



THE CONDUIT

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AEA-R Executive Board and Active members meet to plan the course of action, goals for the coming year.



AEA-R officers, Board of Directors, Chapters, Chairs, and other members embarked upon the new school year with a two day meeting and committee day on September 17 and 18, that set the agenda and strategies for activities for the upcoming year. Major focus will be on increasing member involvement, protecting our public pension program, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. Adequately funding of public school districts was also emphasized as an important objective. New board members were introduced, fund-raising and a new hire at AEA were discussed.

Two advocacy training days and lobby days at the Capitol were announced.

Breakout session covered the new By-laws, Chapter Chair Development, Intergenerational Mentoring, the M.O.R.E. project, involvement of alliances, the Annual Meeting .



Julie Horwin, AEA-Retired President, presents "Values Messaging" at Alliance for Retired Americans Convention, Sept., 2019

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AEA-Retired Calendar

- October 15—AEA-Retired Board Meeting
- December 3—Advocacy Training, Tucson
- December 5—Advocacy Training, Phoenix
- January 23—AEA-Retired Lobby Day at the State Capitol
- February 12—AEA-Retired Lobby Day at the State Capitol
- February 24—School Counselors' Lobby Day at the State Capitol

ASRS UPDATE BY STEVE RAMOS



ASRS PENSION THREAT FIGHT SHIFTS INTO HIGH GEAR WITH MEMBER EDUCATION AND ACTION

powerful Arizona Chamber of Commerce, with support from the following anti-pension groups:

- **The Laura and John Arnold Foundation**. (billionaire, former Enron hedge fund manager)
- **Americans for Prosperity** (libertarian, smaller government, Koch Brothers)
- **The Reason Foundation** (libertarian think tank, Lisa Graham Keegan)
- **The Equable Institute** (a collection of anti-public pension individuals and groups)

There is no way AEA or AEA-Retired can match the millions of dollars available to any one of these groups. Instead, we will have to count on the voices of thousands of AEA active and retired members and friends. As detailed in the March 2019 "Conduit", AEA-Retired has reached out to the **Arizona Retirement Security Coalition** for support. ARSC is made up of other public employee and labor group friends. Our alliance also includes the support of the **National Public Pension Coalition**. AEA Retired members will be visiting AEA locals to try and get our message out to every member in the state. Contact AEA Retired or ARSC, if you can help spread our message in your school district. Also, please visit the ARSC website to watch and share our PowerPoint presentation, sign our petition, and get updates on future actions, including contacting legislators and at least one Day at the Capitol. <https://protectpensions.org/states/arizona>

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ASRS PENSION PERFORMANCE

The Arizona State Retirement System (ASRS) now has over \$41 billion in investments and is 73% funded. Unfortunately, the ASRS fiscal year ends each year on June 30th. That means the official Year-End Report that shows a 6.6% return on investments, combines really terrible returns from the last 6 months of 2018, with pretty good returns for the first 6 months of 2019. A better measure of ASRS performance this year might be to use benchmark comparisons. How well did ASRS do compared to other large public employee pension plans? ASRS total investments out earned benchmark returns by 1.69%.

ASRS HEALTHCARE

Members will soon be receiving an ASRS Health Care packet. United Healthcare will continue to provide Group Medicare Advantage HMO and PPO plans. The medical benefit structure should remain the same as last year, as will the reduced monthly premiums. Estimates are \$75 per month for the MAHMO and \$149 per month for the MAPPO. Non-Medicare plans will be consolidated from 7 plans to 3, with a broad statewide network. Estimated savings will be between 2% and 23% for most members. ASRS Sun Life Dental plan premiums will be unchanged and both plans will add benefit enhancements that will provide cost savings and member satisfaction.

