



THE CLARION

The Newsletter for Retired Educators

Maine Education Association Retired Vol. 136 No. 3

February 2025

From our President: **VICTORY! At last!**



Bob Jean

The historic Social Security Fairness Act has passed the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate. It was signed by President Biden on Sunday, January 5.

History has been made! This is amazing news for those who have fought so hard for many years. Perseverance has paid off in a monumental way.

MEA-Retired thanks its members who lobbied in D.C., wrote letters and emails to representatives, and made countless phone calls over the years. We were always kept abreast of the situation by MEA's Government Relations Director, Jan Kosinski, and MEA-Retired Legislative Chair Crystal Ward. Many thanks to these two for all of their efforts. Together, we have righted the wrongs of GPO and WEP. Hooray!

Over 2 million people are affected by this nationwide. If you are one of those people NEA-Retired has some advice for the steps you should take. JoAnn Smith Mashburn of the NEA-Retired Executive Council and Ross Dill, NEA-Retired Legislative Committee Chair make the following suggestions:

1. If you already receive reduced Social Security benefits, the Social Security Administration (SSA) has all your information. After SSA makes decisions on how to proceed, you should hear from them.

2. If you only receive partial benefits because of the GPO, Social Security is aware of your status and the change in your award will be extended as their process continues.

3. If you have applied for spousal or survivor benefits and have received nothing because of the GPO, SSA has your information and should inform you of your change in status as the process develops.

JoAnn and Ross go on to advise the following two groups of retirees to contact SSA at www.ssa.gov.

(1) If you know that SSA does not have your current address or marital status.

(2) If you have never applied for benefits and you are a qualified spouse, divorced spouse, or a widow/widower of a Social Security beneficiary. You are now eligible to apply for spousal or survivor benefits.

It will be a complex process for SSA. Our patience may be tried at times, but the good news is that we will soon have Social Security fairness for ALL!

By Crystal Ward, Chairperson
Legislative Committee

The Social Security Fairness Act passed the United States House of Representatives and Senate and was signed into law by President Biden on January 5, 2025!

The terrible Social Security Offset---Government Pension Offset (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) are GONE!! We can begin receiving our whole earned Social Security amount to which we are entitled and collect our MainePERS pension as well.

As we know, many educators also paid into Social Security. Until now, we only collect \$1 for every \$3 to which we are rightfully entitled. Those days are gone now. A widow may

See Legislation, Page 2

No effect on MainePERS

By Domna Giatas, MainePERS
Communications Director

On January 5, 2025, President Biden signed the *Social Security Fairness Act of 2023* (H.R. 82), which was passed in the closing days of the 118th Congress. The Act repeals the Social Security *Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP)* and *Government Pension Offset (GPO)*.

This repeal has raised

See MainePERS, Page 6

PAC raffle

By Corley Anne Byras
Convention Raffle Chairperson

Join the excitement at the MEA-Retired Convention and Annual Meeting.

The annual MEA-Retired Convention and Annual Meeting, held the first Thursday in May, is always a highlight of the year!

It's a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with former colleagues and friends—some of whom we may not have seen since last year's convention.

Strolling through the

See PAC, Page 4

73rd MEA-Retired
Convention and
Annual Meeting

May 1, 2025

"Everyone Is a Leader!"

See schedule on Page 9

A great day!

By Rheba Michaud, Chairperson
Convention Committee

Here it is the new year already! Soon it will be Valentine's Day, Easter, mud season, and then time for the MEA-Retired Convention and Annual Meeting on May 1!

Yes!

Convention will be here before we know it and I am so excited! Thanks to our busy Convention Committee, a great day is in store!

Plan to invite a friend or colleague to come with you. Put the date on your calendar. Ask at your affiliate meetings who plans to attend convention and make plans to carpool.

We have a good convention planned for you. The doors open at 8:30 a.m. When you arrive, you will receive your registration packet. You will have time to view the exhibits/vendors/county displays, PAC raffle, book swap, listen to music,

See 2025 Convention, Page 10

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Legislation, from Page 1

now rightfully receive her spouse's Social Security pension—just like everyone else. Retired educators are no longer penalized.

It will take time for the Social Security Administration to get this all figured out for the nearly 3 million impacted people across the country. As I get information on the process, I will pass it along.

A little history: Over 20 years ago at the NEA Representative Assembly (NEA-RA), the Maine delegation submitted a New Business Item (NBI) to have NEA fund a legislative action for the first time.

The action was to have

Historic, landmark legislation

the NEA Government Relations lobbyists work to get rid of the Social Security Offset (GPO/WEP).

The person in Maine who initiated conversations about this inequity and worked tirelessly on this issue was Sue Shaw of Penobscot. She began her campaign to correct this unfairness in 1998.

At the NEA-RA I was the sponsor and worked with the NEA Government Relations (GR) Committee and the New Jersey delegation on wording for the floor speech and organizing the microphone process.

The Maine delegation went to all the State delegations and delivered the information about supporting this NBI. I spoke on the NEA-RA floor representing Maine.

The NBI was passed and has been worked on by NEA as a legislative priority ever since. Maine NEA Directors Terry Given and I lobbied the Maine Congressional delegation in Washington for eight years and attended the first public hearing on this issue in D.C.

Senator Susan Collins is the author and sponsor of the Social Security Fairness Act in the Senate. Her 20 years

of help and hard work were key in passing the bill. We thank all Maine U.S. senators and representatives who have supported this change over the years. This was a major issue for MEA and MEA-Retired.

This has been a long, frustrating battle, but victory is wonderful!! Together we did it!! Thank you!

Education will be under attack starting January 20th with President Trump saying he wants to get rid of the Department of Education and return the job of education to the states. Maine is a high receiver state and could lose hundreds of millions that come from the Federal government for Special Education, Title 1, and more initiatives. Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security are areas to watch very closely.

Maine Legislature

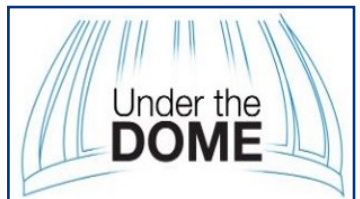
The 132nd Maine Legislature's first regular session convened on December 4, with a statutory adjournment date of the third Wednesday in June. The Democrats control both the House of Representatives and Senate by slimmer margins. Governor Janet Mills has two years left in her final term.

