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we2.0

Washington Education Association
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Washington's class sizes
are **47th out of 50** states.

WEA members are working to change that by collecting signatures to get Initiative 1351 on the ballot. *See inside for your own I-1351 petition!*



We are Educators. We are Union. We are WEA.



Kim Mead
WEA President

Our members are nothing short of amazing. Your enthusiasm and resolve were proven time and time again at the 2014 WEA Representative Assembly, “RA” for short, earlier this month in Spokane. I was reminded and energized by the commitment members brought to our annual meeting. With each new business item, resolution and floor vote — and there were over 50 of them — you were represented by impassioned and inspired delegates.

Working conditions and compensation were the most frequent topics approved for action, reflecting our ongoing demands that this state fund its public education system, not adequately, but amply, as is required by law.

Delegates overwhelmingly voted to support a statewide initiative to lower class sizes, and to adopt a strategic approach to improve total compensation, including COLA, base pay, health care and pensions.

Though referred to as a “class size” initiative, I-1351 would add teachers and, importantly, more counselors, teacher librarians, nurses and paraprofessionals, for an overall increase in the number of caring adults helping our students to succeed.

I feel confident we can win a class size initiative vote in November, but we have to get it on the ballot first. Please fill out and return the petition attached in this issue of *We 2.0*. (See pages 5-8) Ask your family, friends and neighbors to sign in support of the students in their lives. Take advantage of upcoming family gatherings to collect your signatures.

RA delegates also voted to fight for respect and pay with several actions going beyond COLAs to include the whole compensation package, from base pay to pensions and health care. The state Supreme Court has said that nothing is more basic than adequate pay. We agree.

Other floor votes passed in support of special education issues, opting out of standardized tests, and encouraging elected officials to take the sample Smarter Balanced Field Test. For a complete run-down of new business items and resolutions that passed, please visit www.WashingtonEA.org/RA.

Thank you, all, whether you are a rank-and-file member, building rep, delegate or other leader. Together, we are 83,000 people dedicated to a strong and effective public education system.

We are educators; we are union; and we are WEA, the face of education in Washington.

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Nearly 900 delegates attended this year’s WEA Representative Assembly in Spokane, many giving up part of their Spring Break, to discuss, debate and help shape our Association’s direction for the coming year.





It's a wRAp!

Delegates at the 2014 WEA Representative Assembly vote to support a statewide initiative to lower class sizes, among other business for the coming year

As nearly 900 bleary-eyed WEA members made their way out of the Spokane Convention Center early Sunday, April 6, they headed for their beds knowing they completed what WEA members around the state elected them to do — discuss, debate and decide on WEA policy for the upcoming year. Delegates at the 2014 Representative Assembly (RA) elected new officers (NEA state director, ESP at large and Ethnic-Minority at large positions), participated in study sessions, heard from state legislators and voted on a host of resolutions and New Business Items (NBIs).

Members from around the state convened for three days of democracy in action where they had the opportunity to hear from one another about issues weighing on our colleagues' minds. In addition to topics discussed in other articles in this issue of *We 2.0*, members debated whether or not to support a wide variety of issues including providing resources for small/rural locals; working to raise awareness about specific special education issues; weighing in on standardized tests and other student assessment; rising income inequality; immigration; pushing to create a national holiday to honor Cesar Chavez and more. Delegates voted to approve 25 NBIs and four resolutions. For a complete list of action items from this year's RA, visit www.WashingtonEA.org/RA.

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*COLAs,
compensation
strategy
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Intense discussion, sometimes heated debate, plenty of smiles and long hours marked the 2014 WEA Representative Assembly. Nearly 900 delegates participated in this year's annual meeting in Spokane, where WEA members voted to support a statewide initiative to lower class sizes. Delegates also took action on measures addressing compensation, standardized tests and resources for small/rural locals. For a complete list of action items, visit www.WashingtonEA.org/RA.



