



Award Winning Newsletter!

THE CONDUIT

Volume 39, Issue 2

www.azedretired.com

September 2024

City of Brotherly love hosts shortest NEA Representative Assembly ever!

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The National Education Association Representative Assembly (RA) is the highest decision-making body within the NEA. With over 7,000 delegates representing three million-members, the RA is the world's largest democratic deliberative body.

Over the course of four days, RA delegates usually debate the vital issues that impact American public education and set association policy and activities for the year ahead. However, this year was different.

Due to a NEA staff strike, the RA had only one day, July 4, to accomplish new business. That day we heard candidate speeches, debated the NEA Strategic Plan and Budget, New Business Items, Standing Rules, Bylaw and Constitutional Amendments.

Delegates headed to the meetings on July 5 to continue work when they found a staff strike had interrupted the RA. We declined to cross the strike line. Since the RA was halted, elections and issue voting would occur by mail-in ballot.

New Business items direct the NEA to facilitate and accomplish the items within one year. While three business items were debated and voted upon, 105 of the New Business Items were referred to the NEA Board to decide, as outlined in the Bylaws. For this reason, most states continued to hold caucus each day to share input to the board members on each NBI. In September, the NEA Board will convene and decide on those NBI's. The Strategic Plan and Budget were adopted, however, no Constitution, Legislative and Bylaw amendments were passed. Policy Statements and Resolutions are also awaiting debate and action by the board.

Two candidates were elected to the NEA Board of Directors and five candidates were elected to positions on the NBA board of directors.



Calendar

October

- 8—Executive Board Meeting
- 7—Voter registration deadline
- 9—Ballots mailed
- 25—last day to request mail-in Ballot
- 29—Last day to mail ballots

November

- 5—Election Day
- 11—Veterans Day
- 12—Executive Board Meeting

December

- 4—Advocacy training
- 10—Executive Board Meeting



NEA President to RA Delegates: "We Must Keep Going!"

In her rousing keynote address to the 2024 NEA Representative Assembly, NEA President Becky Pringle urged educators to build on their organizing power to meet upcoming challenges.

"Over the past few years, educators and our unions have compiled an impressive record of victories in increasing educator funding, protecting the freedom to learn, reducing class size, pushing back school privatization and winning more respect." NEA President Becky Pringle proclaimed to delegates these accomplishments should be celebrated!

[Continued on page 2](#)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY ANNA CICERO

Let's Get Fired Up!



Welcome to an engaging AEA Retired Association year! We are not literally starting a school year but the same excitement of the first day of school exists. Leadership is ready to introduce the new theme for the year, **Let's Get Fired Up!** Join us throughout 2024-2025 by participating in action opportunities announced in articles of The Conduit and email. Look for the words or phrases “engage” or “please join us” or “save the date.” The road to getting fired up requires generating interest in participation. Be visible in building the union and collaborating with those who share common goals. This election year we need everyone! The AEA Retired Board has steadily been putting logs on the fire. Three of my great honors in the past few months have gotten me more Fired Up involving me in civil rights, community and labor events.

Early this summer, the Arizona Alliance for Retired Americans and the Biden/Harris Campaign invited me to attend the Latino Labor Movement event where I had the honor of listening to American labor leader and Civil Rights activist, 94 year old **Dolores Huerta**. She reminded us of the hard work ahead. This meeting warmed my heart and fueled the fire in me. **Si Se Puede!**



An inspirational moment happened when AEA President, Marisol Garcia, invited me to a photo opportunity with **Vice President Kamala Harris**, the nominated candidate for President of the United States. The audience enjoyed a moving message, inspiring us to continue organizing for power and defending women's rights.



In June and July, many of AEA Retired leaders engaged in retreats via Zoom for committee and team work to reflect on the past year's accomplishments, re-evaluating goals and strategies in light of member conversations and feedback. We are now more prepared to refine action plans and organize when we return on September 10-11 to start monthly board meetings. Thank you “zoomies!”