ASRS PENSION THREAT

The months of October, November and December will be critical for the ASRS and AEA Retired. As I have been reporting for more than a year, forces are gathering for an attack on our ASRS pension plan. These "pension reformers" include a collection of national and state organizations, pushing to replace public employee pensions with more expensive 401k style plans, that threaten the retirement security of all retirees. In Arizona, the attack is being led by the

If you need help with making Medicare decisions, or other concerns, contact the Area Agency on Aging, a free-of-charge program offered for senior citizens at (602) 280-1059 or aaaphx.org.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY JULIE HORWIN



Demand courage from our legislators. Call them. Write them. Shout from the streets and rooftops.

We were educators. Whether our role as part of the village that is in the business of helping students to access the American Dream was in the classroom, in the nurse's office, vacuuming and dusting and a myriad of other jobs, in the lunchroom, on the recess field, in the gym, or on the bus, we knew that we were contributing to creating the next leaders, the next voters, the next Americans. And when we saw that there was an unfair situation in the classroom, or a student was not getting the support they needed, we stopped the world from spinning until we made things right for even one particular student.

We developed a keen sense of fairness. The drama that we see playing out regarding our healthy, strongest-in-the-nation pension system not only affects how we see politics, but our lives and sense of safety. We have all been impacted by the depression of 2009+, the fall in the market, and our ASRS pension is important to us.

We also know that the robust ASRS pension must be there for those educators who will retire after us. In Arizona, the ASRS pension system was developed to attract and maintain great educators in the classroom.

That promise may be threatened this year. The Reason Foundation, conservative Arizona state legislators, and the Arizona Chamber of Commerce have a goal of turning the ASRS system into a 401K type system. We have seen the false, misleading information that has been given to every legislator and we know that the ASRS system is the last purely defined pension in Arizona.

This hits home with thousands of men and women, who are benefitting from their investments now as retired educators, and with those who are now working in the public schools. We watch the calm per-

suasive words that these lobbyists use to take away one of the last rewards for being a public school employee.

When asking why the change is needed, the Chamber, the lobbyists, the legislators wiggle and filibuster out of answering the question.

The issue is what the state legislators will do with the good information it already has from Director Paul Matson, and the unfounded denigrations on that system by the organizations mentioned above. The choice our legislators make will tell our students and education colleagues exactly who these elected leaders are, who they listen to and serve, and what they stand for.

If the legislators say they believe Dr. Matson, and the many employees who are paying into that pension, and wish to keep the ASRS as it is in its very healthy state, then they are actually saying that they respect our sacrifices and understand their fiduciary responsibility to those who are paying into the system now, and those who are benefitting from their years of public school employee pay.

If they vote to change the System because of poorly done, misleading facts, then they are in effect saying that what we and our now active colleagues are saying are lies and the ASRS system is broken. They are not lies, and the system is the healthiest in the nation.

Rationalizing that this attack on decades of unselfish sacrifice by educators, and healthy, strong stewardship of our ASRS is now irrelevant, legislators are telling every educator, and every student: We simply do not care.

I don't know what would be worse. To be dismissive of

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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE *By Luci Messing*



Pension Protection, Public Education Funding and More

The AEA-Retired Political Action Committee met on September 18th to discuss the 2019-2020 plan. It was a very productive meeting and the calendar of events was rolled out. It is our goal to promptly begin member engagement, outreach and action. Please mark your calendars for your choice of **Advocacy/Legislative Update Trainings on Tuesday, December 3rd (YWCA, 525 N Bonita, Tucson) or Thursday, December 5th (AEA headquarters, 345 E. Palm Lane, Phoenix).** Trainings are scheduled from 10:00 am to 2:30 pm. Be on the lookout for an email with information regarding registration.

The 2020 Legislative Session begins on Monday, January 13th. We have been made aware of a potential attack on our pensions during this legislative session. Therefore, we intend to be diligent in our work with our legislators. **AEA-Retired Days at the Capitol have been scheduled: Thursday, January 23rd and Wednesday, February 12.** There will be additional days in March but we are waiting for confirmation from AEA to set their days so we can join them. We encourage anyone who is interested in meeting with their legislators, attending committee hearings and having lunch with representatives to sign up. Details will be forthcoming regarding registration.

