote?
3. What is the Member/staff response to the arguments in support of the package?

We had scheduled our meetings on Capitol Hill and were able to meet with 4 out of the 5 members of our congressional delegation. Senator Ensign failed to respond to our request to schedule an appointment. That didn’t stop Ken from dropping into the Senators office and making sure that they were given the documentation supporting NEA’s stand on the recovery package, and of course there were lots excuses and apologies from the Senator and his staff being stating that they were to busy to meet with us. We met with the staff in Congresswoman Berkley’s office and thanked them for their support on the package. Congressman Heller’s office was a lively discussion on why he was unable to support the package. The Congressman cited a number of examples that he felt illustrated excessive or wasteful spending. We were able to meet with Congresswoman Titus’s legislative director and welcome them to DC and share information with her regarding NEA and our positions. She was open and very receptive and wanted to spend sometime with NEA staff to learn more our position on education policy. This was an important visit for us

and NEA as the Congresswoman had recently received an appointment to the congressional committee that will work on the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind, a real plumb for Nevada. By the time we walked across the mall for our appointment in Senator Reid's office the recovery package was in serious jeopardy and negotiations were in full swing. The Senators office was hopeful that they would be able to solve the problems that the republicans were concerned about and get the recovery package passed.

Pacific Regional Caucus Meeting
Thursday, February 5, 2009
NEA Building, Room 814

The Pacific Regional Caucus meeting was called to order at 4:00 PM. The PRC conference team provided all members in attendance an overview of the conference, the speakers and the activities that had been scheduled. All directors were reminded of their scheduled assignments during the conference. State Presidents provided a brief report of the activities that were taking place back in their state. As it was no surprise that all of the states were experiencing some degree of financial turmoil. It was interesting to hear what and how the states were dealing with the crises and the impact that this crises was on public education. The coming months should be very interesting to watch as we continue to deal with this crisis.

NEA Board of Directors Meeting
NEA Building
Washington, DC
February 5 & 6, 2009

Leadership Team Reports –

President: President Dennis Van Roxel called the meeting to order and updated the board on his activities since our last meeting together. The President talked about his vision for strategic planning for the Association. He explained that our mission and vision define why we exist and what we want as an organization. The next steps are to determine how we get what we want as an Association:

- In this environment
- with this Administration
- with this Congress and
- these players

We also need to figure out how we make our current vision our reality and begin the transformation of the Association. President Van Roxel feels that we have four specific areas of focus to concentrate on in this process. They are:

- Education

- Health Care
- Labor
- Partnerships (including both internal and external)

The President will continue to work with his leadership team and the Board of Directors to craft the details of this change and how it will impact the strategic plan for this Association.

Vice President: Vice president Lily Eskelsen presented her report and updated the Board on her activities since our last meeting. Lily unveiled the new online NEA Academy and showed the members of the Board the potential this tool has on working with affiliates and educating our members. The Academy will be piloted to work out any “bugs” and help determine the direction for this tool.

Secretary-Treasurer: Secretary-Treasurer Becky Pringle presented her report and updated the Board on her activities since our last meeting.

Active Certified Membership:

Full Time 2,266,090

Part Time 96,866

Total- 2,362,956

Growth over last year – 19, 668 which is a 0.8% increase over last year

Active ESP Membership:

Full Time 372,406

Part Time 125,751

Total- 498, 157

Growth over last year – 6,983 which is a 1.4% increase over last year

Active Life Members – Total 57, 960 Virtually, all members in this category are eligible for retirement, which will result in a dramatic drop in this area. However, this drop should not impact our budget as these members do not pay dues.

Student Membership – 52,150 as of February meeting. We are on track to breaking our all time high of 60,993 from 2005

Retired membership – 260,727 This is an increase of 7,526 over last year’s membership.