WEA delegates vote to support class-size initiative

Major signature gathering campaign begins now

Earlier this month at WEA's annual Representative Assembly, nearly 900 educators from across Washington voted to support Initiative 1351, the ballot measure that will dramatically reduce class sizes and caseloads for certificated educators and education support professionals.

The Legislature has failed to make adequate progress toward reducing class sizes, and Washington's students are packed into classrooms ranked 47th out of 50 states.

"That is unacceptable," WEA President Kim Mead said. "To give our kids the quality education they deserve, we must invest in smaller class sizes." Mead said reducing class sizes and caseloads is the most effective way to improve learning and student performance.

Getting I-1351 on the ballot will take work. Supporters need to collect 350,000 voter signatures by July 3. Once it qualifies, I-1351 will be on the Nov. 4 ballot. Class Size Counts, a community organization, is the initiative sponsor. The initiative reduces class sizes for all grades. For

example, I-1351 would fund class sizes of 17 students per class in K-3, and 15 per class in high-poverty schools. The initiative would also fund additional education staff associates such as counselors and nurses, plus additional classified educators such as office assistants, custodians and paraprofessionals.

On the following pages you'll find an I-1351 petition with 10 signature lines. The upcoming holiday weekend is the first big opportunity for collecting the signatures needed to reduce class sizes — bring the petition to your holiday celebration and ask friends and family to sign.

“To give our kids the quality education they deserve, we must invest in smaller class sizes.”

— Kim Mead
WEA President



I-1351 petition instructions

- Carefully remove the staples in the center of this magazine.
- Remove the petition.
- Sign the petition.
- Ask immediate family members to sign the I-1351 petition if they are registered to vote in Washington. Explain to them why students benefit from smaller class sizes, and tell them we are 47th out of 50 states.
- Bring the petition to your family celebrations and ask friends and family to sign if they are registered to vote in Washington.
- Ask your neighbors and other friends to sign if they are registered to vote in Washington.
- By April 30, whether you have one signature or 10, return the I-1351 petition to:
**WEA Petition Office, P.O. Box 9100
Federal Way, WA 98063-9100**

If you'd like more petitions and information about other opportunities for collecting signatures at major community events, email WEA@WashingtonEA.org and provide your name, local association/school district and your personal email address. Or contact your building's WEA I-1351 petition leader. Learn more about I-1351 and find helpful materials at www.OurVoiceWashingtonEA.org.

COLAs, compensation strategy approved at Rep. Assembly



Not surprisingly, one of the most heated topics of the WEA Representative Assembly was compensation.

Members across the board are fed up with the lack of legislative action to reinstate educator COLAs, but also recognize the need to improve the total compensation package. Delegates this year passed at least three pay-related New Business Items (NBIs) to jump start actions to shore up educator pay and benefits.

“Our compensation strategy has to be about more than COLA,” Edmonds EA member Lisa Markussen tweeted during the floor debate about a comprehensive approach to salaries, health care and pensions.

To ensure we enter the 2015 session strong, the WEA Board of Directors put forth an NBI that directs the Association to explore options to improve the total compensation package, beyond the recent focus on restoring the COLAs. Base pay, health care and retirement will be considered when developing our approach to compensation for the 2015 legislative session.

With years of inaction from Olympia, delegates expressed skepticism that the Legislature would move on any pay-related issues.

“We have members taking home less pay than five years ago! We need to focus on organizing and doing action,” said Kari Clithero, an education support professional from Central Kitsap. She sponsored NBI 31, which directs WEA to prepare and plan for a possible state-wide action for the 2015-16 school year, should next year’s Legislature fail to act once again.

Delegates shared several wrenching stories on the floor of the RA, demonstrating how difficult times are for school staff and teachers. One teacher said she is at risk of losing her home next month. Education support professionals from across the state have watched their paycheck disappear simply to cover health care costs, with some reporting that they end up paying money to their district for insurance. “We should not have members struggling to meet basic needs,” said Christina Jobe, a first-time delegate from Bates Technical College.