MEA and MEA-Retired priorities are:

1. Raise the state's share of retired educator healthcare premiums by 5 percent **each** year over the next two years. If passed the State will be paying 70 percent. Bill submitted By Rep. Jan Dodge. (Primary focus)

2. Address the COLA cap for retired educators and Ed.

See Legislative Updates, Page 5



Members are invited to sign up to receive "up-to-the-minute" legislative news and updates from MEA Government Relations Director John Kosinski. Send an email to him at jkosinski@maineea.org.

The Clarion is published bimonthly by Maine Education Association Retired. Readers are encouraged to submit feature stories, news articles, notices of events and activities, and opinions of statewide interest by the fifth day of the month preceding publication. Please send articles to kay_grindall@yahoo.com or mail to Kay at 23 Hilltop Drive, Oakland 04963. Questions? Call Kay at 207-512-0027.

We pay 70 cents for every *Clarion* returned due to "incorrect address." Please send address changes to Lisa Collins at 800-281-3191, Ext. 2400 or 207-888-3856 or via email at lcollins@maineea.org.

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NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA RA

June 30—July 6, 2025
Portland, OR

July 1—July 7, 2026
Denver, CO

June 29—July 5, 2027
Indianapolis, IN

June 29—July 5, 2028
Washington, D.C.

June 29—July 5, 2029
Kansas City, MO



MEA-Retired is here for you!

March 3, 2025, 9 a.m.
Executive Committee
MEA Headquarters, Augusta

April 7, 2025, 9 a.m.
Board of Directors Meeting
Best Western Hotel, Waterville

June 2, 2025, 9 a.m.
Board of Directors Meeting
Best Western Hotel, Waterville

Meet/greet begin at 9 a.m.
Meetings begin at 9:30 a.m.

Contact affiliate leaders
with ideas and concerns.

MEA-Retired Delegates

MEA-RA
May 17-18, 2025
We need 1 delegate
and 8 alternates

NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA-RA
June 30—July 7, 2025
We need 4 delegates

Will you consider?

Our last few pre-retirement sessions will round out another year of informing active educators how best to prepare for retirement.

Lisa Collins, MEA-Retired's Uniserv Assistant in the Caribou office, takes care of the registration and member verification as well as zoom

is under \$100 a year.

Committee member Jim Thornton hosts our first evening and monitors the chat for member questions and introduces the evening's presenters.

Tuesday evening sessions feature Sharon Beaulieu of MEA Benefits Trust

has lobbied the state to subsidize at 60 percent.

A representative from Horace Mann Insurance Company has described the inequities of the Social Security Fairness Act. This presentation is not relevant anymore as we witnessed the recent resolution to these

inequities.

This legislation was

passed in the U.S.

House (H82) and

approved in the Senate (S397).

President Biden signed it into law on January 5, 2025. It will be spring before benefits will be disseminated to those of us who rightfully earned Social Security benefits.

Committee member Joan Warren hosts Wednesday night MainePERS presentations and reminds members to submit their surveys and talks about the benefits of joining your county association.

Kim Bumford from MainePERS walks members through the many options they have to chart their future

Seminars prepare for retirement

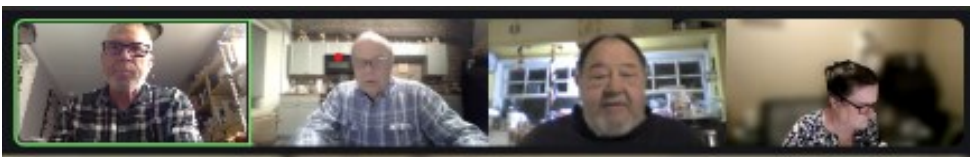
By Bo Zabierek, Chairperson
Pre-Retirement Committee

receipts of pension. Joan monitors the chat, and Kim fields questions after presenting each part of the plan.

Committee member Julie Gomez backs up both Jim and Joan in their hosting duties whenever they cannot be there.

Sharon Beaulieu is backed up by Patty Wheeler in the Portland Anthem office. Alex Rand from MainePERS backs up Kim if she has a schedule conflict. Our fall sessions were well attended. Members are encouraged to attend multiple sessions as they approach their retirement date.

Kevin Malenfant, health educator in SAD 1, says of a recent session he attended. He says, "Although no one can go back in time and make a brand new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand new ending."



Since the start of the pandemic in March 2020, pre-retirement sessions have been moved to Zoom. Not only has it been extremely cost-efficient, it has enabled many more active educator members to attend from the convenience of their own homes. Attending a recent Zoom Pre-Retirement Session are (L to R): Jim Thornton, Bob Jean, Bo Zabierek, and Sharon Beaulieu.

links to the seminars. She attaches documents to email messages so that they will be prepared ahead of time. They are also asked for input in a feedback survey.

MEA-Retired President Bob Jean begins the first night with an explanation of unified membership in NEA, MEA, and MEA-Retired. Membership in all four organizations

who coordinates with Lisa to provide verified members their own personal Anthem rate sheet. This gives them the cost particular to them and the district where they worked.

Sharon then presents slides that walk members through the Anthem Medicare Advantage program which is the plan that MEA

Please report hours of physical activities and volunteerism

The recent holidays found many of our MEA-Retired volunteering at food pantries, churches, schools, and other community organizations.

Volunteerism in the United States dates back to the 1700's when people offered their services during the Revolutionary War. In 1881, the American Red Cross was organized by Clara Barton to administer care for those in need of medical attention.

Today, more than 63 million people volunteer in a myriad of ways and venues across our nation every year. Be inspired by reading more about this benevolent American pastime: (<https://bloomerang.co/blog/what-is-volunteerism-a-guide-to-the-history-benefits/>).

In By April, 15, 2025, affiliate presidents will request that all of their retired

members submit the number of hours of volunteerism and physical activities that keep us going. The names of the individuals with the highest number of hours in each category will be submitted to me for documentation and recognition at our convention and annual meeting on May 1.

Additionally, these names will be included in the minutes of the annual meeting and in the June *Clarion*. Please send information via email to Susan Grondin at sgrondin@hotmail.com by April 28.

The Community Participation Committee has contacted the MEA Benefits Trust to organize an event for those retirees enrolled in the MEABT health plan. More information will be forthcoming on this project.

Pre-Retirement seminars slated

MEA-Retired pre-retirement seminars will be held virtually by Zoom on two consecutive nights from 5:00-6:15 P.M. Members should attend BOTH nights. Below are the dates for the Zoom seminars.

REMAINING WINTER 2025 SEMINARS

Session 6 –

Tuesday, February 11 MEA Benefits Trust & WEP/GPO
Wednesday, February 12 MEA-Retired & MainePERS

Interested active educators who are MEA members are invited to attend and must pre-register—contact Lisa Collins at lcollins@maineea.org.