The AEA PAC plan has numerous opportunities for all members to become more active in electing pro public education candidates and individuals who will protect our pensions. Start with any one of the following activities to play a part in reaching our goal. If every member participated in just one activity that would be ideal. Participating in additional events will help the cause even more. Encourage other members to join us in our important work.

- Help a district pass an override or bond
- Call your legislators and leave a message with your priorities and/or ask to meet
- Email your legislators and state your priorities and/or ask to meet
- Send a postcard to your representatives (Pick up on Oct. 15th at AEA headquarters)
- Attend your legislative district meeting to become more informed
- Register for an Advocacy/Legislative Training in preparation for the year

Register for an AEA-Retired Day at the Capitol We will have something for everybody if you want to participate and insure that our pensions are safe and our public schools receive the funding desperately needed.

AEA-Retired Members Meet with Congressman Raul Grijalva at the Alliance for Retired Americans Event on August 13



Seated, from the left, are Marilyn Calhoun, Ed Messing, Congressman Grijalva, Barbara Matteson, Steve Lindner. Standing are Ken Freed, Cathy Peredes, Luci Messing, and Cathy Peredes.

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educators whose experiences and voices have merit is a critical message.

But here's what I do know: students of all ages in our classrooms deserve access to qualified educators, to a safe, healthy environment. If the one remaining item that keeps qualified educators in their positions is removed, the teacher exodus from the classroom will only become much larger.

Educators do not have a sense of entitlement – we know that we paid for our pensions with every penny that we earned, with every pay cut we endured and still remained in the classroom – yet, that very pension is under attack.

Do legislators actually want to tell Arizona students that those who they meet each day in school are those that will stay in the classroom with low pay, a flimsy pension, and are only acceptable, not worth rewarding with a lifetime pension?

Do they want to declare that despite what we and our active colleagues have achieved for every Arizona student should affect the lives of our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren because we will need to depend on them for a safe dignified retirement?

Some people have said they empathize with the difficult decision legislators must make. When it comes down to it, however, the decision is pretty simple: Legislators cannot acknowledge Dr. Matson's and the ASRS's truth without condemning the Reason Foundation's and the Arizona Chamber of Commerce's lies as it attempts to weaken the ASRS.

Demand courage from our legislators. Call them. Write them. Shout from the streets and rooftops. Send an old-fashioned telegram. Bang on every door of every legislator. **Thank them if they believe we should keep the ASRS strong and deny the attempts to create any sort of hybrid 401K.**

On the other hand, hold them accountable for their callous hypocrisy if they say they believe Dr. Matson, but then accept the false information and elevate it into law that will impact the retirement of current educators. Our own retirement will be impacted by the changes sought because it will lower our ability to eventually have a PBI. If the legislature does not stand for truth, then it's our responsibility to make sure in the next election (2020) we send people who better represent our values to take their places.

We are working hard to help keep the ASRS strong, safe and secure. We will need your help when/if a bill is dropped in January in the next legislative session. I promise to keep you informed, and I ask that you promise to respond with your help through a small donation, a call to action at the state legislature, or to communicate with your legislators. And please let us know of any response to your inquiry or message to your state legislator.

Our students are learning about what this state stands for, what fairness means, and what justice should demand. Our future depends on it. And today's students depend on it as well to ensure that they have only the best trained and experienced educators standing in front of them and preparing them for their future.

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AEA Executive Director

Luis Heredia has been selected by the AEA Board of Directors to be the association's executive director.

He addressed the AEA-Retired Executive board meeting sharing his vision for the coming year.

AEA-Retired Executive Board for 2019

President: Julie Horwin

Vice President: Janie Hydrick

Secretary: Janice Dwosh

Treasurer: Steve Linder

AEA Director: Ken Freed

Past President: Linda Somo

M.O.R.E. PROJECT

Mobilize, Organize, Research & Engage
Wherever you taught, in Ohio, California, Minnesota, no matter where in the United States, there are great memories of students, colleagues and community.

When you moved to Arizona, you did not leave those memories behind. Please join educational colleagues from all over the country and Arizona as we socialize, share experiences, network & talk about important issues.