Projected NEA dues increase for the 2009 -2010

Total projected active certified full time dues \$158.00 (2008-2009)

\$162.00 (2009-2010) a \$ 4.00 dues increase per year

Total projected active Education Support Professional full time dues \$91.50 (2008-2009)

\$93.50 (2009-2010) a \$2.00 dues increase per year

NEA is preparing for the future and the economic challenges that might be presented. They are very well aware that they will have to be sensitive to membership issues that may result in lower revenue.

Executive Director: Executive Director John Wilson presented his report and updated the Board on his activities since our last meeting. He went on to explain that NEA had been named one of the top 50 employers and staff had been working hard to recognize the employees that had made this happen. He, along with the other managers, is continuing to evaluate the Associations field operations to determine the effectiveness of these operations. Any proposed changes will be submitted at a later date. Mr. Wilson represented NEA with the Hope Foundation a summit that has been organized to focus help for disadvantaged youth. This is an exciting opportunity for NEA as it's another great example of our seat at the table to utilize our expertise with youth.

Legal Counsel: Legal Counsel Bob Chanin presented his report and updated the Board on his activities since our last meeting. The courts have ruled against us in the cases that are challenging the Department of Labor ruling on the LMRDA (a.k.a. Landrum-Griffin) that requires a state affiliate of NEA to comply with the LMRDA even though they only represent public sector employees, just because the NEA allows for private sector employees. However, the NEA is hopeful that with the Obama administration and a new Secretary of Labor, that ruling can be changed and will return to the former interpretation of the law that exempted state affiliates from the reporting requirements of LMRDA if they do not represent private sector employees.

A new suit has been filed against the Alabama Education Association by former members who complained that they were coerced into contributing to the political action fund, and that they were deceived about the purpose of the fund. The Right to Work Committee is assisting the former members in pressing the suit against the AEA.

Several cases (not involving the NEA) recently decided by the Supreme Court yielded positive rulings that can be beneficial for future cases in which the NEA might be involved. New cases being heard by the Supreme Court that have a implications for the NEA deal with: rights of school districts to search students (or employees) suspected of illegal actions; obligations of school districts and states to adequately fund the cost of educating English Language Learners; and the rights of parents to seek publicly paid, private education for special needs students without first using the public education facilities available.

Executive Committee: All members of the Executive Committee submitted copies of their report in writing updating members of the Board on their activities since our last meeting.

Action Items of the NEA Board of Directors:

1. CONTINGENCY FUND REQUEST FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL DIALOGUE FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION (CEBULSKI – LEVINGS)

Recommend for Board of Directors approval up to \$200,000 be allocated from the NEA Contingency Fund to continue the Transformational Dialogue for Public Education Partnership with the Knowledge Works Foundation.

104 yes 32 no 3 abstentions

2. ESEA COMMITTEE CHARGES (CROWDER – MOSS)

Recommend for Board of Directors approval of the ESEA Committee charges as amended. - Passed by voice vote

3. Appointment of the Board Steering Committee as presented by the President – Passed by voice vote

4. Approval of the NEA dues for the 2009 – 2010 year as presented by the Secretary-Treasurer - Passed by voice vote

5. Election of alternate representative to the NEA Fund for Children – Elected Kevin Flemming, Director from New Hampshire by acclamation

6. Recommendations of the Annual Meeting review committee accepted as presented by the chair – Passed by voice vote

7. Proposed amendments to the NEA Bylaws: **Bill Bjork**, Chairperson of the NEA Committee on Constitution, Bylaws and Rules, presented proposed changes to the **Campaign and Election Regulations for NEA Office** which are part of the **Standing Rules. The Board approved submitting the following changes to Bylaws for approval at the Representative Assembly:**