Further information may be obtained from
Pre-Retirement Committee Chairperson
Bo Zabierek at 207-365-4329 or bozabierek@gmail.com

MEABT introduces Lin Health to you

By Jennifer Kent, Exec. Director
MEA Benefits Trust

As we embark on a new year, it's time to focus on your health. Did you know that 1 in 5 people have chronic pain?

Are you one of them?

A new clinically proven treatment is now covered through your MEA Benefits Trust health plans and is available by telehealth.

Lin Health Medical Group is a specialty medical practice offering a clinically proven treatment for chronic pain.

The treatment is built on an evidence-based approach to managing chronic pain that addresses the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral patterns affecting the experience of pain and other uncomfortable symptoms.

Lin Health's care model includes one-on-one pain recovery coaching and integrative support with medical oversight.

This low-risk form of chronic pain treatment provides a safe alternative to opioid medication or surgery, offering better pain relief and

more accessible and effective care.

How does Lin Health work?

Meet with a doctor to see if Lin is right for you. Get matched with a pain recovery coach. Schedule coaching sessions for the month.

Consider Lin Health for the following conditions:

Pelvic Pain	Back Pain	IBS	Neck Pain
Fibromyalgia	Frozen Shoulder	CRPS	Strain Injury
Migraines	Chronic Tendonitis	POTS	Sciatica
Joint Pain	Plantar Fasciitis	TMJ	And more

AARP: Pressing issues in 2025

By Pam Partridge
MEA-Retired Liaison to AARP

A belated Happy New Year to all!

The year 2024 was another productive one—thanks to AARP's advocacy work for family caregivers, fair utility costs, for the protection of Social Security, fraud prevention, voter engagement and more. We accomplished a lot, such as protecting the Medicare Savings Program, amending laws on manufactured housing zoning, protecting homeowners and more. Policy priorities have been decided for 2025, and the work continues.

The first regular session of the 132nd Legislature is underway and **Tuesdays at the State House** (TASH) will be present. We will be wearing our signature red shirts, trained, and ready to begin another year of advocacy work. At the top of the list is continued work for family caregivers and utility costs.

Caregiving is a pressing issue for Maine adults 45 and older according to a survey. Most of them want to age in their homes with caregiver assistance once basic life tasks become more difficult. Seven in ten adults aged 45 and older have had caregiving experience. Over half of them who have already provided care expect to have to provide care again in the future.

Caregivers need financial support. Maine has nearly 166,000 family caregivers, providing 155 million hours of unpaid family care, with an estimated economic worth close to \$3 Billion to the state. We know that 85 percent of them spend their own money to help care for a loved one and say that financial support would be extremely or very helpful.

Solutions include providing financial relief, support and respite services, expansion of services that allow people to age in their own homes, and provide help to caregivers navigating the health care system. Paying for utilities is another pressing issue, and it is very complex. An increase in electricity bills would be a problem for many Maine residents—particularly among lower income households.

In a survey of Maine adults age 45 and older, 63 percent live on less than \$25,000 per year. When surveyed, they said an increase in utility costs would be a major problem. Furthermore, 43 percent of those surveyed whose incomes are between \$25,000 and \$75,000 reported the same concern.

Two-thirds of residents have seen an increase in utility costs. Among the surveyed, 78 percent agree the state should look for ways to limit electricity rates as they also push for renewable energy.

For more information on the 132nd Legislature, visit the State of Maine website: <https://legislature.maine.gov/>. This site includes the legislative calendar—just click on "Calendar." It shows the topics and times for committee work sessions and what is happening in the Hall of Flags.

If you have questions or are interested in becoming an AARP Maine volunteer, please feel free to contact me at pampartridge1@gmail.com. There are many different ways to volunteer with AARP and something for everyone to do! We need your expertise. See op-

tions below:

<https://www.aarp.org/research/topics/life/info-2022/aarp-vital-voices-surveys-older-adults-2022-2024.html>

https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/surveys_statistics/life-leisure/2021/vital-voices-2021-chartbook-maine.doi.10.26419-2Fres.00351.258.pdf

PAC, from Page 1

vendor tables is always a treat, as we gather fun freebies and discover useful items. The county affiliate displays are consistently impressive, showcasing creativity and dedication. And for me, picking up free books to enjoy in my favorite recliner is an extra delight. But what truly sparks my enthusiasm is the PAC (Children and Public Education) raffle tables, and I'm reaching out for your help to make it a success again in 2025.

To host a fantastic PAC raffle, we need *fifty fabulous* items. Here's how you can contribute:

Donate new or "like-new" items in excellent condition. Items should be smaller than a bread box and valued at a minimum of \$5.

Consider re-gifting items you've received but don't need—this is a great way to put them to good use!

You can give your contributions to your affiliate president who will bring them to the April MEA-Retired Board of Directors meeting. Together, we can ensure the PAC raffle is a highlight of the convention, supporting children and public education in a meaningful way.

Thank you for a donation and for being part of this exciting tradition!

On the evening of November 12, my husband was checking his email. With ecstatic excitement in his voice, he exclaimed, "Your Offsets have been repealed!"

"My" offsets? Everyone's offset—educators in Maine and 14 other states plus first responders and public workers in all states.

He had just received an informational email letter from Representative Chellie Pingree: "Tonight, for the first time in a decades-long history of tireless advocacy by millions of retired public servants, the bipartisan *Social Security Fairness Act* was put before the U.S. Congress for a vote—and good news: IT PASSED."

I was floored. Completely surprised. And the numbers

were unbelievable...327-75-1. Completely bipartisan!

Back in the late 1990's and early 2000's, the grassroots effort to educate those impacted by the Social Security Offsets of the GPO & WEP was just getting fired up and going.

As an educator looking at my coming retirement after 35+ years of teaching, I had just discovered that my retirement income was not going to be what I thought! I grabbed opportunities to teach others about the Offsets and to fight for change!

Developing technology was on our side. Email communication was being used by everyone. Copying CD's to share information was inexpensive and easily done (especially when the school

IT Dept assisted). Computer programs such as Power Point made it easy to prepare presentations that were both entertaining and informative. The Maine grassroots group, Retirement Equality for Public Employees At Last (R.E.P.E.A.L.), was off and running!

And we ran straight to Senator Susan Collins! Although both the MEA and NEA had information on their websites, we knew that we needed our state congressional delegation behind us.

And behind us they were! In those first days Senators Susan Collins and Olympia Snow and Representatives Mike Michaud and John Baldacci all signed onto legislation to repeal the offsets right away.