In July, elected delegates traveled to Philadelphia and represented you well at the **NEA RA** and the **NEA Retired Annual Meeting**, under the new leadership of **President Anita Gibson**. Details are in the front page article. **Luci Messing, Ken Freed** and **Anna Cicero** were proud contributors to work accomplished by fifty state retired associations. They brought back new ideas and the results of what was accomplished. Click this link to see the minutes of the NEA Retired Annual Meeting. https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1IqSBoMjZ9VLwLP_gNqpGhppShf44YkUJ?usp=drive_link



Back in Arizona, I was proudly involved with active and retired colleagues, in the AEA Retired membership committee's Adopt-A-Local Project building union power and relationships through the **AEA New Hire Action** at several local education associations. This engagement contributes to the future of those who will eventually retire. This collaborative action with local members builds knowledge and solidarity and re-enforces the importance of supporting the AEA and its affiliate associations. In closing, I extend an invitation to join us in the coming ACTION! It's really time to **Get Fired Up!**

An Action plan's results are only as good as the degree of engagement in its delivery.

[Continued from Page 1](#)

Speaking to RA delegates in Philadelphia, Pringle called out the U.S. Supreme Court, saddled with a right-wing majority which “continues to render decisions that attack, diminish, and disregard the needs and lived experiences of far too many Americans.”

NEA Representative Assembly delegates approved NEA's first policy statement on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in education, ensuring that educators have an authoritative voice in the implementation and regulation of this rapidly expanding technology. Click the link to read this statement. <https://www.nea.org/resource-library/artificial-intelligence-education>

“Where AI once seemed like something coming in the future, it's clear the future is now,” asserted NEA Secretary-Treasurer Noel Candelaria, who led the NEA task force dedicated to developing the policy. “We need to be at the forefront of how this technology is evaluated and used.”

Do you have questions about the RA or any of the processes or outcomes? I am happy to talk with you and give you more information. Contact me by text or phone: **602-320-3093** or email: Julie.horwin@gmail.com

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

BY LUCI MESSING



I am proud to serve as both your new Vice-President and the Retired Director on the AEA Board. It has been a busy summer serving in this capacity.

It is my intent to assist and support our members, our activities and committees to ensure outcomes are the best that they can be.

I truly enjoy the work I do on behalf of AEA and AEA Retired. Though I have stepped down from the position as the political action coordinator, I will not be stepping away from my involvement in political action. The November election is absolutely the most important election of our time. I urge every single one of our members to VOTE. We need everyone to commit to actively supporting AEA's recommended candidates. No deed is too small. Anything you do can be the one thing leading to victory.

Here are some of the activities I participated in this summer representing AEA/AEA Retired.

- AEA Rally at the Capitol
- AEA Leadership Updates (Zoom)
- AEA-Retired Zoom Meeting
- AEA-Retired Board Virtual Retreat
- Pre-RA AEA caucus
- The NEA RA/AEA Caucuses in Philadelphia
- AEA Board retreat (Renaissance Hotel)
- Tucson Chapter Meeting
- Recommended candidates' events
- Filmed a commercial for Kirsten Engel (CD6)
- Flowing Wells, Marana and Sunnyside New Hire Events
- Arizona Retirement Security Coalition Updates (Zoom)

It would be wonderful to see as many of you as possible at our retired events. Chapters are meeting, committees are working, and the Executive Board will begin our monthly meetings on September 10. This will be a two day meeting to adequately plan for the upcoming year. In addition, we will be having an Advocacy/Lobbying training on December 4. All members are welcome to attend any or all these activities.



AEA Retired Getting Fired Up!



Go to our website at www.azedretired.com to learn more.

POLITICAL ADVOCACY AND ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

PAEC stands for the AEA Retired **Political Advocacy and Engagement Committee**. Leading the committee this year will be Anna Cicero. Board members who have indicated interest in participating as the Core Team for PAEC, are Vice President Luci Messing, AEA Political Director Ellie Perez, Community and Legislative Liaison Staff Isela Blanc, board member Cindy Couture and ARSC Lobbyist Daniella Smith.

The word ENGAGEMENT is built into our committee's new acronym and action plans. Let's all come together to help to elect pro-education candidates who align with union goals. Engage in writing postcards, making phone calls, knocking on doors, talking to neighbors and donating to candidate campaigns, register voters and encourage voting. More information to come via the AEA Retired monthly email updates.

