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Scottsdale Resort is site of 2016 Annual Meeting and Delegate Assembly May 6-7

Good food, good friends, fun, prizes, and, as usual, great speakers to make you well informed members of a terrific organization await attendees at the 28th AEA-Retired Annual Meeting on May 6th at the Scottsdale Resort at McCormick Ranch in Scottsdale, an exciting new venue for this event.



This year's theme will center on an election year with elements of "red, white, & blue". Our keynote speaker will be Todd Crenshaw, NEA Organizing Specialist who specializes in organizing, motivating, and mobilizing retirees.

Attendees will also receive important information from various speakers who will bring them up-to-date on what is happening at the legislature, ASRS, and AEA. Learn about all the bills that directly affect public education and retirees.

A major part of every Annual Meeting is the election of officers and Representatives-at-Large who comprise the AEA-Retired Executive Board. In keeping with our Constitution & Bylaws, only the 85 elected delegates (who are our delegates to the AEA Delegate Assembly) may vote in these elections. This year, delegates will elect a secretary and six Representatives-at-Large.

Another exciting part of every Annual Meeting is the awarding of the Les Reynolds Distinguished Senior Service Award to a member who has been an exemplary leader and volunteer within, and outside, of the organization. This year's recipient is AEA-Past President, Linda Somo.

For those attendees who are also delegates to the AEA Delegate Assembly, which will be held on Friday evening and all day Saturday, AEA-Retired will cover half the cost of a double occupancy room at the Scottsdale Resort for the evening of May 6th. When rooming with another delegate, the net result is free lodging for one night. Online reservations for the Scottsdale Resort will be available soon for \$113 when using the AEA discount code.

While the guest speakers, a fantastic lunch, and the legendary AEA-Retired Happy Hour at the end of the Annual Meeting are all attractive, the one thing that will make this day perfect is YOU. If you've never attended an Annual Meeting, make this the year you do. You're bound to see old friends, and make new ones. There is a nominal Annual Meeting registration fee of \$30, which helps to defray the cost of the meeting room, materials and the lunch. Fill out the registration form on page 7 and send it in, or register online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2016AEA-RetiredAnnualMtg>.



AEA Retired Calendar

March 22-24—NEA Organizing Conference, San Diego, CA

April 12 —AEA-Retired Board meeting; AEA HQ

May 6 —AEA-Retired Annual Meeting, Scottsdale

May 17—Vote for Prop 123 & Prop 124

ASRS UPDATE BY STEVE RAMOS



Steve Ramos

State actions create solutions, but also some unintended consequences for ASRS Fund

At the time of this writing, the Arizona legislature is in full swing. AEA Retired leadership has been speaking to a number of bills of concern at the capitol that relate to our Arizona State Retirement System (ASRS) and public education. We have also been reaching out to other retired groups through our Arizona Retirement Security Coalition.

ASU/ASRS PENSION THREAT UPDATE

It appears ASU will hold off on their attempts to pull new hires out of ASRS until the 2017 legislative session. They apparently thought the timing was not right, but continue to press the issue in recent presentations to the legislature. Keep sharing this issue with others.

AEA Retired asks members to contact their legislators to express opposition to the following two bills:

HB2157: ASRS; POLITICAL SUBDIVISION ENTITIES

Similar to the ASU/ASRS Pension Threat, this bill identifies 15 employers with employees currently in ASRS, and would exclude any new hires from joining. None of these groups want their employees removed from ASRS. These government entities do public service work for and with the State, counties, cities and school districts. ASRS predicts this bill will cost the ASRS fund \$25.3 million plus interest over 30 years.

HCR2040: STATE MONIES; PROHIBITED INVESTMENTS; TERRORISM

This ballot resolution is wrapped in politics and emotion and could have a devastating effect on the investment returns of our ASRS pension plan and the ability to pay a future Permanent Benefit Increase (PBI). It asks voters to prohibit ASRS from investing in any legal entity that is invested in or doing business with the government of a country that is identified as a state sponsor of terrorism. On the surface this sounds reasonable and even patriotic but more reasonable prohibitions are already part of federal law. Groups from outside Arizona

are pushing this measure in states to protest their opposition to the federal government and an international agreement with Iran.