Delegates agreed, also passing NBIs in favor of living wages and strengthening retirement. A complete list of NBIs that passed this year are available at www.WashingtonEA.org/RA.



2014 legislative session report

Major win on education policy; lawmakers again fall short on COLA and class size

The WEA Board of Directors adopted three goals for the 2014 legislative session: Restore the educator COLA, reduce class sizes and promote and empower WEA members as the voice of the education profession.

The Legislature fell short on the first two goals: the final supplemental budget did not restore educator COLAs, and it did nothing to reduce Washington’s crowded class sizes. That means Washington educators will go six straight years without a state COLA, and Washington’s students will remain in crowded class sizes that rank 47th out of 50 states. (*See related stories in this issue.*)

When it came to education policy, WEA members achieved a major victory by protecting our new teacher evaluation system from further changes. WEA members adamantly — and successfully — opposed legislation that mandated the use of state test scores in teacher evaluations. This win was consistent with the goal adopted by the WEA Board: “Oppose top-down, state-driven, micro-management of teaching and learning.”

On teacher evaluations, our voice was heard.

Now teachers and administrators will continue their collaborative work on the new evaluation system, and WEA is calling on the U.S. Department of Education to provide the flexibility we need to be successful.

For COLAs and compensation, WEA members are turning to the bargaining table and the 2015 legislative session, when the COLA is scheduled to be restored. Compensation has been, and remains, a top WEA priority at both the state and local level.

WEA members across the state traveled March 6 to Olympia to help defeat misguided legislation that would have mandated the use of state test scores in teacher evaluations.





Courage remains stronger than fear.

Hope can win over oppression.

Members of the new Ki-Be School Board are congratulated upon taking office. All five members of the previous school board were voted out of office when community members joined with local union members to take back their schools.

Just ask educators in Kiona-Benton, outside the Tri-Cities, where complaints of administrative abuse had gone unresolved for years — until now.

The concerns were staggering: hostile work environment, bullying, intimidation, due process violations, contractual just-cause violations, heavy-handed oppression. Some problems were never even reported amid a climate of retribution — but dozens more complaints were.

Kiona-Benton Education Association members, with help from staff at WEA-Southeast and experts from WEA statewide, launched more than 180 grievances and four Unfair Labor Practices cases. While administrators and school board members tried to ignore the complaints, the community took notice. District legal costs more than tripled, taking money away from education programs in the small community.

“The breaking point came with the number of arbitrations and ULPs the union was winning, and yet it did not stop the behavior of the district,” WEA-Southeast UniServ Director Steve Lindholm says.

The community stepped up with educators to take back its schools. The effort culminated this winter when the last of the five earlier school board members was replaced, and within weeks the superintendent and high school principal had both been relieved of their duties and put out on leave.

“Our teachers are part of the community. We go to church. We shop. Word gets out,” says Ki-Be High School teacher Irene Schmick. “My hope with the new board being seated is that we get back to what the heart of the school is, and that is students and teachers. Everything else supports that.”

Schmick says educators could have not won in Ki-Be without their union.

“Without the union, I wouldn’t be as good a teacher,” Schmick says, “because the union enables me to do my job while they are fighting the battles of our freedoms and our rights.”

Watch a video on how WEA members have been given new hope after joining with its community to take back their schools: www.WashingtonEA.org/Ki-Be



Left: Madrona Elementary kindergarten teacher Sandra Aguila-Salinas participates in a study session about immigration issues and opportunity gaps that impact students. Right: South Kitsap EA President John Richardson poses a question on the RA floor.

RA, from page 3

Other highlights at this year’s RA included the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of several issues educators are currently facing. Teacher evaluations, Common Core State Standards, the possibility of losing agency fee rules, what is going on in the state with charter schools, and ways to bargain in current times were a few areas of focus. Washington State Teacher of the Year Katie Brown, for instance, talked about how colleagues at her middle school are working together to speak a shared common language of learning and the positive impact it is having on all students.



Washington State University student Audrey Hamill watches the debate on the big screen with the Student WEA delegation.

