



February 2026

THE CLARION

The Newsletter for Retired Educators
Maine Education Association Retired
Vol.137 No.3

From our President:



Molly Smith

The Year in Review

With the new year comes a time of reflection. For me, this means reflecting on and taking stock of the Maine Education Association Retired, it's actions and activities at least since the beginning of May 2025, when I was inducted into the office of President.

This will be a sort of "State of the Union". Yes, pun intended.

Much work has been dedicated to the productive running of the organization. Countless hours have been spent by those in leadership positions and by our members, attending meetings, discussing issues, identifying priorities, responding to surveys and inquiries and communicating with each other via emails, zoom meetings and of course numerous in-person meetings.

The Executive Committee (made up of elected officers and other office holders at the state level and committee chairpersons) and the Board of Directors (made up of the Executive Committee and the leadership or their designees from our 15 county affiliates and HEAR (Higher Ed Association of Retirees)). Both groups each meet a minimum of four times throughout the year either in Augusta at the MEA Office, or at the Best Western Hotel in Waterville.

In those meetings your leaders have tackled the usual order of business assuring the orderly management of resources, reflecting on today's challenges at the local level, at the State House and in Washington, sharing many conversations about strategies to maintain both the physical and financial health of our members, while preserving a decent standard of living in which retirees are able to experience a safe and supportive environment in the living situation of their choosing.

We saw the repeal of both GPO and WEP, a collective battle fought for decades to have access to the hard-earned Social Security money in several states' public employees groups, not just those in education, who were denied this right for so long.

Thousands of lives, in the state of Maine and elsewhere were instantly improved by the passage of the Social Security Fairness Act. The life changing impact is incalculable.

Sources at the National Education Association state that impacted individuals have seen an average increase of \$360 per month in Social Security benefits, many due to spousal benefits.

We must remain vigilant about the plight of public education, the schools and organizations to whom we have dedicated our often long serving careers. So many things have changed for our active colleagues, students and their families since our retirement.

Committees

There have been new ad hoc Committees established.

The Association Review Initiative

Committee was formed to guide the assessment and review of the organization to review our mission, organizational and governance structures, committees, and our functional relationships with the Maine Education Association, National Education Association-Retired and the National Education Associations.

The ARI Committee has facilitated and lead discussions that promote opportunities to develop solutions related to continuing educational opportunities; health and safety issues; human and civil rights and social justice issues; improving public education; organizing leadership training; providing social opportunities; retirement security; and legislative issues for retirees.

The committee constructed and put out a survey to engage all 5,300+ members, to solicit and hear all voices, to record the concerns, questions, thoughts and ideas of our members.

This was also an effort to understand the demographics of our collective membership.

The ARI committee is currently undertaking a comprehensive review and study of the result of the survey. It will be recording results and writing a summary to be shared universally within the organization.

With that task accomplished, opportunities will be made for discussion and hopefully the organization will have a better understanding of itself. From that hopefully will come plans for growth, development and

See President, Page 8

74th MEA-Retired
Annual Meeting
and
Convention
April 30th, 2026
"The Many Hats of
MEA-Retired"

Save the Date!

Registration has begun for the MEA-Retired Annual Meeting and Convention. Registering early gives you a better chance of securing the breakout sessions you wish to attend.

In the December issue of *The Clarion* we shared some biographies of our presenters. In this issue we will do a short review of these and add a few pictures.

For those who have never attended our convention, here is what you should expect.

The registration table will open at 8:30 with registration continuing until 9:30.

Many participants like to arrive early so they can have time to visit vendors, affiliate displays, and our free book swap table. You do not have to bring a book to take one.

Beverages and snacks are available during this time.

This is also a great time to

See Convention, Page 9

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Legislative Committee Report By Crystal Ward– Chair Grace Leavitt– Asst. Chair

The second session of the 132nd Maine Legislature begins January 7, 2026. This is called a short session and runs from January to April 2026.

The second session is held mainly to finish what they worked on last session and to deal with any bills carried over. It is harder to submit a new bill this session, but there will be some approved.

MEA and MEA-Retired worked hard last session on several bills dealing with retirement issues.

The issues addressed fixing the MainePERS 2011 pension changes (costing over \$1.5 billion), raising the amount the COLA applies to up to \$40,000 (\$750 million), changing the COLA cap back to 4%, and raising the percentage paid by the state for health

insurance by 5% for a contribution of 65% (cost of about \$3 million).

We were successful in getting bipartisan support and many more Legislators understand the great harm done by the changes in 2011. They also understand that our pensions are NOT keeping up with inflation and we continue to lose buying power.