Check <http://arizonaaea.org/> for events to engage in election activities in your area.

SAVE the DATES!

AEA Retired Advocacy Training on December 4, 2024 at AEA Headquarters.

Opening Day of the Legislature on January 6, 2025 at the Arizona State Capitol.

Message from **Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA)** Executive Director Richard Fiesta:

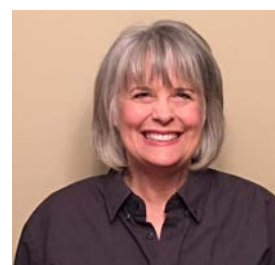
"The senior vote is always crucial in any election." The ARA urges older Americans to be vigilant and ready to fight attempts to cut Medicare, Social Security and health care benefits. Voters over 65 are going to be the strongest contributors to the outcome of this election. More on this here: <https://retiredamericanspac.org/2024/08/new-poll-of-older-voters-in-six-battleground-states-shows-tight-race-between-harris-and-trump/>

Arizona budget was adopted. Some education budget highlights include:

- The state faced a budget deficit of \$1.3 billion.
- The 2024-2025 budget, at \$16.1 billion, includes significant reductions from last years \$17.2 billion.
- There were modest increases in funding public district and charter schools and student transportation costs.
- Some reforms to the ESA program but not enough. No caps were put on the ESA program.
- Democrats succeeded in getting a \$135 million cap on the amount of money that corporations could take as income tax credits for contributions to school tuition organizations (STOs), which provide scholarships for low-income students to attend private and parochial schools, saving the state \$7 billion.
- Cuts to education funding include \$2.1 million removed from a workforce training program and \$3 million taken from a program that encourages dual enrollment in high school and college.
- Additional funding won last year, including \$37 million for schools based on the number of students in poverty and \$29 million in additional assistance for capital needs ranging from books and computers to buses, will be evaporating.
- Democrats got a promise to restore those dollars after this budget year, but not until the 2027-2028 school year. However, that does not bind future legislators to restore those funds to the budget.

Several ballot referrals, passed this legislative session, will be on the November ballot (unless they are defeated in court). To learn more about the status of the ballot referrals please click here: [CEBV- Civic Engagement Beyond Voting \(https://www.cebv.us/\)](https://www.cebv.us/)

PAEC Core Team, from the left
Anna Cicero, Chair
Luci Messing
Cindy Coture
Daniella Smith
Isela Blanc



Membership

by Nancy Putman, Shirley Boswell, Michele Smith

AEA Retired membership currently has 2,045 members. We recruited 77 new members last year and 30 new members this summer. The AEA Retired Membership Team is continuing our membership drive to recruit newly retired members to join us.

YOU, TOO, CAN HELP INCREASE MEMBERSHIP!

If any friends or colleagues have retired within the last few years, the membership team is asking you to reach out and ask them to join AEA Retired. You will be awarded \$10 for signing up a new member. Congratulations to Maria Leyva, Vice President of AEA Retired, for signing up seven new members this year.

We are offering new members a special rate for the first year. \$70 will be reimbursed to the new member when they join and choose payroll deduction from ASRS. That is a monthly deduction of \$8.75 if you are not a NEA lifetime member. If you are an NEA Lifetime member, your dues will be \$5.83 per month for the year. A check will be sent to the new member once the membership has been processed.

Here are some talking points to assist you in recruiting a new member. AEA Retired

- *monitors pension and health benefits.*
- *lobbies the Arizona State Legislature regarding public education issues.*
- *works to protect Social Security and Medicare in conjunction with AEA and NEA.*
- *has nine local AEA Retired Chapters around the state to join, listed on the back.*
- *keeps you informed on retirement issues through publications of The Conduit, AEA Retired web site at www.azedretired.com.*
- *Members continue to receive the AEA Advocate and the NEA Today.*

New Hire Action Events. This is the fifth year AEA Retired has supported AEA active locals with the New Hire Action Events. Meet and greet socials are opportunities for the local AEA associations to share what the union is about and ask new employees to join. Sixteen AEA Retired board members volunteered to help 22 locals, and 1,451 new AEA members signed up at the New Hire Events. Retired members held powerful conversations about why education employees should join the union. Thank you to those AEA Retired members who helped recruit new AEA members. AEA leaders and staff are incredibly grateful for the passion and knowledge AEA Retired members contributed to helping enroll new members.

