

NEWSLETTER

Washington State School Retirees' Association



In this newsletter you'll get a legislative update, details about our next event and a scholarship application.

Are We In Danger of Living in a News Desert?

Local news sources are disappearing at an alarming rate. Join us for a brown bag lunch on October 22 for a presentation from the League of Women Voters: **The Decline of Local News and Its Impact on Democracy**. The Zoom presentation will highlight the League of Women Voters Washington's study of the decline of locally owned news sources. The presentation will examine the history of the decline, focus on the impact to our democracy, and explore solutions to the problem. There will be time for questions and discussion. Our new Executive Director, Peter Diedrick will be visiting. Peter was WSSRA's Legislative Coordinator before taking over when Alan Burke retired. Peter will share where our organization is headed and challenges for the coming year.

We will have coffee hour starting at 11 AM and the meeting will start at 11:30 at our usual meeting place:

Our Saviors Lutheran Church

215 Mukilteo Blvd, Everett

Tuesday, October 22, 2024

We will have coffee, tea, cookies and treats to go with whatever you choose to bring.

So that we will know how many to set up for, please call Marianne Harvey 425-238-3124 or 425-348-4993 or email Ken Harvey at kenwes55@comcast.net and let us know if you plan to attend. You can look at the study online at <https://www.lwwwa.org/local-news#Quick> There is a link to the two year study in the first paragraph on the main page.

October 2024 Legislative Report

We are more than three months away from the 2025 Washington State Legislative Session, but things are happening in the legislature right now that could directly affect our futures. You are aware that since 2011, WSSRA and many Plan 1 retirees have fought every session for a permanent Cost of Living Adjustment like that enjoyed by Plans 2 and 3. Yet, for 14 years, that permanent COLA has been denied. The best that they could manage were partial “one-time COLAs” in 2018, 2020, 2022, 2023 and 2024 that blunted the speed at which Plan 1 retirements have lost purchasing power, but many have already lost 50% of their value.

Due to a provision in the one-time COLA that passed the legislature in 2023, the important Select Committee on Pension Policy was ordered to study the feasibility of providing Plan 1 retirees with a permanent COLA and to recommend action regarding it to the 2025 legislature. A Plan 1 COLA is not inexpensive; it would cost the state \$1.6 billion over the next ten years.

For the first time ever, at their September 17, 2024 meeting, the SCPP voted to instruct their staff to prepare draft legislation extending a permanent COLA to Plan 1 members. We expect that at their October 15, 2024 meeting that the SCPP will vote to recommend this new permanent COLA to the legislature. Never before has the path forward to a permanent COLA for Plan 1 like that of Plans 2 and 3, been so clear. This recommendation from the SCPP wouldn't automatically make the Plan 1 COLA law. The bill would still have to clear every obstacle and fiscal committee in both legislative houses, but we have never before begun a session with such excellent “field position”.

That is why it is cruelly ironic that two initiatives to appear on the November 5, 2024 general election ballot could kill any chance of that COLA happening in the coming years. As a result, for the first time the Washington State School Retirees' Association has taken a position opposing three state-wide initiatives.

The first is Initiative 2109. It is sponsored and primarily funded by Republican former hedge fund manager and millionaire, Brian Heywood, leader of “Let's Go, Washington.” If passed, it would repeal the Capital Gains Tax that has been Washington State law since 2021 and which survived a 2023 challenge in the State Supreme Court.

That tax imposes a 7% excise tax on the sale of long-term capital assets, specifically stocks, bonds and business interests (not real estate) above and beyond \$250,000. Keyed to inflation, that tax floor has risen to \$262,000 this year. The people paying this tax are Washington's wealthiest residents, and their number lies somewhere between three and four thousand people. That's about 2/10ths of 1 percent of state residents. Brian Heywood hopes to strip away a potential \$2.2 billion from state revenue in the next five years just to give millionaires a tax break. That money goes to K-12 education, early learning and child-care, K-12 school construction and higher education. Its passage would require major budget cuts, killing new spending proposals like a Plan 1 permanent COLA.

The second threat is Initiative 2117, also sponsored and funded by Brian Heywood and "Let's Go, Washington". It would repeal the Climate Commitment Act (the CCA) also a state law since 2021, meant to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45% by 2030 and by 95% by 2050. It does this by setting limits on major greenhouse gas emitters, such as oil refineries and utilities, requiring them to purchase state allowances at state auctions for each metric ton of air pollution produced beyond that limit. Each year the amount of allowable emissions is reduced further. The funds created by the state auctions finance hundreds of climate sustainability projects. Passage of this initiative would eliminate limits on greenhouse gas emissions, kill those environmental projects and force state budget cuts, killing new spending proposals like a Plan 1 permanent COLA.

The third initiative opposed by WSSRA is Initiative 2124. Sponsored and funded by Brian Heywood and Let's Go, Washington, it would allow active employees and self-employed individuals to opt out of paying the 0.58% payroll tax that funds the WA Cares program. Starting in 2026, WA Cares will provide them up to \$35,500 (adjusted for inflation) to pay for long-term care services after they have contributed for at least 10 years. By allowing individuals to opt out of the program, Initiative 2124 could make WA Cares insolvent and collapse. While this initiative would have no effect on our retirements, without long-term care insurance, these active employees would need to eventually spend down their savings to not more than \$2,000 in order to receive long-term care benefits through Medicaid.

