Report of NEA Retired Directors
NEA Board of Directors Meeting
February 5 – 7, 2009
Washington, DC

Thursday, February 5

After attending the legislative briefing conducted by NEA Government Relations Staff, your retired members of the NEA Board joined their active colleagues and headed to Capitol Hill to lobby their Congressional teams for passage of the **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.** The House already passed its version of this bill (without a single Republican voting for it), but the Senate was still debating amendments to its version (throughout the weekend the Board received updates on the amendments being proposed in the Senate). Among other things, the House version of the Act will help stimulate the economy, save/create jobs, and assist struggling families by providing:

- School modernization grants and tax incentives to create jobs and infuse money into communities through repair, renovation, and construction of public schools and higher education facilities
- Funding to local school districts and public colleges and universities distributed through existing state and federal formulas
- An increase in Title I funding to help close the achievement gap and enable disadvantaged students to reach their potential
- An increase in special education/IDEA funding to take pressure off state budgets
- An increase in Pell Grant maximum award
- Investments in unemployment insurance, nutrition assistance, and other programs to help families meet basic needs during this economic crisis.

Additionally, all Board members were instructed to ask their representatives to sign onto the **Social Security Fairness Act**, which would repeal the GPO/WEP, and to encourage Senator Feinstein to introduce the bill in the Senate. Since the bill did not become law in the last session, the whole process must begin anew. The bill has been reintroduced in the House (with 135 co-sponsors) and will be reintroduced in the Senate soon.

The Board was told that President Obama has signed two important bills: a new SCHIP bill which makes available low cost health insurance to an additional 4 million children of working class families; and the Pay Equity Act for women.

Friday, February 6

President's Overview and Report

As part of his "reflections and projections", **President Van Roekel** began the meeting by describing the difference between long range planning and strategic planning. Long range planning means knowing where you want to go and strategic planning is how you will get there using your mission, vision and goals. He announced that he will meet monthly with the new **Secretary of Education Duncan.** He also described a meeting at the White House that he attended with **President Obama,** the new **Secretary of Labor,** leaders of AFL-CIO, Change to Win, and other unions. President Obama told the group that he believes labor unions are not the cause of the current economic problems, but instead are the solution. He presented the three pens that he had used to sign some legislation to the presidents of AFL-CIO, Change to Win, and **NEA.**

Continuing our discussions of "transforming education" the Board watched a video by Sir Robinson entitled "Schools Kill Creativity" that encouraged us to question what we do and how we do it in public

education, and to be open to new ideas from all sources. Robinson also emphasized the importance of the arts in education. The video was followed by one-hour of Board participation in a professional development activity based on the book Teaching an Anthill to Fetch by Stephen Joyce.

Board Actions

The Board took action on the following items:

- Approved appointments to the Board Steering Committee which included **Linda Somo**, **NEA-Retired**
- Approved dues for the 2009-2010 membership year; NEA dues for 2009-2010 are set by formula at $162 for certified (an increase of $4 or 2.5%), $93.50 for ESP (an increase of $2, or 2.2%), **$25 annual dues for Retired** (no change), and no changes for other categories.
- Elected **Kevin Fleming** from the Board to be Alternate Representative to the NEA Fund For Children and Public Education

Celebration of Women's History Month

Keynote speaker for the celebration of Women's History Month (which will be observed in March) was **Governor Kathleen Sebelius** from Kansas. She touted the strides that women have made over the past decade in exerting their political power and being elected to important political offices. She also emphasized the importance of investing in public education for the future of America.

Report of the Vice President

Lily Eskelsen, NEA Vice President**,** demonstrated the variety of information and trainings available on the new NEA Academy website and how members can utilize this valuable resource. Some courses are available for graduate and continuing education credit for a fee of $69, and other courses provide free training but do not give credit. For more information, go to www.nea.org/academy.

Report of the Secretary Treasurer

Becky Pringle, NEA Secretary Treasurer**,** reported on membership increases and finances. Active certified membership is up 19,659 and ESP is up 8,079 for a total membership of 3,239,488. **Retired membership is up 7,509 for a total membership of 295,496 (still the fastest growing segment of NEA).** Pringle reported that NEA's financials are in good shape currently, but may be impacted by the economic conditions, budget cuts, and market downturns that are negatively impacting state associations and school districts. The NEA employee retirement fund has experienced a significant drop because of stock market investments which will necessitate an increase in the contributions that state affiliates make for their employees. This may have drastic implications for state associations' budgets. Pringle also reported that the NEA Contingency Fund currently has an available balance of $665,400.