This highest COLA amount this past year was \$713 which equals \$59.42/month before taxes.

We now know that our Anthem Advantage Plan is going up over 9%. Medicare is going up about 11%. Delta Dental is increasing by around 9%. These increases alone take up most of the COLA gains.

We all know that just about everything else is going up...food, electricity, some fuels, cable and phone, etc.

The plan for the 2026 session is to get **LD111** off the Appropriations table, funded and signed into law by the Governor. Last session **LD111** passed the Labor Committee with unanimous Bipartisan support!

It passed the House and Senate under gavel, which means there was no opposition, and it was sent to the Special Appropriations

table for funding. It is still on the table. The job is to focus on the Appropriations Committee and to remind your Senator and Representative and the Governor about **LD111**.

LD111

An Act to Increase the State's Share of Retired Teacher Health Insurance

Summary: The bill requires the State to pay 65% (this would be a 5% increase) of a retired teacher's share of the premium for group accident and sickness or health insurance from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026.

Presented By:
Rep. Janice S. Dodge,
D– Belfast

PLEASE E-MAIL THESE LEADERS ASKING THEM TO SUPPORT AND FUND LD111

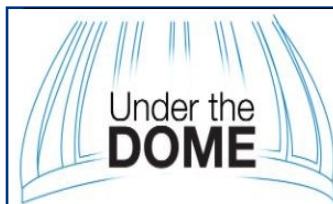
Senator Margaret Rotundo
Chairperson
Margaret.Rotundo@legislature.maine.gov

Rep. Drew Gattine
Chairperson

Andrew.Gattine@legislature.maine.gov

WRITE TO:

Governor Janet Mills
1 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333



Members are invited to sign up for all the latest legislative news and updates from MEA Government Relations Director Jan Kosinski by emailing him at: jkosinski@maineaa.org

Submitting an Article for a future issue?

**The deadlines for our
future issues of
The Clarion:
April issue—please
submit by March 5.
June issue— submit by
May 5.
August issue— submit
by July 5.**

Send articles/photos to:
vegas04861@yahoo.com

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. Send articles to vegas04861@yahoo.com Questions? Call Bob Jean at 207-593-6597

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@maineaa.org.

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NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA RA

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 2, 9:00 AM
Executive Committee Meeting
MEA Headquarters, Augusta

April 6, 9:00 AM
Board of Directors Meeting
Best Western Hotel, Waterville

April 29, 9:00 AM
Executive Committee
MEA Headquarters, Augusta

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

Pre-Retirement Committee Report By Bo Zabierek– Chairperson

We have completed our fall pre-retirement and the committee, in conjunction with our presenters, reviewed the survey results generated by the seminar participants on Tuesday, November 25th.

We reviewed the feedback and discussed whether there are places we can improve these sessions for the upcoming winter sessions.

The feedback was mostly positive with many mentions of how informative and professional the presentations were.

We continue to stress to

participants that they are welcome to register for more than one session in order to digest all of the material presented.

We are also exploring the possibility of adding at least one Social Security seminar per season for our Ed.Tech.1 and other education support professionals not covered by MainePERS, the state retirement system..

We made initial contact with our Social Security northeast sub-regional public affairs specialist who covers the state of Maine but our plans were interrupted by the fed-

eral government shutdown.

We hope to preview their standard 75 minute presentation and, if relevant, include it in our offerings on a separate day and time.

They would have to conclude their informational sessions by 5 p.m. to fit within their normal business schedule.

It is our hope to explore this opportunity further this school year in hopes of offering something new in the 2026-2027 school year.

Committee member and Anthem MEABT session host, Jim Thornton, represented our committee at the December Executive Committee meeting to answer questions regarding our committee report and how the survey reviews went.

Julie Gomez, our President -elect hosts the MainePERS sessions.

Our first two winter seminar sessions occurred on January 13 & 14 and then the 27th & 28th.

I have included the winter seminars schedule at the end of this article.

Bo Zabierek, MEA-Retired Pre-retirement Committee Chair

WINTER SEMINAR
Final Seminar of the year
February 10, 2026
MEA Benefits Trust
February 11, 2026
MEA-Retired and MainePERS
To register contact Lisa Collins
lcollins@maineaa.org

Community Participation Report By Belinda Micucci– Chairperson

The Community Participation Committee reports that our members again volunteered their services to active and retired members as well as community organizations.

Affiliates provided backpacks, food, books, and school supplies.

Participants are encouraged to time their projects to take place around September 11, the date of the Day of Caring.

Our main goal is to involve retirees in reaching out to schools by providing needed supplies and/or aid to support the education community while building relationships that extend beyond the Day of Caring.