NEA Retired "The Spirit of Membership Award." AEA Retired was awarded "The Spirit of Membership Award-2024 Runner Up" in recognition of extraordinary projects we have undertaken to support public education and the seniors we serve. Thank you to President Anna Cicero for all your assistance.

Membership Committee receives award from NEA Retired

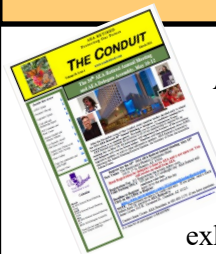


AEA Retired Membership Committee was honored with the distinguished **Spirit of Membership Award** at the NEA Retired Annual Meeting in Philadelphia.

The national award recognizes and honors those state and local Retired affiliates that, while building membership, have built an innovative program to engage, involve, grow, and advocate around professional issues within their organization, their state, and their communities.

Congratulations to the membership core team:
Chair Nancy Putman, Michele Smith, Shirley Boswell and Maria Leyva!

The Conduit receives third award from NEA Retired



Also at the NEA Retired Annual Meeting, **The Conduit** was announced as the national winner of the **E-Retired Newsletter Award**.

Nominated newsletters must exhibit good journalism and show broad and effective coverage of issues relevant to members.

Congratulations to **Jan Nichols and Bart James**, co-editors of the Conduit!



AEA Retired 2025 Annual Meeting

The 2025 **AEA Retired Annual Meeting** will be May 9 and 10 at the Renaissance Hotel in downtown Phoenix. All members of AEA Retired are invited to attend, but, consider being a delegate. Hear from guests like the AEA President, the ASRS Executive Director, Arizona Senators and Representatives. Enjoy a great lunch and participate in drawings and a silent auction. Registration information and more details will be in the December Conduit. Click the link here to [pledge to be a delegate](https://forms.gle/hqFpDs5k1AXcu3L79).

<https://forms.gle/hqFpDs5k1AXcu3L79>

Save the Date

Racial and Social Justice Committee

By Janice Dwosh

NEA Leaders for Just School Project

How can we as AEA Retired members support our educators in the classroom, future educators, and students in public schools? We can learn and advocate for the freedom to teach and the freedom to learn. The amazing NEA Leaders for Just Schools program has a leadership team of highly qualified NEA members.

I joined this program as an active participant and gained tools for critically thinking about equity and social justice, as well as skills to help provide opportunities for all children in public schools to succeed and thrive. Because of the COVID crisis, what was a three-year program morphed into a five-year journey for the San Diego Cohort which began in August 2019.

The original cohort which began with almost 150 NEA members, still had 75 after finally meeting in person again in 2022 in Washington DC. By the final get together in Minneapolis in 2023, only 45 were left. Each of whom started an Equity Project designed to impact their state or local association or students in their schools. Of those participating, 15 completed and presented projects at the June 2024 virtual Completer's Ceremony. Seven were accepted to present in Denver at the 2024 Mega Week for LJS.

My LJS Equity Project focused on stopping banned books and ensuring that schools have diverse literature for all students to read and enjoy. During the year, I was able to conduct surveys of AEA Retired leaders, as well as focusing on providing learning and action items members can take to further the cause of "freedom to teach and/or learn" in public schools. Part of AEA Retired Racial and Social Justice committee work focused on making sure articles were included in every Conduit to all AEA Retired members. In addition, presentations were made to local active association meetings, AEA Retired chapter meetings, and AEA Retired Executive Board meetings and retreats, and at the NEA Retired Conference in San Francisco and Chicago, engaging all levels of NEA members.