We in Maine pointed with pride to the fact that all of our legislators were sponsors or co-sponsors of repeal efforts!

Remarks were made at the repeal bill signing ceremony on Sunday, January 5, that suggested that congressional efforts to repeal the Offsets began in 2020.

Not so! Senator Collins began the work for repeal in 2002! Petitioned and encouraged by Maine educators and MEA (and of course R.E.P.E.A.L.), she held the first Senate hearing on the Offsets in 2003.

She and the late Senator Dianne Feinstein of California introduced the *Social*

From the archives To victory!

By Sue Shaw, Retired Educator
Hancock County

Security Fairness Act in 2005. She has kept a repeal bill on the agenda since then, and just last month she and Senator Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) called on Senate leadership to immediately bring their legislation to the Senate floor for a vote.

It passed, 76-20. A true bipartisan victory, but a true Susan Collins victory as well!

Those of us who have been around a while can remember those first years of trying not just to get the Offsets repealed, but to also educate public workers who had no idea that their retirement dollars would be reduced by the GPO and WEP.

Kudos to MEA-Retired and Legislative Chairperson Crystal Ward for keeping this critical national issue on the front burner in Maine year after year. She has espoused the inequities and encouraged our contacting our congressional representatives.

And now? We wait... because...finally...at last... "The check's in the mail"!

Legislative Updates, from Page 2

Techs. (Expensive)

3. Place markers in the law regarding the 2028 payoff of the Unfunded Actuarial Liability (UAL) and divert these funds to the pension system for improvements. (Important)

MEA is working with the Maine Center for Economic Policy and other entities to increase the Homestead exemption and property tax fairness credits and other initiatives to address the rising property taxes.

MEA-Retired is only as strong as it members.

Please remember your voice on every issue is important in Augusta. Please send a short note or email. Make a phone call. Participate in the coming retired lobby days!

We need YOUR help!

Let's send "THANK YOU" notes to Congress

Will you take a few minutes to contact our congressional delegates and write a heartwarming "THANK YOU" note for their exemplary efforts, determination, and votes to pass the bill to correct the Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision. If you do not have a computer, send a handwritten letter.

Rep. Chellie Pingree (District 1): 354 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515 (202) 225-6116
<https://pingree.house.gov/contact/contactform.htm>

Rep. Jared Golden (District 2): 1710 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515 (202) 225-6306
https://golden.house.gov/address_authentication?form=/contact

Sen. Angus King (District 1): 133 Hart Building, Washington, DC 20510 (202) 224-5344
<https://www.king.senate.gov/contact>

Sen. Susan Collins (District 2): 413 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510 (202) 224-2523
<https://www.collins.senate.gov/contact/email-senator-collins/form>



Updates from Benefits Trust

By Faith Campbell, Trustee
MEA Benefits Trust

I am writing shortly after learning of President Jimmy Carter's death. I remember attending his candidate rally at the former Bangor Auditorium. I was a UMO student at the time and amazed that I was in the same room as a Presidential candidate. He cinched my vote that night.

Reflecting back, I realize that I had previously attended events where Edmund Muskie and Margaret Chase Smith

were present. We are spoiled and blessed in Maine to have had so many fine, thoughtful leaders.

I also give special mention to William Cohen and George Mitchell. I am particularly grateful to Senator Mitchell as my step-daughter is currently attending Bates College on a Mitchell scholarship.

President Carter's death prompted me to research his Administration's record on healthcare. I found an interesting *Time* magazine article entitled, "America Still Needs Jimmy Carter's Health Agenda."

The article discusses the 1970's debate on a comprehensive national health insurance plan championed by Senator Edward Kennedy and Carter's more limited approach to addressing soaring health care costs.

The article concludes

with recommending for review two Carter Administration proposals—one for hospital costs containment and the other defining the need for a combination of public and privately funded healthcare as precursors of universal healthcare.

The MEABT trustees and staff attended the recent International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans (IFEBP) Annual Conference in San Diego. Each attendee was able to continue and advance their professional certifications.

I was able to attend six sessions directly connected to retiree healthcare. I was reminded that the Center of Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is the largest healthcare program in the world. As such it provides the template for much of the world's healthcare management.

Here are a few Medicare reminders about your coverage in 2025.

(1) Your health insurance premium will not increase throughout this year.

(2) The benefit year has changed from July-June to January-December to align with the Medicare calendar.

(3) The Out-of-Pocket prescription maximum has been reduced to \$2,000 from \$8,000.

(4) Virgin Pulse becomes Personify Health—You can use the same app, username, and password. Visit the website www.join.personifyhealth.com/MEABT

The Blue Vision Plan is included in Medicare Advantage Plan. Feel free to call 1-844.963-0436 with questions and concerns. This number is on the back of your insurance card. MEABT trustees and staff wish you a Happy and Healthy New Year!

MainePERS, from Page 1

questions about what this means regarding MainePERS pension benefits.

This repeal does not affect MainePERS pension benefits in any way. MainePERS retirees will continue to receive their same pension benefit

amount.

The WEP and GPO were offsets to any social security benefits someone might be eligible to receive. Please consult with the Social Security Administration (www.ssa.gov) for information

about the effect these changes may have on your Social Security benefits.

For additional information about the Social Security Fairness Act of 2023, visit [www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/82](http://www.congress.gov/bill/118th/congress/house-bill/82).

CONGRATULATIONS



Benita Russo, 1/1/1919
Lucille Walker, 1/1/1921
Frances Bryson, 1/1/1923
Josephine McAlary, 1/1/1923
Harold Frazier, 7/15/1924
Theresa Thibeault, 1/1/1925
Lucy Ledien, 1/1/1925
Leona Roberts, 1/1/1925
Gladys Stokinger, 1/1/1925

FREE Coffee Socials

Want to meet other AARP members this summer? Join AARP Maine for free coffee and snacks while greeting neighbors, friends, staff, and volunteers. You will also hear from community leaders.

Coffee socials are held each month at the following locations and times:

Bangor: Third Friday, 8:30-10 a.m., Dysart's at 1110 Broadway.

Fort Kent: Second Wednesday, 2-3 p.m., Public Library, One Monument Square.

Lewiston/Auburn: Last Wednesday, 8:30-10 a.m., Happy Days Diner, 67 Mill St., Auburn.

Portland: First Friday, 10-11:30 a.m., AARP Maine's State Office, 53 Baxter Blvd., Suite 202.