Affiliates receive \$100 in matching funds to assist with the projects.

Affiliate presidents are given forms asking them to describe their project and are asked to

do a follow-up form evaluating the results of their work.

These forms are handed out at a fall Board meeting, but can also be accessed on our MEA-Retired website.

Each year, the Community Participation Committee also recognizes individuals from each affiliate who tally the most volunteer hours and the most physical activity hours.

The individuals who amass the most hours in their affiliate are recognized at the Annual Meeting and Convention.

Affiliate Presidents, or their designee, are encouraged to collect the data and relay it to the committee chair early on in April.

Our committee wishes to thank all affiliates for their assistance, and all our members who continue to support the goals of the Association.

CONGRATULATIONS “Century+ Club”

Benita Russo, 1/1/1919
Josephine McAlary, 1/1/1923
Frances Bryson, 1/1/1923
Theresa Thibeault, 1/1/1925
Gladys Stokinger, 1/1/1925
Ruth McInnis, 3/14/1925
Elwyn Walkier, 6/17/1925
Marian Downing, 12/20/1925
Lorraine Bowdoin, 1/1/1926
Lucy Deroche, 1/1/1926
E Kenneally, 1/29/1926



AARP MEA/MEA-Retired Liaison Pamela J. Partridge

Tradition has us thinking about our hopes and wishes for the new year. Articles for *The Clarion* are due the month prior to publication for obvious reasons, so while you are receiving this in February, I am sitting here on New Year's Eve thinking about what to share in the upcoming issue.

Wellness is a topic year round. AARP offers public wellness activities in every state. Here in Maine, AARP hosts classes in meditation (10 minutes every Wednesday morning) and yoga (1 hour every Friday morning) throughout the year on Zoom.

While they are offered once a week, you can redo the classes by viewing the taped

versions. You do need to register in advance in order to get the zoom link. You may register for all 12 months of 2026 in either class at:

<https://states.aarp.org/maine/wellness-classes>

To see all Maine events google AARP Maine events or go to:

<https://state.aarp.org/maine/me-events>

You may be required to create an AARP account to access registration and links to some of the events. Many of these events are open to the public and don't require AARP membership.

Free coffee socials are open to the public every month in Bangor, Fort Kent, Yarmouth, and Lewiston/Auburn. The socials often have a guest speaker with updates from AARP on state and national advocacy work.

For more information on the details of the schedule go to: <https://states.aarp.org/maine/free-coffee-socials-networking>

Registration is not required to attend but notifications of cancellations or changes do go out to those who have registered.

Learn how to be a fraud fighter with Phil and Pam's Fraud Watch program, a monthly 1/2 hour virtual program on fraud. Different topics are covered on the second Thursday of each month. The program is interactive, a safe place to ask questions and access additional resources on fraud prevention. To get the ZOOM go to:

<https://states.aarp.org/maine/monthly-fraud-watch>

Tuesdays at the State House (TASH) began in January when the legislature returned for their second session. Advocacy will continue on the priority issues of affordable living, aging in place, home care, utility rates and protection from fraud.

More information will be included in the next edition of *The Clarion*.

Get taxes done FREE

AARP offers free tax
preparation through
AARP Tax-Aide

This program provides
free, quality assistance
in filing taxes through
AARP Foundation.
Trained volunteers can
assist you in filing both
short forms and more
complicated long forms
along with the necessary
attachments.

To find an AARP Tax
Aide site near you, call
1-800-227-7669
or visit

www.aarp.org/taxaide
Scheduling begins at the
end of January. Reserve
your slot soon.

MEA Board of Directors Report By Kay Grindall

Greetings from 26 members of the MEA Board of Directors. I am privileged to represent MEA-Retired in this position. Our recent meetings were on December 6 and 7 at MEA Headquarters.

It was noted that the net Retired Membership growth is 51 members (new members-deceased). MEA-Retired has the highest number of members contributing to PAC through automatic payments (51 retired members in all). The next highest number is a local active

group with 7 members paying automatically. There are 150 locals with NO PAC contributors.

I learned some interesting stats on educators in Maine (current year) : 800+ are retiring; 500+ are quitting, and college education programs of studies graduated 400 new educators during the past year.

The special Legislative session- January through April- may be extended if needed. They will be working on bills that were carried over from the previous session. Emergency bills will also be addressed. The 2026 MEA Election campaign slogan is "Together we win!" MEA will endorse primary election candidates.