Delegates cheered at the WEA Political Action Committee (WEA-PAC) meeting when middle school instructional coach and state Rep. Monica Stonier said, “Education is not a partisan issue. It’s an all-hands-on-deck issue!” After departing,

Stonier tweeted, “Found inspiration here today. Educators light the fires!” Rep. Mike Sells also spoke at the WEA-PAC meeting, as did Everett

teacher and WEA member Mike Wilson, who is seeking election to an open House seat in the 44th Legislative District in Snohomish County. The WEA-PAC Board has unanimously recommended Wilson for the position.

State Sen. Marko Liias, who is the first college graduate in a family of immigrants, told delegates he wouldn’t be where he is if it weren’t for his public school teachers. A staunch ally, Liias said the reasons

he supports reducing class sizes are very clear: “It’s important, evidence-based and easy to explain.”

Delegates raised some \$15,000 for the WEA Children’s Fund and learned about a new way to become a sustaining donor.



Governance and Administration
Kim Mead, WEA President
Stephen Miller, WEA Vice President
Armand Tiberio, WEA Executive Director

WEA Communications Staff: Cathy Britt, Dale Folkerts, Brooke Mattox, Linda Mullen, Eddie Westerman, Linda Woo and Rich Wood



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We are interested in your feedback and ideas. Reach Editor Linda Woo at lwoo@washingtonea.org, by mail at P.O. Box 9100, Federal Way, WA 98063-9100, or 253-765-7027.

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Class size petition inside!



A legacy of activism

Seattle's Marguerite Jones is the 2014 WEA Education Support Professional of the Year

WEA's 2014 Education Support Professional Marguerite Jones has said good morning to students in Seattle more than 8,000 times. The 45-year veteran special education instructional assistant approaches the work she does with her students with the same energy and enthusiasm she had on her first day of work in the late 1960s.

After completing a program at a community college and going through an extensive screening process, Jones began working at Kimball Elementary School as a "teacher's aide." Like so many ESP members, Jones' assignments were many. She helped implement the Title 1 Program at an elementary school where her classroom became a model for others and she received special recognition from Evergreen College President Dan Evans for allowing college students the opportunity to gain field experience in her classroom.

Her involvement with the Seattle Education Association, which began 42 years ago, allowed her to serve as Seattle Paraprofessional President, chair of the Grievance Review Committee and a proud board member of the Seattle Classified Organizing Team (SCOT).

"She is currently our longest-serving director on the SEA board," SEA President Jonathan Knapp says. She is also a current WEA Board Director, an NEA at-large director, a member of the WEA ESP Action Coordinating (ACT) team and serves on other committees.

But union involvement is only one part of her active schedule.

Jones is a consummate volunteer at her church. She says she enjoys singing in the choir and loves working hard at the church's

Annual Day of Giving, where they sort and distribute back-to-school items in the fall and toys, gift cards and clothing to the community in December.

Jones' duties at West Seattle High School include being the student transportation liaison for the special education department which involves working with staff and communicating with parents. She helps with assessments and serves on the West Seattle High School Building Leadership Team. She has served as an adviser to the Cheer Squad, worked with the Home Economics department and helped with the school's Opera Club.

"Marguerite's dedication to students, parents and fellow staff members never wanes," West Seattle High School Principal Ruth Medsker says. "She remains a tireless advocate who pushes for the best outcomes in our learning community, always putting the needs of others before her own."

"When she is involved," says SEA colleague Linda Overlie, "participants on both sides of an issue are confident of a positive resolution."

Knapp says the common theme about Jones is dedicated service to others. "Her long-term commitment to keep the union at the center of all discussion about public education has been an inspiration to all those who have come into union work after her," he says.

Jones philosophy is steadfast: "I believe that all of our students are winners! Their successes are my successes."

Colleagues and acquaintances describe Marguerite Jones, WEA's Education Support Professional of the Year, with these terms: dedication, staunch organizer and volunteer with a heart of gold.