SB1428 and SB1429: PSPRS MODIFICATIONS (Neutral Position)

These bills make changes to the Public Safety Personnel Retirement System (PSPRS), which has been in the news for its funding status and questions about costs and sustainability. PSPRS and its public employee groups met with state leaders and negotiated a deal to improve the long-term problems with the fund. Most of the changes affect only new hires. They would work longer, retire older and split the contribution rate equally with their employers. They also would be given a choice of opting for a 401(k)-style retirement plan rather than a plan with a guaranteed pension. Part of the fix involves asking voters to support an exception to constitutional protection language. AEA Retired respects the view of public safety leaders that, under current circumstances, this is a fair agreement for their employees. However, AEA Retired has decided to take a neutral position on this issue.

VOTE YES FOR SCHOOLS - PROP. 123

In May, voters will be asked to vote on Proposition 123. AEA Retired wants to be clear that this is only a settlement of a lawsuit, filed in 2010, over money owed to schools for the states failure to fund public school inflation costs. It does not solve Arizona's school funding crisis. It takes funds from the interest earnings of the State Land Trust, but does not touch the base. Short of electing more education friendly people to public office, AEA believes it is the only way to get desperately needed dollars immediately into our schools. AEA Retired recommends voting **Yes ON 123!**

ASRS AUDIT: A recent audit of ASRS reported the following conclusion:

"ASRS has generally met its statutory objective and purpose and that terminating the ASRS would significantly harm the public welfare."

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY JULIE HORWIN



Caregiver help, and advice available for retired members

If there's one thing we'd like you to know about those of us who volunteer our time at Arizona Education Association-Retired, it's how much we care about you and your life. We care about keeping your pension safe, helping you to get the most bang for your healthcare dollar, and saving you stress. Like a good friend, we care about making your retired years fun-filled with like-minded education retirees, and activities and information that will add value to your everyday life. But, we know that you also deal with things that are not easy and not always fun, like caring for an aging parent, an ill loved one, or dealing with difficult transitions in life.

Today's reality is that thousands of Arizonans are caring for a loved one, and chances are you're part of that statistic (or will be at some point.) If you already are, then you know that caregiving can bring joyful moments, but can also take a toll on your own physical and emotional health. That's why I am going to include some links to Arizona agencies that may be helpful to you.

Arizona Area Agency on Aging, <http://www.azaging.org>
If you are wondering which Medicare Plan is best for you, go to **State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP)** <https://www.medicare.gov/Contacts/>

A free health benefits counseling service for Medicare beneficiaries and their families or caregivers. Our mission is to educate, advocate, counsel and empower people to make informed benefit decisions. SHIP is an independent program funded by federal agencies and is not affiliated with the insurance industry.

This program is a partnership of the Department of Economic Security, Division of Aging and Adult Services and Arizona's Area Agencies on Aging.

SHIP Hotline: (800) 432-4040 (Leave a message and they will call you back!)

Arizona's school funding crisis needs your action to make improvements

School funding in Arizona has dropped to 1970 levels – with more kids and with more families who are disadvantaged so they need more support. We have an unprecedented teacher shortage because the teaching conditions are incredibly poor – making for tough learning conditions. Look at any stats on how many students graduate and how few of those who graduate, actually matriculate to college. It is dismal.

I attend the state legislative hearings most days to testify on your behalf and to advocate for AEA's legislative agenda. I sit on three different boards of coalitions to strategize ways to protect and defend our pensions – and I am proud of the team of retired educators who help in these endeavors. I help train political leaders so that they have the skills and resources to make good policy decisions. I maintain excellent relations with elected officials in order that we can work together to protect our pensions.

I also depend on you, our members to support our efforts through your membership dues, your appearance at the state legislature and your voices in response for a call for help. Thank you. You have really come through for me and for your colleagues. I, like my fellow AEA-Retired leaders, am mindful of your membership support and the time you take when a request is made to send an email, make a phone call, show up at a press conference, a rally, or to testify in committee. You show up, and together we have managed to make a difference.

One way that we can easily help to make Arizona education better - and very soon - is to **cast a "Yes" vote on the special election on May 17, 2016**. Please, don't ignore that special election – it seems that only those with an "agenda" will vote so let's make sure that we show policy makers that we have an agenda to continue the work that we did during our working lives. We haven't forgotten our passion for public education and the democracy that it protects. Without raising one cent of taxes, we can increase the funding for every school, every student, every teacher with one yes vote on May 17.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

By Barbara Matteson and Larry Wittig



Bills moving quickly through legislature. Stay informed and involved.