It was an amazing honor to be the only NEA Retired and AEA Retired member to present at the latest LJS Mega Week for more than 200 NEA Leaders for Just Schools members from Washington, D.C., Minneapolis, and Denver. Current educators now understand NEA Retired members have power and the advocacy abilities to make a difference in our public schools! We can all impact students, families, current educators, as well as retired members. Please contact me at jdwosh27@gmail.com if you are interested in joining our AEA Retired RSJ committee working to advocate for equity and justice! Click this link to NEA Leaders for Just Schools to learn more:

<https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/leadership-development/leaders-just-schools>

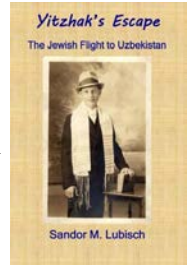


Janice Dwosh and Julie Cieniawski at LJS Mega Week conference.

Book Corner

By Ann Myers

There are so many things to tell you. First, I'm always excited when an AEA member publishes a book. Sandor Lubisch, retired from Phoenix Union, has a new book, *Yitzhak's Escape-The Jewish Flight to Uzbekistan*. The characters are fictional, but based on Lubisch's relatives, and the background is well researched and historically accurate. Yitzhak, a young Jewish boy, and his family lived in Bolechov, a Ukrainian city, made up of Poles, Ukrainians, and Jews living peacefully. By the late 1930s, Bolechov was threatened by the armies of Germany, Poland, and Russia. Yitzhak's father chose to trust the Soviets who promised asylum in Russia. The family made a long, complicated journey to a work camp in Uzbekistan. Thankfully, this really was a work camp where they were able to live safely until the end of the war. They returned to Bolechov three years later to find that none of their extended family had survived, and the town now blamed the Jews for the war. This is an important story about the Holocaust.



The AEA Retired Racial/Social Justice book group picked women's rights as a theme for their recent book, *Lessons in Chemistry* by Bonnie Garmus. Women baby boomers will identify with Elizabeth Zott, who in the 1950s wanted to be a chemist, but was forced out of her field by men who believed she was too feather-brained to understand science. She

becomes a TV chef in the style of Julia Child and teaches chemistry as applied to cooking. While her audience loved her, Elizabeth longed to return to her laboratory. This book is a mix of humor, romance, social commentary and is a thriller. No wonder it was on the best seller list for weeks.

In July, the book group had another movie field trip. This time the movie was *Sound of Hope: The Story of Possum Trot*, a near documentary of the community of Possum Trot, Texas, in the 1990s whose families fostered children considered too hard to place. Not a Hallmark movie, it showed difficult challenges of living with traumatized teenagers. My favorite part was the epilogue showing the real-life children, now successful adults, with their own families. Afterwards, we found we were seated in the theater next to a foster mother and her daughter. Bless these families for their love and patience.



Finally, there's a special surprise section of this month's column, with the emphasis on prizes! I so enjoyed the book, *The Lincoln Highway* by Amor Towles that I'm going to give away my copy. Send me your name, phone number or email address, and one of you will win this book. The contest will be open for two weeks after this month's *Conduit* is published.

Love to read? Want to talk about the book? If you'd like to join the Social/Racial Justice Book Group, contact me for more information. We meet virtually every now and again. Ann Myers, 480-510-8098 or azann@mac.com.

Mesa/East Valley Chapter

The East Valley Chapter meeting was informative, as candidates for Mesa School Board and Maricopa County Board of Supervisors spoke.

Welcome to new members who recently retired! Join us for a great lunch at our next meeting on October 1, at 11:30am at Mi Amigos, Gilbert and Southern in Mesa.



Left to right: Barbara Matteson, Luci Messing and Deb Larned of the Tucson Chapter.



Stoking the fires! Join us at upcoming events like Town Halls, School Board Meetings, Candidate Forums and Voter registration events. Go to BeBallotReady.com to update your voter registration.



Left to right: Janice Dwosh, Linda Somo, Cindy Coture and Larry Wittig.

Greater Tucson Chapter

On June 8, the Tucson Chapter represented AEA Retired at the Save Our Schools Arizona Pima County Action Summit. SOS is a valuable public education partner and the support given to public education is appreciated.

The summit included guest speakers, legislators, state candidates, public officials, petitions, vendors, workshops, and attendees willing to support public education in Pima County and Arizona. There was a clear message to VOTE 4 PUBLIC ED! when voting in the General Election.