Partnership for Caring

Retired educators remain eligible to participate in the "Partnership for Caring" financial assistance program. The criteria reads: "MEA will assist local affiliates to meet exigent expenses of an unpredictable nature incurred by members or their immediate families. Specifically, the MEA will match, dollar-for-dollar, up to \$1,500 in contributions raised by a local affiliate or combination of affiliates to meet such expenses."

When an affiliate raises funds to assist a needy unified member to help with catastrophic circumstances (fire, flood serious health diagnoses, etc.), MEA will match the raised amount up to \$1,500. Applications are on our MEA-Retired website and Facebook page.

Four members of MEA-Retired—Bob Jean, Susan Grondin, Debbie Killam, and Molly Smith—recently undertook the challenge of learning more about creating organizational campaigns and developing effective organizing skills.

Joining the online nationwide training program entitled “6 Weeks to Power” we collaborated with several national organizations lead by the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools (AROS).

More than 250 individuals from 150 cities in 34 states representing 20 nationwide groups participated in this initiative. These entities included the educational unions of American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA) which came together focusing on strategies to protect and improve public education.

The original thought was by participating in the training the team would develop skills that could be used collaborating with other groups in Maine. MEA-Retired could team with organizations or associations that were also concerned about issues related to retired public employees and to strengthening public education. Upon completion of the training an action plan would be developed and submitted. With approval an award of \$2400 and the support of a coach from AROS would be provided to the team for 1 year to carry out the designed plan or campaign.

Early into the training the MEA-Retired team members realized that before effectively reaching out and coalescing with other organizations, there needed to be a systemic internal review of the MEA-Retired Association.

An inquiry was made of current members and past leaders to gain an understanding if and when a similar undertaking had been initiated in the past. The team learned that there had been an effort to do so in decades past, where

some information was gathered focusing on systems, functions and outcomes of the organization.

That all proved very interesting, but there had been limited follow-through using the information toward future planning and development.

The team continued its involvement in the training and with consultation of organizers at NEA’s Center for Organizing (C4O) and proceeded to learn about external organizing.

While at the same time the focus shifted to organizing an internal examination and review process that would be an opportunity for MEA-Retired to “get its own house in order.”

This was thought to be necessary before we were ready to do any “external organizing” and collaborating with other organizations. The team was assured that by completing the training, future access to grant money and coaching support would be available.

The vision is to improve the lives of all retired educators, both current and future by enhancing opportunities and by promoting positive outcomes. The foci of these outcomes would be in the areas of communication; economic well-being; physical, psychological and emotional health.

Thereby strengthening the Maine Education Association Retired, the team undertook the task to create and initiate a plan to revitalize the organization and to increase member engagement consistent with its stated mission.

So, what’s next?

The goal is to ...focus on the needs of our members, the organizational structure, its function and the revitalization of MEA-Retired. This work is currently in progress with the team working on this goal since October 2024. The process will be a mara-

thon, not a sprint, having started on December 2, with the sharing of the initiative and a discussion with the MEA-Retired Executive Committee. The process will start in earnest in the spring of 2025, culminating in May 2026.

The team sees this as an organic process. The journey will, in part, lead us. A timeline is currently being developed, as are other components of this initiative.

Some of the identified methods are listed below but are not intended to be totally inclusive respecting the “organic nature” of the process. They are as follows:

- (1) Revisiting our Mission;
- (2) A survey of the general membership, all 5000+ of us with an eye toward understanding demographics of affiliation, level of leadership experience, thoughts on mission and policy, governance, membership engagement and technology;
- (3) Needs assessments;
- (4) Resource assessments;
- (5) Reviewing organizational structure;
- (6) Engagement and input from all levels of governance, to include but not limited to the Executive Board, the Board of Directors, committees/chairs, representatives and trustees, delegates, our affiliates, the MEA and NEA.

Where will resources come from to support this initiative? Existing ideas to date include the following:

- Current “6 Weeks to Power” Team;
- Member volunteers to assume leadership roles;
- Existing governance meetings;
- Leadership Training “2025”, with an existing budget of \$3,600;
- Applying for the now

“Six Weeks to Power” training and beyond

By Molly Smith, President-Elect MEA-Retired

combined NEA-Retired Organizing and Coalition of Retired Activist and Leaders (CORAL) grant projects.

- Funded up to \$8,500 per state affiliate, per year.
- Support from NEA C4O (Center for Organizing)
- Support from MEA
- Other, to be determined

What is the information process?

- Word of mouth, presentations to internal governance bodies
- Written information letter to the entire MEA-Retired membership, sent via email by MEA. Periodic updates as determined
- Publication in *The Clarion* (February 2025) and ongoing updates thereafter
- Postings on our website mearetired.org
- Presentations at local affiliates,

upon request

- Presentations at the May Convention and Annual Meeting in 2025 and 2026.

The team was encouraged by the reception and input received from the Executive Committee when the initiative was presented to them in December 2024.

It is hoped that all members of MEA-Retired will seize the opportunity to participate and contribute to this initiative, hopefully resulting in a revitalized and strengthened association for years to come.

It is hoped that all members of MEA-Retired will seize the opportunity to participate.



By Kay Grindall
Kennebec Ref. Educ. Assoc.

If you were to ask teachers in Aroostook County or principals and superintendents around the state or anyone in the State of Maine Department of Education, all would respond, “Yes! I know Fern Desjardins from St. Agatha.”

Born into her family of five brothers and one sister, Fern was expected to go to work after high school in the family potato business “just like my brothers did,” she says.

However, Fern had other plans for her life. See, very early in her grammar school days, she decided she wanted to teach school “just like Mrs. Imelda Boucher, my first grade teacher.”

She explained that Mrs. Boucher was single, lived close enough to walk to school every day. “She was the kindest, most dedicated and loving teacher any six- or seven-year-old youngster could ask for.”

“From first grade on, I knew in my heart there was nothing else I would rather do than teach school,” she says.

Her exemplary, tireless work ethic served her well in her preparation for her choice career. Fern earned a bachelor’s degree in education from the University of Maine at Fort Kent and started her teaching career in a Grade 3 classroom at the Montfort School in St. Agatha. MSAD 33 included Frenchville and St. Agatha in Northern Maine.



Fern Desjardins

She is a “leader of leaders”

After five years, the school closed and students were moved to one school—the Dr. Levesque Elementary School (DLES) in Frenchville where she taught Grade 3 another six years.

Fern was a supervising teacher to many student teachers during her tenure in the classroom.