Transformational Dialogue for Public Education

Mel Myler, Retired Executive Director of National Council of State Education Associations**, Dr. Jillian Darwish,** Executive Director of Institute for Creative Collaboration**, and Patricia Frost-Brooks,** President, Ohio Education Association, reported on the work of the Ohio Transformational Dialogue Partnership that consists of government representatives, other education groups, community groups, interested stakeholders, and the state affiliate. This group meets regularly to discuss how to transform public education so that every child can learn 21st century skills in a great public school. NEA is supporting this group as a model for future implementation in other states.

Saturday, February 7

Committee on Constitution, Bylaws and Rules

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

Annual Meeting Review Committee Report

Carolyn Crowder, Chairperson of Annual Meeting Review Committee**,** moved the following items on behalf of the committee and the Board approved:

- Smartcards will be given to all NEA members attending the NEA RA regardless of delegate status
- NEA will provide information about the facilities offered to pregnant and nursing women who need to nurse, pump, or rest while still participating in the business of the RA
- That the scope of the Technology Task Force be widened to include other forms of technology besides the telephone system at the RA

Report of the Executive Committee

Mark Cebulski, Executive Committee, moved the approval of up to $200,000 from the NEA Contingency Fund to continue the Transformational Dialogue for Public Education Partnership with the Knowledge Works Foundation which is currently taking place in Ohio (see Friday notes). **The Board approved the expenditure.**

Report of the Executive Director

John Wilson, Executive Director, reported that Joel Packer, Director of Education Policy & Practice, is retiring and will be replaced by **Kay Brilliant.** Wilson participated in a Hope Foundation forum that drafted a document entitled, "Courageous Leadership for Shaping America", which is a message for President Obama that incorporates a policy statement on public education and labor unions.

Report of the General Counsel

Bob Chanin, General Counsel, reported on the new development in ongoing cases. 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.

Black History Month Observance

Walter Dean Myers, prolific author of books for children and youth, was the keynote speaker for the Black History Month Observance. Myers grew up in Harlem in foster care, twice dropped out of high school, but went on to become a New York Times best selling author of books on urban-teen life, sports, and black history. He has used his writing to reach out to urban teens by describing life as it exists in their experience while giving them hope that they can make a change in their own lives. Myers credits public schools for his success, and he has become an outspoken advocate for public education.

Transforming Public Education

The Board participated in an interactive session dealing with leadership, diversity, and social justice as they pertain to transforming public education. The objectives of the session were:

- To develop a common understanding of the terms "diversity" and "social justice" and the relationship between the two terms
- To identify how social justice issues surface – on a regular basis – in our schools, related workplaces, and in the educational policy arena
- To identify how NEA leaders – and NEA as an organization – can begin to address these issues to transform public education and ensure a great public school for every student.

Campaigns & Elections Update

Charles Hasse, NEA staff, reported that eighteen states have been targeted for Anti-Employee Free Choice Act Initiatives. Currently petitions are being circulated in Arizona. Also forty-two states are facing budget deficits, with CA, FL, AZ, NV and a few others are facing some extreme challenges with huge deficits and unfriendly legislatures. These states may need some additional help from NEA.

Read Across America

Rae Baczek, Chairperson of RAA Committee, reported on all of the year-around activities and the special events of February 25 – March 7, 2009. March 2 is officially Read Across America Day. For more information go to www.nea.org/readacross to download ideas, pledges, awards applications, and anything else that you might need to plan your own event or participate in organized events. **NEA awards stipends of $250 in 18 different categories for RAA activities. Download an application form to apply for the funds.**

Middle Class – Union Made

Board members from Michigan distributed a booklet entitled "Middle Class – Union Made" and other materials, and gave a presentation regarding 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.

Report compiled by Linda Somo

Respectfully submitted by your NEA Directors:

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Important Reminders

New grant applications and progress reports for existing grants are due by February 15th for the 2009-2010 membership year.
Contact Candace Lillyquist at Clillyquist@nea.org for more information. Forms are available online at nea.org/retired.

NEA-Retired West Regional Conference
Tuesday-Thursday, March 31-April 2, 2009
Portland, OR

NEA-Retired East Regional Conference
Tuesday-Thursday, April 7-9, 2009
Savannah, GA

NEA-Retired Annual Meeting
Saturday – Monday, June 27-29, 2009
Hyatt Manchester Hotel, San Diego, CA

See the *This Active Life* for information.
Online registration only