The M.O.R.E. Committee will send personal postcard invitations for mixers and advocacy training & lobby days. (See page 4 for dates)

You can register here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WinterMixer2020>

Stay tuned and look for postcards to announce happenings

For more information, or to register, contact Linda Somo lsomo@cox.net (480) 293-4291

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Membership Expands, Gains Power

Membership signed 19 new NEA Lifetime members and 20 new Lifetime AEA-Retired. Seven AEA-Retired Board members attended local events to stress importance of membership once retired.

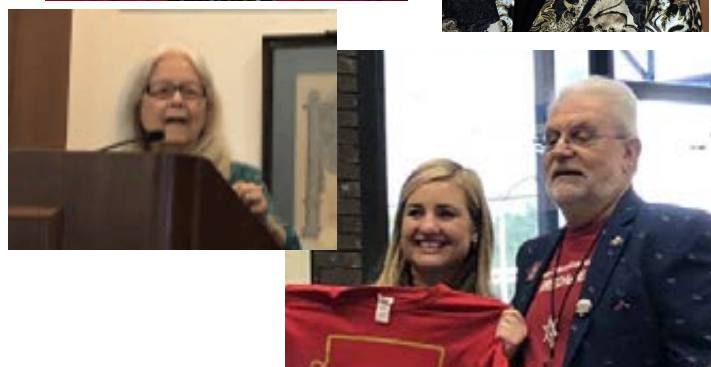
Membership has grown to 2200. But there are so many others just waiting to be asked. Whenever you socialize or have a gathering, talk about strength in numbers creates power. The more voices, the more power. Membership forms are available at azedretired.com

One way to show support and get involved is to order a custom T Shirt with AEA-R logo. Contact Michele Smith at 602-463-1624 or email at mms7997@msn.com



AEA-Retired is a member of the **Arizona Alliance for Retired Americans**. The two organizations join forces to protect retirement security for future generations.

At its biennial convention on September 26, AARA met to celebrate 16 years of activism. AEA-Retired's Janie Hydrick, Barbara Matteson and Julie Horwin were elected to serve on the Board of AARA.



Top: Janie Hydrick, AARA Treasurer, Barbara Matteson
Bottom: Senator Lela Alston, Mayor Kate Gallego with Marshall Militano

Read Across America

Now, March 2, 2020 & Year Round



The National Education Association is excited to bring **you Read Across America year-round** to help you motivate kids to read, bring the joys of reading to students of all ages, and make all children feel valued and welcome. The titles and resources featured by NEA's Read Across America include books that students can see themselves reflected in, as well as books that allow readers to see a world or a character that might be different than them.

Readers who feel included, recognized, and a part of the world are engaged readers. We hope that you'll be able to share these recommended titles—and many others—to celebrate Read Across America in March and throughout the year. We invite you to:

- Read books with kids and use Read Across America's resources to **daily** promote the message there is room in our community for **all** readers. The world—and books—are filled with many different kinds of people. Getting to know them is interesting, exciting, and fun!
- Use Read Across America to help kids enjoy and relate to what they read by linking books and reading to other experiences in their lives and on the school year calendar. When everything from your Hispanic Heritage Month celebration to the 100th day of school to the science fair to Memorial Day includes books, guest readers, activities, and conversation about reading, you raise awareness about the importance, value, and fun of reading **throughout the year**.



Make your community the place where Read Across America is on everyone's agenda.

calendar. When people make the time to read with children, children get the message that reading is important. Parents, members of your community, and local celebrities who make time to read at **monthly or annual** Read Across America celebrations help motivate kids to read and celebrate the diversity in their community and our country.

NEA Reading Lists are created on **WorldCat**, the world's largest network of library content, to help you find these titles in your local library.

The categories listed below are for expanding diversity knowledge.