The 2016 Legislative Session has begun and things are moving quickly. Be sure you are signed up to receive the “AEA Action Alert” so you can respond quickly to requests to oppose or support a bill. Go to: arizona.org and sign up for the “Action Alert”. Your voice can make a difference. We saw that happen with the legislation that restored the much needed funding for JTED’s that was cut by \$32 million last year. The restoration of most of the funds will help to provide the critical programs for our students to obtain vocational training.

You can also sign up with **Arizona Voices** and leave a message on any bill. Our legislators read these messages. And the more voices, the more they listen.

Of course, you can always keep in touch with your own state senator and representatives. Call them or send them an email and let them know you are watching. Go to www.azleg.gov where you can find contact information for all members of the legislature, as well as information on all bills, committee meetings, and everything that is happening at the Capitol. Or call 1-800-352-8404.

As of this writing, the expansion of “Empowerment Scholarships”, a.k.a. vouchers, passed the Senate with SB1279, but has stalled in the House with HB 2482 where several amendments were offered. There is a strong likelihood that the bills could pass both houses. These bills will award taxpayer money to all children in Arizona to attend any school they choose, private, parochial, on-line, home schooling, or even set aside funds for college. This would drain even more money out of our neighborhood public schools where 85% of our Ari-

zona children choose to attend. Moreover, it could put in jeopardy the passage of Prop 123 which would provide sorely needed funds for public education that were withheld by the legislature in past years.

Passage of these bills will create many unanswered questions. What about accountability? The AZ Dept. of Education has difficulty keeping up with the limited number of vouchers they now have, which has resulted in some well-documented cases of fraud. Where are the standards and proof of student achievement that are demanded from our public schools, but will be totally absent from the private schools that will receive public tax dollars? Which bank is going to handle the vouchers, and how much will that cost the taxpayer? Is the goal to privatize education? Even if these bills fail this year, some legislators have vowed to bring them back in the future. So far our efforts to stop them have been successful, but we have to keep fighting such onerous bills, whether at the legislative level or with a governor’s veto.

Funding district public schools and our state universities is essential to the health and wealth of our state. We need a well-educated populace to make Arizona a sought-after place in which to do business and to live.

Stay informed and educate your friends and neighbors. Take action. Pick up the phone, or send a text or email and let our elected leaders know how you feel. And be ready to work to support and help elect our AEA recommended candidates who support public education and public school employees, both active and retired. **Let’s get to work!**

AEA-Retired members demonstrate their support for public education on opening day of the Legislature at the Capitol



Things to Do in Arizona in the Spring

Desert Botanical Garden

1201 N. Galvin Parkway, Phoenix, AZ 480-941-1225

Music in the Garden

Every Friday night through June 24, 2016 - Artists from Arizona & around the world perform a variety of styles - from 7-9 p.m. until May 13, then, from 7:30 – 9:30 until June 24. Sit outside and enjoy beautiful music, food & adult beverages. Only Adults 21 + Admission is \$20 members, & \$25 non-members. Gertrude's Restaurant located at the garden entrance is fine dining inside or on the patio.



Bill Munro, Sonoran Light Show

This exhibit showcases 8 large-scale, light based installations & a variety of glowing fiber optics. Nightly through May 8, 6- 11 p.m. Adults \$25/\$12.50 children (3 – 12). Day/Night pass \$30 adults/\$15 children (under, 3 free). Nightly through May 8, 6- 11 p.m. Adults \$25/\$12.50 children (3 – 12). Day/Night pass \$30 adults/\$15 children (under, 3 free).



Cochise County, stop & smell the roses and other things to do

Rush hour got you down? Busy schedules? Head on down to Cochise County & relax in a beautiful desert atmosphere, with friendly people and a rich history. Tombstone, Bisbee, Benson, Willcox, Sierra Vista or Douglas are interesting attractions.

In spring, marvel at the world's largest rosebush while exploring **Tombstone**, the "Town too Tough to Die." The ghosts of Wyatt

Earp, Doc Holliday & cowboys haunt the saloons & graveyards.

Fairbank, a town from the 1880's, is open on the weekends.

Goods bound for Tombstone flowed in and out of Fairbank through the busy train depot. When the automobile became popular, Fairbank began to disappear. The last train depot closed in 1966, but the schoolhouse is now a visitor center. Take a casual walk through the museum & along the banks of the San Pedro River where a rich riparian habitat exists.