The Greater Tucson Chapter table shared information for AEA Retired and NEA Lifetime Membership. Literature, membership forms, QR code, and the one-on-one discussion with Summit attendees were valuable tools to educate others about AEA Retired and our Association.

Thank you to Ellie Felder, Ken and Marilyn Freed, Obdulia Gonzales, Deb Larned, Luci Messing, Cathy Parades, and Theresa Riel for representing the Greater Tucson Chapter and AEA Retired.

Vote November 5

Send your email address to

julie.horwin@gmail.com

Win \$100



If we already have your e-mail address, you are entered in the \$100 drawing

Good luck!



The Conduit



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AEA Retired Chapter News

Chapters bring AEA Retired together. Most chapters will meet in person, some chapters may choose to add a Zoom meeting now and then. Each chapter governs itself in order to meet the needs of its members. Meetings usually include information programs and time for socializing with friends and colleagues. This is a great way to keep in touch with the latest issues in our communities. Anyone interested in forming a new chapter should contact Chapter Coordinator **Susan Sommer**, (623) 628-1935, ssommer114@aol.com.

All AEA Retired members are eligible to join a chapter where they worked or currently live.

When Chapters meet via Zoom, connection is a simple process. All you need to do is click the link you receive from your Chapter Chair via e-mail. We welcome your attendance and participation.

Glendale/West Valley Chapter: This year our meetings are being held at 11 am at Dillon's KCBBQ-Arrowhead, 20585 N 59th Ave, Glendale, AZ 85308 We enjoy food and good conversation. Meetings dates are on the third Thursday each month, September through April. For more information call, text or email **Marshall Militano** at 602-882-3260 or mmilitano1@gmail.com.

Greater Tucson Area Chapter: We are meeting the third Tuesday of the month, August through May. Meetings begin at 10am at the Southern AEA office, 6873 N. Oracle Rd., Tucson, AZ, 85704. Please e-mail Chapter Chair **Peter Coston** at pcoston1@cox.net for Zoom meeting links.

Kyrene Chapter: The Hub Grill and Bar, 14205 South 50th Street, Phoenix, keeps active and retired educators connected and having fun. Food and drinks keep our camaraderie fueled. Meetings are on the fourth Friday of the month August through March. Wherever you worked or work as an educator, we welcome you. Contact **Janie Hydrick** at hydrick@aol.com.

Mesa/East Valley Chapter: We meet for luncheon at Mi Amigos Restaurant, 1264 South Gilbert Road, Mesa. Join us at 11:00am on October 1, December 3, January 7, February 4, March 4 and April 1. Wherever you worked or work as an educator, we welcome you. Contact **Janie Hydrick** at hydrick@aol.com

Phoenix Chapter: We meet on Mondays—November 25, January 27, March 24 and April 28. at the Beatitudes Campus, 1610 W. Glendale Ave., Phoenix. Contact **Suzan Austin** at suzanaustin@cox.net or **Gary Mehok** at lojo40@cox.net for more information.

Scottsdale/Paradise Valley Chapter: All meetings will be held on the **third Monday** of each month from 11:00 to 1, September through April (excluding December). If you're not on our mailing list, please contact **Nancy Riley** at 480-600-8559 or rileyfam@cox.net.

Southeast Arizona Chapter: The Southeast Arizona AEA Retired Chapter is located in Cochise County and is comprised of districts in Sierra Vista, Tombstone, Huachuca City, Naco, Palominas, Elgin, and Ft. Huachuca, and retirees from other states who have moved to Cochise County. Meetings are scheduled for the second Thursday of the month September through May. Please contact Sally if you would like to be added to the email contact list, our only method of communication. Contact Chapter Chair **Sally Rosén** at 520-249-0233, azcatsally@aol.com for details.

Interstate/Flagstaff/Northern Arizona/Reservation Chapter (INFARC). Meetings will be held on the third Thursday of the month at 2pm (MST). Meetings will be held on Zoom. Please contact Daniel Barlow at dsjbarlow@yahoo.com. A link will be sent to you to connect to the meetings.

For more about AEA Retired, visit the website at www.azedretired.com.