Former student George Nelson has managed the International Space Station’s Technology and Science Research office for more than 15 years and remembers his Grade 3 teacher: “Mrs. Desjardins has certainly stuck in my mind growing up and into adulthood. She impacted me in a very positive way.”

Another third grade student fondly remembers Mrs. Desjardins. Vicki Michaud of Hermon says, “I’ve always considered her my favorite teacher, because she was always really sweet to all of her students. I especially enjoyed learning my multiplication tables there. She made education fun.”

During this time Fern felt challenged to further her education, Fern earned a master’s degree in education from the University of Maine and a Certificate of Advanced Study (CAS) from the University of Southern Maine.

These degrees opened doors for her, as she became the principal of Dr. Levesque Elementary School after her sixth year teaching Grade 3. She held that position for 15 “wonderful years,” she says.

In the meantime Fern was granted a sabbatical and earned a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Maine.

In the midst of that very demanding doctoral pro-

gram of studies, Fern soon learned that her superintendent had retired. The school board offered her the position—one she held for 16 years.

“As an administrator in a small, rural school system, I carried out many roles with the help of teachers and other staff members. I served as Director of Special Education Services for a number of years, oversaw the English Learners bilingual education program, and processed federal grant applications and related reports,” she noted.

Additionally, the University of Maine asked her to teach courses in Aroostook County in their master’s and CAS cohorts.

Fern is especially “proud of the academic growth students made in my classroom and throughout our school. I am proud to serve with such a dedicated staff who worked so well together.

“It was exciting to become a nationally recognized Blue Ribbon School in 1998,” she says.

“Receiving the same coveted award in 2017 again under a different principal,

DLES will remain a high-achieving school because of the culture in the school and the communities it serves. The townspeople take great pride in that school, as do all the people who work there. They care about their students and their work, and it pays off greatly,” she asserts.

Fern is still amazed at how very effective education in a small, rural school can become and how well prepared



Announcing the 2023 County Teacher of the Year are (L to R): Deputy Commissioner Daniel Chuhta; Governor Janet Mills; Waldo County Teacher of the Year Caitlin Ray; President of the Maine County and State Teachers of the Year Association and the 2020 Maine Teacher of the Year, Heather Whitaker; and Fern Desjardins, Chair, Maine State Board of Education.

she was to attend college and aspire to be the best possible educator in all the positions she held.

“I was challenged to succeed in accomplishments that I hadn’t even dreamed of right in my own small school district. I also appreciated the professional associations with other teachers and administrators in Aroostook County and statewide,” she explains.

She noted that whether a district has 10 teachers or 100, the positions require the same time and talent commitment, enthusiasm, and love for students and colleagues and their successes.

“Often, the workload can be much heavier in small schools. For example, there are likely not enough students



NASBE President and CEO Paolo DeMaria and Vice Chair of the Maine State Board of Education, Paulette Bonneau, presented Fern with the 2023 Distinguished Service Award for “exceptional contributions to education.” She is delivering her acceptance speech

See Fern, Page 9

to fill two or three sections of a course. Hence, high school teachers usually teach only one section of any course; or only one math teacher will teach all levels of all math courses,” Fern explained.

After 43 years serving as teacher, principal, and superintendent of MSAD 33, Fern certainly was not ready to be done with students, teachers, classrooms, and administrative offices.

Fern worked for two years as a facilitator providing technical assistance and guidance to regional groups of school administrative units in the process of planning and developing regionalization project proposals.

She was appointed by Governor Paul LePage in April 2018 to serve on the State Board of Education (SBE). The appointment was made in front of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee and confirmed by the State of Maine Senate. The terms are for five years, and one may serve two terms. In 2021, she became chairperson of the SBE.

Her influence in educational leadership extends well beyond the York toll booth—as secretary-treasurer of the Na-

tional Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) since 2021. Her responsibilities enable her to influence several committees that guide policies and procedures for school boards of education from coast to coast.

Paolo DeMaria of Ohio has worked with Fern on NASBE for three years and says, “Fern has made tremendous contributions. Not only does she bring years of experience as an educator and a state board member, she has also served in leadership roles—the New Member Representative, a member of the Public Education Positions Committee, and as secretary-treasurer and chair of the Finance & Audit Committee.

“What I love most about Fern is her positive attitude and her habit of always looking for ways to lift people up. She brings great perspective to guiding the work of NASBE, represents Maine very effectively, and is an amazing team member.”

In October 2023, Fern was honored as the recipient of the Distinguished Service Award from NASBE for her “outstanding contributions to education.”

Fern was recently inducted into the

Franco-American Hall of Fame. She explains that “its mission is to celebrate our French heritage, culture, and language and to recognize the contributions of Franco-Americans across Maine and focus on how we continue to shape our great state.”

She noted that French was her primary language. “I did not speak English until I started Kindergarten. It is great that Maine recognizes and celebrates the varied benefits of its bilingual and multilingual population and their respective cultures.”

Fern and her husband Francis live in St. Agatha and have three children and four grandchildren.

Get taxes done FREE

AARP will do your taxes free! The program, aimed at taxpayers 50 years of age and older, is free and doesn't require AARP membership.

You'll get assistance from volunteers certified by the Internal Revenue Service. You can even get your tax return sent electronically for free, which will speed your refund.

To get help with preparing your tax return from an IRS-certified volunteer, book an appointment using the “Site Locator.” You can't just walk in empty-handed or with a shoebox full of receipts. Here's what you will need:

- Correspondence received from the IRS and your state/local taxing authority.

- Social Security cards and/or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number notices/cards or other official documentation that show the taxpayer identification numbers for every individual on your return.

- Government-issued photo ID for each taxpayer.

- Checking or savings account information if you want to direct-deposit refund(s) or direct-debit amounts due.

- Identity Protection PIN (IP PIN) (for each individual if applicable). Don't have one? The IRS can send you one.

Most taxpayers have a choice of taking either a standard deduction or itemizing their deductions. You need to have more itemized deductions than the standard deduction. If you have a substantial amount of deductions, you may want to itemize. If so, bring receipts and other documents delineating deductible payments.

AARPMaine has a list of services.

MAINE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION RETIRED

73rd Convention & Annual Meeting.