Gammons Gulch, Tombstone & the Dragoon Mountains have all made their mark as backdrops for western movies. Poppies carpet the desert floor from Cochise Stronghold to the Chiricahua's.

Cochise Stronghold is located to the west of Sunsites, Arizona in the Dragoon Mountains at an elevation of 5,000 ft. Once the refuge of the great Apache Chief, Cochise, it is a beautiful woodland area with high granite domes and sheer cliffs. Hiking trails & great picnic areas abound.

Benson, just northwest of Tombstone has a rich history of ranching culture & colorful saloons.

To the west of Benson is **Willcox**, home to wineries & Rex Allen, famous cowboy singer in the 40's & 50's. Annie's Apple Orchard abounds with pies, jams, jellies & sauces, as well as baskets of fresh apples ready for sale.

Bisbee, an artist's colony, ghost town, mining town has much to offer. There are watering holes in **Brewery Gulch**, copper & turquoise shops, and guided tours of the mine. The Copper Queen Hotel is a must-stay to appreciate the grandeur of the mining heyday. Save time for fine dining.

Douglas, in southeastern Arizona was a smelter town that processed Bisbee's ore. The **Gadsden Hotel** & the **Slaughter Ranch** are both fascinating tourist attractions, harkening back to the cowboy era.

Arizona is rich in beauty and history. Enjoy an adventure to somewhere not as well-known and not as well traveled.



AEA-Retired successfully launches MORE Project



*Left: All participants at Tucson MORE meeting
Above: Guest speaker Laura Feldman with President Horwin*

The NEA-Retired M.O.R.E. Project (Motivate, Organize, Recruit, Engage) brings together NEA-Retired members from many states. On February 16 in Tucson and February 17 in Phoenix, AEA-Retired hosted over 60 NEA-Retired lifetime members from other states -- who now live, pay taxes, and VOTE in Arizona but are not members of AEA-Retired. The goal of this project is to organize a small but highly effective army of retired educators who will stand up for public education, educators, and retiree issues.

HISTORY OF THE ARIZONA M.O.R.E. PROJECT GRANT

At the NEA-Retired Organizing Conference held last spring in Atlanta, Vice-President Suzan Austin initiated a proposal of a grant to fund a M.O.R.E. project similar to a successful one in Florida. President Julie Horwin advanced the membership engagement project and a grant was awarded by NEA for \$3,638 in the Fall of 2015. With the assistance of Todd Crenshaw, NEA Organizing Specialist, organizing teams from Maricopa and Pima Counties were formed and planning meetings were held in November for the events in mid-February of 2016.

"We're So Glad You're Here" Events

Invitations to the two social networking events, themed "We're So Glad You're Here," were mailed in January to over 1200 NEA-Retired lifetime members now residing in Maricopa and Pima Counties. AEA-Retired members were also invited. The results were two very successful and enjoyable meetings.

Retirees who taught in states like Alaska, Maine, Hawaii, Illinois, New Jersey, Michigan, Wisconsin, Virginia and Germany came to network with their Arizona colleagues and to learn

what AEA/AEA-Retired were about. They also came to hear Washington renowned speaker on Social Security and Medicare, Laura Feldman. Laura was outstanding in her presentation which gave attendees the facts about Social Security and Medicare, but did so in the Conservative/Liberal debate lens about its longevity.

In Tucson, TEA President Jason Freed, and in Phoenix, AEA President Andrew Morrill outlined the importance of Prop 123 for public education funding in Arizona. But the real highlight of the 4 hour regional meeting was the participants, who networked with one another, engaged each speaker with thoughtful questions and then volunteered to work on behalf of the Association to support public education in Arizona. Out of 122 attendees, 89 signed up to lobby, make phone calls, write letters, attend legislative meetings, attend school board meetings and work with teachers and students during Read Across America week.



Attendees participate in fun, get-acquainted activities at the MORE meeting in Phoenix.