- African American Author Titles
- American Indian/Alaska Native/First Nations titles
- Asian American & Pacific Islander Recommended Titles
- Diverse Books with Trailblazing Women
- Hispanic Heritage
- LGBTQ experience about pride, tolerance & diversity
- Spanish/English Bilingual books



The Conduit



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AEA-Retired Chapter News

Chapters are an attempt to bring AEA-Retired closer to members. All AEA-Retired members are eligible to join a chapter where they worked or currently live. Meetings usually include an information program, business meeting, lunch or dinner, and time for socializing with friends and colleagues. Anyone interested in forming a new chapter should contact Chapter Coordinators

Susan Sommer, ssommer114@aol.com

Glendale/West Valley Chapter- The meetings are held at Biscuits Café, 19420 N. 59th Ave., Glendale. Our next meeting will be December 5, 2019 at 10:00 AM. All members are welcome to join us for news pertaining to retirees and senior issues. Call, text or email **Susie Sommer** at 623-628-1935 or ssommer114@aol.com

Mesa / East Valley Chapter: Our next meeting is October 25. The chapter will address postcards to voters of the Mesa School District about the upcoming override election. Contact **Janie Hydrick** at Hydrick@aol.com or (480) 963-1848 for more information.

Greater Tucson Area Chapter: Meetings are held the third Tuesday of Sept.—May, at 10:00 AM, and alternating sites between the TEA office and the Southern Region office. Our last meeting was on Tuesday October 8. The guest speaker was Jonathan Rothchild, outgoing mayor of Tucson., at the AEA Southern Region Office at 6873 N. Oracle Road. For future meetings and information, contact **Marion Pickens**, Chair 520-296-5908 or marionpeterpickens@gmail.com

Phoenix Chapter: Meets at the Beatitudes in Phoenix, 1610 W. Glendale Ave. at 10:30 AM. Contact Chapter Chair **Michele Smith** at 602-463-1624 or mms7997@msn.com.

Scottsdale/Paradise Valley Chapter: We meet at Denny's Restaurant on Mayo Blvd. and Scottsdale Rd. at 11:00 a.m. on the 3rd Monday, bi-monthly. Our first meeting of 2019-2020 year featured Jennifer Hilbos from Save Our Schools who talked about Arizona's educational funding. We support the Kinnaman Scholarship Fund & Justa Center, a homeless center. Our next meeting will be October 21 with Jan Nichols updating us on Arizona Charter Schools. We welcome any AEA –Retired member, or potential member, to our group. Contact **Nancy Riley**, 480-596-1144, rileyfam@cox.net, or **Ann Myers** 480-510-8098, azann@mac.com

Southeast Arizona Chapter: The Southeast Arizona AEA-Retired chapter is located in Cochise County and is comprised of education retirees from districts in Sierra Vista, Tombstone/Huachuca City, Naco, Palominas, Elgin and Fort Huachuca, and retirees from parts of Arizona and other states who have opted to move to Cochise. We meet over dinner in various restaurants in the Sierra Vista/Hereford area approximately every other month. The next meeting will be in October, place and date TBA. To join us, contact Sally Rosén (520)249-0233 or azcatsally@aol.com

Flagstaff Chapter: If you live in the Flagstaff area, you can't afford to miss out on our AEA-Retired chapter meetings, held on the first Tuesday of each month, 10 AM to noon, in the basement room of Flagstaff Federated Church. We work to stay informed and support Arizona's retirees, educators and students through service projects, political action, and constant monitoring of retirement issues at the state and national levels. We hope you will join us and lend your expertise to our efforts to support our profession and the people we serve. For more information and to RSVP, contact **Tricia Roach** at trrteach6@mac.com or 928-525-1997.

Kyrene Chapter. We meet at Native Grill and Wings, 5030 Ray Rd. #5 from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m., the third Wednesday of the month. Speakers TBA. Active, as well as retired members, are invited to attend. Contact Ellen Shamah at eshamah@cox.net

Yavapai Chapter : We meet at Augie's restaurant., 1721 AZ-69, Prescott , Az. Meetings begin at 11:15 and are held on the third Thursday following the AEA-Retired Exec Board meetings. Contact Chairperson **Rob Johan** at johanica31@gmail.com or 630-430-8902 for more information.