Augusta Civic Center, Augusta, ME

May 1, 2025

“Everyone Is a Leader”

8:30	Registration, refreshments, exhibits/vendor/county displays, PAC raffle, book swap, music	
9:30	Welcome.....	Bob Jean, President
	Invocation	Michael Lawson, President
		Waldo Educators Association Retired
	Land Acknowledgement.....	Bob Jean, President
	Pledge of Allegiance.....	Molly Smith, President-Elect
	National Anthem.....	Attendees
	Maine Education Association.....	Jesse Hargrove, President
	Introductions: Vendors, Exhibitors, Displays	Bob Jean, President
9:45	View exhibits and vendors, PAC raffle	
10:35	Breakout Session 1	
11:20	Breakout Session 2	
12:00	Buffet Lunch—Main floor (ticket needed) Raffle prizes awarded	
12:40	Keynote Address.....	Captain Colleen Nevius, Retired USNR
1:25	Business Meeting—Main floor.....	Bob Jean, President
	Minutes of 2024 Annual Meeting.....	Jane Conroy, Secretary
	Action on Bylaws Changes.....	Phil Gonyar, Parliamentarian
	In Memoriam Tributes.....	Gary McGrane
	Legacy Committee.....	Jan Collins, Chairperson
	Membership Committee Awards.....	Roger Roy, Chairperson
	Community Participation Awards.....	Susan Grondin, Chairperson
	Affiliate Leadership Awards.....	Molly Smith, President-Elect
	Honorary Membership Award.....	Bob Jean, President
	President's Award.....	Bob Jean, President
	Report of Nominating Committee.....	Susan Grondin, Chairperson
	Installation of 2025-2027 Officers.....	Phil Gonyar, Parliamentarian
	Remarks.....	Molly Smith, President-Elect
3:00	Adjournment.....	Bob Jean, President

and have some refreshments. Of course, you will be greeting former colleagues and friends as they arrive.

See our schedule on Page 9. Our opening ceremony includes remarks by MEA-Retired President Bob Jean and MEA President Jesse Hargrove. We have arranged for more viewing time of vendors, PAC raffle, and displays before you go off to your two chosen breakout sessions as follows:

We are pleased to offer the following four breakout sessions from which you may choose two. We will still have time to view exhibits, raffles, and the PAC table. See schedule on Page 9.

“Hiking in Maine for All Ages” by Ed Mathieu of Sangerville. An experienced Maine guide for over 30 years, Ed has spent many a time in the great outdoors with people all across the globe—showing them great places to find peacefulness in the woods and view scenery, wildlife, and ten waterfalls.

His presentation will encompass some of these beautiful places to visit that are easily accessible for any age. He will share pictures and stories of nice family-friendly hiking areas in our beautiful state.

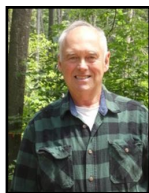
His website invites folk to “join us to go on a Maine moose watching tour by canoe! Our registered Maine guides drive you from the Moosehead Lake region to remote Maine woods, ponds, and shallow bodies of water where moose and other wildlife feed. Did you know that Maine moose in the North Maine Woods outnumber people three to one?”

His Maine moose tours and wildlife safaris by canoe are 3.5 to 4 hours. All trips depart from Northeast Whitewater with our knowledgeable and entertaining guides to remote Maine woods ponds in the North Maine Woods where you will experience canoeing in a peaceful, pristine setting.

Moose feed in the shallow ponds, so our Maine moose canoe tours take you to remote spots where guests have the best opportunity to get close to moose and other wildlife on our moose tours by canoe.

Capture amazing moose pictures, hear moose slurping and chomping the pond weeds, all the while getting up close and personal to the elusive Maine moose on our Maine moose canoe tours. This session promises to be very interesting.

David Melville of Portland is a Maine author, speaker, and ontologist. He studied communications and public relations at the University of Maine.



Ed Mathieu

His recent interesting book entitled, ***The 5 Things to Improve Your Everyday Experiences*** is light-hearted and easy to read. It is not political, not preachy—but just real-world techniques to improve your everyday experiences.

David will skillfully challenge readers to reassess their lives with fresh perspectives and encourage us to “step out of our comfort zones” and try new initiatives.

According to David, we can (1) change our mind; (2) pay attention to our attention; (3) employ radical acceptance; (4) infuse the day with gratitude; and (5) be present.

David and his wife Lisa have raised six sons in and around the Portland area.



David Melville

“Mission Dogs” by **Christie Gardner** of Oxford.

She is a retired Army veteran. She was injured overseas in 2006 and spent nearly five years rehabbing before she was finally able to live on her own again.

She started participating in adaptive sports—thanks to her service dog Moxie. She’s been on the US Women’s Para Ice Hockey Team for 14 years and was an alternate for Tokyo 2020 in shot put and discus. She also represented the USA at the Para Surfing World Championships in 2020 and earned a silver medal at the Para Pan American Games in Santiago, Chile, in 2023.

Gardner trained service dogs and therapy dogs for ten years but wanted to grow that dream to help more Mainers in need. Mission Working Dogs was founded in July 2020 as a local non-profit to do just that. The organization serves to train service dogs and therapy dogs for the local community and has recently opened a new training center in Maine.

Its mission is to improve the lives of community members who live with a disability. Properly trained service dogs are provided to help them live independently and therapy dogs bring mental well-being to citizens of Maine. They especially target residents of nursing homes, hospitals, and schools.

“The Basics of Healthy Foot Care” by Lisa Nelson of Oakland. A registered nurse specializing in podiatry, Lisa identifies and treats nail and foot diseases—including fungi of the nail. She treats and recommends prescriptive treatments for callouses, corns, and ingrown toenails.

Lisa will discuss techniques of healthy foot care and will explain gait

analyses and foot measurement as one ages. She noted that the size of the average woman’s shoe increases by two sizes by the age of 50. She will share tips on gaining and maintaining maximum mobility through the aging process.



Lisa Nelson

She serves clients in clinics in Scarborough, South Portland, Portland, Freeport, Wiscasset, Skowhegan, Oakland and Waterville. She also does homecare visits for folk who no longer drive.

After lunch, we will be honored to hear our keynote speaker—an esteemed, most accomplished, renowned member of our Armed Forces community:

Keynote Speaker Captain Colleen Nevius, USNR (Retired) was the first U.S. Naval female test pilot. Captain Nevius, graduated and was commissioned in May 1977 from Purdue University as a member of the second group of women Midshipmen accepted into Navy ROTC.

She was selected for pilot training commencing October 1977, flying the T-28, TH-57 and H-1, earning the coveted Wings of Gold in February, 1979.

With Lieutenant Junior Grade (LTJG) Karen Thornton, Colleen was assigned as one of two women pilots to the sea-duty component of Helicopter Combat Support Squadron Six (HC-6) at NAS Norfolk, VA, to fly the H-46 Sea Knight’s Vertical Replenishment (VertRep) mission.