With the general election just a month away, WSSRA wants you to vote No on Initiatives 2109, 2117 and 2124 . If you would like to invest in your future and contribute to the campaigns opposing them, you may learn more and donate at:

<https://www.no2109.org> <https://no2117.com> or <https://www.no2124.org>

Sincerely,

Tim Knopf

WSSRA Legislative Committee

Snohomish County School Retirees' Association

Sno-Isle 22

Mini Grant Application— 2024-25

Teachers or school staff working with students are eligible for our \$300 Mini-grants . The purpose of the Sno-Isle mini-grant program is to assist in providing supplies, equipment, help with field trip costs, or other special project outlays that can be used to defray costs not included in regular classroom budgets.

We've all been in education so we've tried to make it as simple as possible to complete the application.

Email completed application to Joan Penewell at joanpenewell@gmail.com or mail to Joan Penewell 10715 Birch Dr. NW Tulalip WA 98271

The application should include the following information:

1. Title and description of the project or activity (maximum one paragraph)
2. Educational value or goal of the project (one or two sentences)
3. Provide a basic project budget (doesn't have to be precise) that includes how the \$300 will be spent
4. District, name of school, grade level(s) and number of students to be served
5. Print your name and provide your home and email addresses. Please state that you are a member. Non-members can apply for a grant and then join at: www.wssra.org Click on the membership tab.
6. Applications are due by November 8, 2024.
7. Recipients will be notified through an email. If possible, the award will be presented at a faculty meeting.

Note: If you like to fill out forms one can be found at <https://sno-islesra.info/learning-support>

A mini-grant committee will read the applications and determine the recipients.

Sno-Isle 22 is an affiliate unit of the Washington State School Retirees' Association (based in Lacey, Washington) which has a statewide membership of 17,000. Our purpose is to improve pensions and health care benefits for retired educators. We also offer mini-grants to Snohomish and Island County educators, and provide scholarships to high school seniors interested in a career in education. Please request a membership application and consider joining our association. Dues are \$7 per month and are primarily directed to legislative advocacy regarding pensions and health care benefits.

Learn more at: www.wssra.org Enrollment information can be found under the " Membership " tab.

AMBA Benefit for all WSSRA Members

YOUR PASSPORT

AMBA has introduced a new benefit for all WSSRA members. It is a passport which may be used by both RETIRED and ACTIVES. It allows the member to receive discounts of up to 40% off services and merchandise from the business. You may use it where you live and also when you are traveling. When away from home just dial up the app to see what is available where you are. Some of the participating companies include Costco, Kohls, Sams, Wyndham, Apple, Disney Parks, Hertz, Whirlpool. Thousands of different opportunities are available in travel, dining, entertainment, clothes, health. These are in addition to the benefits that were already available through AMBA for long term care, dental, vision, hearing, cancer, life insurance, etc

If you would like to take advantage of this benefit just follow these steps-Contact Michele in membership at the main office: 360-413-5496 Ext. 1. She will give you a code to obtain the free app for your phone and you will be set to start receiving discounts.

Sno-Isle is hoping this news can generate some new members. If you have friends or colleagues, retired or active, who are interested in joining WSSRA- ask them to join us. If you get someone to join, Sno-Isle will pay for you to have a Starbucks. Just let us know!

Invite a friend to join and enjoy a coffee on us!

Have your friend enroll at www.wssra.org. Enrollment information can be found under the "Membership" tab. It's easy to join. Once your friend has joined let us know at: kenwes55@comcast.net and we will send you two \$10 Starbucks cards. We already sent some cards out last month!

Since you probably have more than one friend you can refer as many as you like.

Friendship pays off.

**SNO-ISLE
WSSRA UNIT #22**

10715 Birch Drive NW
Marysville WA 98271

**RETURN SERVICE
REQUESTED**



2024-25 Sno-Isle Board

PRESIDENT

Ken Harvey

VICE PRESIDENT

Marianne Harvey (retiring after this year)

SECRETARY

Open

TREASURER

Joan Penewell (retiring after this year)

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Membership—Open

Scholarships—Liz Meisner

Legislative—Tim Knopf

FB/Website—Ken Harvey

Newsletter—David Davis

Health—Open

Friendship—Brenda Leider, Sue Rookaird, Anne Spence

STATE REPRESENTATIVES

Legislative Committee—Tim Knopf

District 1 Representative—Ken Harvey

UPCOMING DATES

September 24—Welcome Back Pizza Party

October 22—League of Women Voters Presentation

December 10—Holiday Luncheon

February 18—Dottie Metcalf-Lindenburger (Former NASA astronaut)

March 18—TBA

April 15—TBA

May 20—Scholarship Tea

June 2-4—2025 78th Annual WSSRA Convention in Yakima