**AEA-Retired Annual Meeting at the Scottsdale Resort
7700 E. McCormick Parkway, Scottsdale, AZ
Friday, May 6th 9:30 AM – 3:30 PM**

**Registration Form: The \$30 non-refundable registration fee is payable by check or money order to AEA-Retired and must accompany this form on or before Friday, April 22, 2016.
Mail to: AEA-Retired Annual Meeting, 345 East Palm Lane, Phoenix, AZ 85004-1532.**

Name _____
 Address _____ Zip _____
 Phone(s) _____
 Email _____

***Please mark your choice of luncheon entrée so we have an accurate lunch count (unmarked forms will receive chicken):

- _____ Achiote Rubbed Chicken Breast
- _____ Baked Pacific Salmon with Dill Cream
- _____ Vegetarian

Registering another? Great! Each individual must pay \$30 registration fee.

2nd Name _____
 email _____

- _____ Achiote Rubbed Chicken Breast

Meal Choice for 2nd person

- _____ Baked Pacific Salmon with Dill Cream
- _____ Vegetarian


Require or use special accommodations? Yes No

If yes, please help us to make you welcome; explain? _____

Somo picked for Les Reynolds Award


The Les Reynolds Distinguished Senior Service Award Committee is honored to announce their unanimous selection of Linda Somo, Past President, as the 2016 award recipient. Whether Linda was a member of the Mesa Education association, the NEA, AEA, or AEA-Retired, she has been, and still is, a tireless worker who uses her exceptional knowledge to the benefit of school employees, both active and retired.

As a leader in AEA-Retired, she was able to write successful grants, purchase needed equipment, streamline services to members and greatly increase membership and participation. As if this weren't enough, she has also been involved in her community with the United Way, East Valley Institute of Technology Education Foundation, and Oakwood Creative Care. Linda will receive her award on May 6th at the AEA-Retired Annual Meeting. Congratulations, Linda, you are an inspiration to us all!



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 or **Suzan Austin** at (480) 947-2089 suzanaustin@cox.net.

Glendale/West Valley Chapter- Next meeting will be Thursday, April 7th, at 4 PM. All members are invited to join us for a social and informative gathering. If you live on the Westside of I-17 in the Valley of the Sun, contact us. For more information call **Susie Sommer** at 623-628-1935 or e-mail ssommer114@aol.com.

Mesa / East Valley Chapter: Met Wednesday, March 9, at the Mesa Public Schools Bldg., 63 E. Main Street in Mesa. Guest speaker was Samantha Pstross, Executive director of the Arizona Advocacy Network. Next meeting will be May 11, newly-elected AEA President will be our guest speaker. Contact **Janie Hydrick** at Hydrick@aol.com or (480) 628-1845 for more information or to RSVP.

Greater Tucson Area Chapter: Meetings are the third Tues. of Sept.—May, at 10:00 AM, and alternating sites between the TEA office and the Southern Region office. Go to <http://www.azedretired.com/TUCSON/index.html> for more information, or contact Chapter Chair **Marilyn Calhoun** at 520-744-0399 or marilyn13148@q.com.

Phoenix Chapter: Will meet at the Beatitudes in Phoenix from 10:30 –12:30 on Tuesday, March 22, and May 24. For more information or to RSVP your attendance, contact Chapter Chair **Michele Smith** at 602-463-1624 or mms7972@msn.com.

Yavapai Chapter: Met Jan. 30th, and presented a power point detailing the possible danger to ASRS pensions if the universities withdraw new employees. Contact **Ted Coleman** at theodorecoleman76@gmail.com for information about future meetings.

Scottsdale/Paradise Valley Chapter: Meetings for this year are scheduled for March 21st, and May 16th. For information contact **Suzan Austin** at (480) 947-2089 or visit <http://www.azedretired.com/SCOTTSDALE/index.html>. Everyone is welcome.

Southeast Arizona Chapter: Contact **Sally Rosen** at 520-459-0430 or azcatsally@aol.com. for information and future meeting dates.

Northern Arizona/ Rez Chapter: Contact **Maryanne Goodluck** at magoodluck55@yahoo.com for information and future meeting dates.

Kyrene/Tempe Chapter: Everyone who is eligible for AEA-retired membership, and their guests, are welcome to the meetings. Contact **Ellie Feldner** at teachgift@gmail.com, for more information and future meeting dates.

Flagstaff Chapter: Will meet the first Tuesday of every month at 10 AM at the Federated Church, at Aspen & Sitgreaves. The next meeting is scheduled for April 5th. For more information and to RSVP, contact **Tricia Roach** at trrteach6@mac.com or call 928-525-1997.