- 5-1 c. The Board of Directors shall adopt procedures for challenging the election of a director
- 5-3 – language that provides changes which allow for filling vacancies when states qualify for an additional director
- 6-1. c. The Board of Directors shall adopt procedures for challenging the election of a member of the Executive Committee
- 12. E. – language providing clarification of campaign expenses in paragraphs 1 & 2
- 12. E. New 3. addresses reporting campaign expenses for an NEA office that does not take place at the Representative Assembly, such as president of NEA-Retired
- 12. G. 3. – provides that Ex-Officio delegates to the RA can nominate a candidate from the floor
- 13. B. – clarifies the distribution and posting of campaign materials while the RA is in session
- 15. New G. – clarifies the definition of campaign materials

Informational Items

1. Campaign and Elections – Provided the Board a report on their activities and the reorganization of the department. They showed board members the activities they had been engaged with to support and move the economic stimulus package. They had used a mixed approach of paid programs, such as: email blasts, patch through calls and web advertisements. Earned media was also provided with National and State press releases, capitol press conferences and direct lobbying. The actions from this department played a direct roll in the passage of the stimulus package. The department is not slowing down since the election is over, in fact, they are gearing up and setting their sights on upcoming campaigns.
2. Ballot Measurers/Legislative Crises Fund Report – NEA staff presented information on the Anti- Employee Free Choice Act stating that eighteen states are being targeted for ballot measures. At this time a petitions is being circulated in Arizona. The Employee Free Choice Act is one that NEA supports and has fought for in the past few months. This could easily prove to be a very costly fight for state associations and NEA. Currently, there are forty- two states that are facing serious budget deficits and some uphill battles with some very unfriendly legislatures. These battles could also cost NEA some serious money.
3. Read Across America report – The chair of the committee gave the Board a report on their proposed activities for the upcoming event. This event is scheduled for the week of February 27 – March 7, 2009 with March 2 being the official Read Across America Day. Also, presented information on The Cat A Van tour and their proposed upcoming stop in Las Vegas, Nevada. Stay tuned for details!
4. Interim Report on Implementation of 2008 New Business Items – The Board was brought up to date on the implementation of the new business items passed at the 2008 Representative Assembly.
5. Preliminary Activity Reports on NEA Committees 2008- 2009 – The Board was provided a written report of the activities of the NEA Committees.
6. Middle Class Union Made - The booklet entitled “Middle Class – Union Made” was distributed by the Michigan members of the Board of Directors. And other materials, and their presentation was on the importance of solidarity for all union members. They reinforced the idea that unions built the middle class in this country and if unions disappear, so will the middle class. We are all interconnected. They urged all NEA members to be strong unionists and fight for middle class and union values. This was a very good and informative presentation.

Special Presentations:

Friday, February 6, 2009 – Members of the NEA Board of Directors’ participated in the Women’s Caucus observance of the Women’s Leadership month. Governor Kathleen Sebelus from Kansas was the featured keynote speaker. She has a long and very full history of her service to others through her elected positions within the Kansas government. Governor Sebelus provided us with a very inspirational presentation. She has recently been taped by President Obama to serve as the new member of the cabinet over insurance and health care.

Saturday, February 7, 2009 – Members of the NEA Board of Directors’ participated in the Black Caucus observance. Walter Dean Meyers author of children and youth books was the keynote speaker for this observance. He talked of his experiences growing up in the foster care system while living in New York. He used his writing to touch youth and teens by describing life as it exists in their experience while giving them hope that they can make a change in their own life. Meyers credits the public schools for his success and has become an out spoken advocate for public education.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:10 PM. The next meeting of the NEA Board of Directors’ is scheduled for May 1 & 2, 2009 in Washington, DC at the NEA building.

Special Activities of the NEA Directors’

1. February 11-13, 2009 - Both NEA Directors attended the Pacific Regional Minority Leadership Training in Seattle, Washington
2. February 13-15, 2009 – Both NEA Directors attend the Pacific Regional Conference in Seattle, Washington. Our very own, Ken Buhrmann, served as vice chair of the event and Nevada’s delegation captured 3rd place in the NEA PAC fund contributions.