The first woman pilot to graduate from US Naval Test Pilot School, Colleen was assigned to the Rotary Wing Aircraft Test Directorate as lead pilot for H-46 and CH-53E helicopters. She completed more than 50 projects in a two-year assignment in the Attack Assault Branch.

She completed the assignment as Assistant Officer in Charge, HM-12 Sea Component flying the Vertical Onboard Delivery (VOD) mission, subsequently standing up HC-2 VOD Squad. She was deployed with the CH-53E to NAS Roosevelt Roads in support of carrier training, and to the North Atlantic in support of NATO exercises.

She and her husband Bill Readdy have three children raised in the Arlington, Virginia, area. Following in his mom and grandfather’s footsteps, one of their sons continues the family flying legacy.

The afternoon business meeting provides opportunities to honor and



Capt. Colleen Nevius



Christie Gardner

Convention, from Page 10

recognize our own members and their accomplishments. Community Participation Committee awards those who excelled in volunteerism and physical activity. Each affiliate awards a member who demonstrates extraordinary leadership. Our In Memoriam segment honors those persons in the educational field who have passed. It is a very solemn and touching service.

The Legacy Committee presents a scholarship to a deserving student and Ritter Grants will be given to affiliates. Affiliates with increased percentages of membership will receive awards.

President Jean will honor two notably outstanding MEA-Retired members—one is the Honorary Membership Award and the second one is the President's Award.

This year the new officers for the next biennium will be installed. Plan to come and meet the officers who will serve us for the next two years.

A full interesting day is planned! We hope to see you there. Please write "MEA-Retired Conv." on your May 1, calendar.

Remember that the number one comment our attendees wrote in last year's evaluations was, "It is always great to see friends and former colleagues!"

Looking forward to seeing you and your friends soon!

73rd MEA-Retired Convention & Annual Meeting

"Everyone Is a Leader!"

Keynote Speaker

Captain Colleen Nevius, USNR (Retired)

May 1, 2025

Augusta Civic Center, 76 Community Drive, Augusta

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m.

Name _____ Tel. _____ Affiliate _____

Address _____ City/Town _____

State _____ Zip _____ Email _____ Age 90+ FREE _____

Registration: \$30—coffee/juice/food, vendors, raffles, prizes, book exchange, awards, affiliate displays, buffet lunch, entertainment, annual business meeting, fellowship

Two breakout sessions featuring four topics: Select 1st and 2nd choices for each one.

- (1) Mission Dogs (2) The Basics of Healthy Footcare
(3) Hiking the Maine Outdoors (4) Improving Everyday Expectations

Session 1 10:35—11:10 a.m.: _____ 1st choice _____ 2nd choice

Session 2 11:20—11:55 a.m.: _____ 1st choice _____ 2nd choice

This form may be duplicated—submit a separate registration form for each registrant. Registration is to be postmarked by April 15, 2025

**Make check payable to MEA-Retired. Send with registration form(s) to
Carl Bucciantini, Registrar, PO Box 352, Greene, ME 04236-0352.**

Questions? Convention Chair Rheba Michaud, rmichaud143@charter.net (207) 564-7494

Book table at convention

Tables will be set up at our MEA-Retired convention for our **FREE** book swap. Bring books you have read and take books donated by others. It is a great way to expand your reading and clean out bookshelves. You do not have to bring books to take books.

Children's books will also be available. We always need new books to read to our grandchildren now that we are retired and have more free time. Bring books and take books.

So, when you start your spring cleaning, begin with your bookcases and share your reading material. For more information, contact our convention coordinator, Rheba Michaud at 207-564-7494.



Convention Booklet Deadlines

December 1: Leadership Award Bios & Photos to MEA-Retired President-Elect Molly Smith

February 1: Leadership Award Bios & Photos to booklet editor Kay Grindall

March 1: Reports from MEA-Retired officers, liaisons, and committee chairpersons

March 15: Necrology Reports

Names of all deceased who contribute to the education of students—bus drivers, custodians, cooks, secretaries, coaches, ed techs, teachers, principals, crossing guards, superintendents, Dates of decease: March 10, 2024, thru March 10, 2025

**Please send to kay_grindall@yahoo.com.
Mail to 23 Hilltop Drive Oakland 04963**



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Membership Matters: Invest in your future

Now is a great time for newly retired educators to consider investing in their future. I highly suggest you consider purchasing a lifetime membership in NEA-Retired.

This one-time payment of \$300 means that one would never have to pay the annual dues of \$35 per year.

Retired ed techs and higher ed support staff would pay only \$180 for lifetime membership. In fewer than nine years, a retiree would have recouped this investment and be saving money for the rest of his/her life.

Furthermore, if you know active career educators, you should recommend that a person purchase this NEA-Retired lifetime membership before they actually retire. That way, they are protected against any future dues increases, and never have to pay

NEA-Retired dues when they do retire.

I joined NEA-Retired over ten years before I retired, and I avoided two subsequent dues increases.

In fact, many educators purchased lifetime NEA membership at a cost of only \$100 back in the 80's. True, the dues amount has increased; however, so has teacher pay incrementally.

Now, I need to address another topic regarding membership, as we prepare for our state convention and annual meeting on May 1.

Membership recruitment and retention are critical to ongoing growth in MEA-Retired. We appreciate your continuing to invite fellow educators who are thinking about retiring to join the ranks of the local affiliate, state MEA-Retired, and na-

tional organization, NEA-Retired.

Truly, it is proven that when asked, most people respond that they have joined an organization "because I was asked." So, let's keep asking. That is how we keep building our membership—which stands at more than 5,400. Thanks to your great efforts!

I would like to remind our MEA-Retired local affiliates to submit the number of members on their rolls as of February 15, 2025. I also need to know how many members died during the period of February 15, 2024, thru February 15, 2025.

These numbers are used to calculate which affiliates have amassed the highest percentage of membership increases over the past 12 months. The number from

February 15, 2024, is decreased by the number of deceased members.

The current February 15, 2025, number is then compared to that number to calculate the percentage of growth since the previous year.

At the MEA-Retired conference on May 1, 2025, the affiliate with the highest percentage increase will receive a check for \$100. The next four affiliates with the best percentages will each receive \$50.

The numbers can be reported to Roger Roy by text or phone at 207-768-1688, or send by email to soucyroy@maine.rr.com.

Thank you for your diligence and hard work on membership engagement and record-keeping to ensure accurate membership tallies are available. I look forward to seeing you at our May conference.

By Roger Roy, Chair
Membership Committee