Lobby Days will be instituted in February; however, rather than have one big day when

many descend on the Legislature during February break, MEA will have thrusts on Weeks 1, 2, and 4. More information will be forthcoming. The events will be smaller but as focused on three primary issues: teacher salaries, mental health, and retirement.

The 16 microphones around the MEA Board room are for use by parties at all meetings. Hearing discussions at our Executive Committee meetings should be a lot easier from now on.

The safe and convenient use of Google docs among committee members and other entities is being investigated. There is now a "Report a Problem" button on the MEA website. Admittedly, not all problems can be anticipated.

"May Day" is International

Labor Day. A May Day toolkit is available on the NEA website. Jesse would like 3 locals from the 9 Board regions to commit to May Day activities.

The NEA website has a section about the history, meaning, and significance of May Day.

MEA is investigating a pilot program to transition from payroll deduction to private deductions for payment of dues. There may be a possibility of paying dues with a credit card. More information to come.

Our next Board meetings are on Feb. 7 and 8.



News You Can Use By Joyce Bucciantini

AARP Community Outreach Coordinator

February is one of the most beautiful times in Maine.

Gone are the super short days of early winter, leaving us with more daylight to enjoy the great outdoors in Maine.

Many cities and towns have winter celebrations which might include snow sports, ice fishing, and, hopefully, hot cocoa.

Getting outdoors is a great way to fight off cabin fever and reconnect with our neighbors and friends.

For those who enjoy warmer activities, there is always excitement to be found at the

state high school basketball tournaments during the February school vacation week, or an AARP Coffee Talk.

In between enjoying the bright winter weather and fresh air, we must also face a yearly task that we all must do but few enjoy; taxes.

Organizing our financial information and completing our tax forms can be a daunting task. This year there are changes in how tips and overtime can be taxed and additional tax deductions for qualifying taxpayers over the age of 65.

It can be hard to keep track of all these changes and how they might impact our individual tax returns.

However, there is some good news, the AARP Foundation offers free Tax-Aide preparation clinics in 47 locations in Maine. Last year 240 Tax-Aide volunteers filed 13,671

Federal returns helping Maine taxpayers receive \$10.4 million in Federal refunds.

AARP Foundation Tax-Aide is managed through the AARP Foundation and is jointly sponsored by the Internal Revenue Service.

This service provides tax preparation assistance free of charge, focusing on taxpayers who are over 50 and have low to moderate incomes. This program offers free, quality assistance to those who need help filling their taxes.

The Tax- Aide volunteers are trained, certified by the IRS and ready to assist Mainers with both the standard short tax forms and the longer forms as needed.

The on - line Tax - Aide Site Locator tool found at:

https://www.aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp_taxaide/locations/ is a good way to find the Tax-

Aide location nearest to you.

This website, **the Locator Tool**, provides the locations, the operating schedules and the information needed to schedule a tax aide appointment.

Information about AARP Tax Aide can also be found by calling the Tax Aide number: **1-888-227-7669**.

Tax- Aide appointments fill up fast. It is a good idea to go ahead and make your appointment early in the tax season.

Then you can rest easy and enjoy all that the great Maine outdoors has to offer, or for indoor fun, check out the AARP website for an event near you.



MEA Benefits Trust Report By Faith Campbell

Midwinter greetings to all of you.

MEA Benefits Trust Wellness Director, Michael Booth, has been spearheading a Request for Proposal (RFP) search exploring the benefits and programs from a number of "wellness" providers.

Our current provider is Personify Health, whose contract expires on June 30, 2026.

The provider selection process began last fall when the MEABT Trustees authorized a RFP.

There were approximately a dozen providers indicating an initial interest.

Those companies completing the application had their responses and other

documentation scored on a scale created by Dana Verrill law firm personnel.

These applications were comprehensive. One firm's application response was 75 pages long! Many responses required long term backup data.

Four companies were selected to meet with the MEABT interview committee based upon these scores.

The committee will meet on February 9, 2026. I am honored to have been selected as a committee member.

It is hoped that a decision can be made on, or shortly after, the interviews.

The new contract is scheduled to begin on July 1, 2026.

Please be on the lookout for updates.

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 combinations 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.

An application can be found on our MEA-Retired website and Facebook page.

Day of Caring

More projects from our affiliates

Franklin County Retired Educators Association

Day of Caring: Mallard School and Franklin County Retired Educators Support Saint Joseph's Food Bank Community Service Brings Together Students, Retired Teachers, and Local Safety Personnel



Annual Thanksgiving Food Drive Fosters Generosity and Community Spirit On the morning of November 24, 2025

A heartwarming scene unfolded in Franklin County as the Franklin County Retired Educators Association joined hands with Mallett School students to deliver more than 500 pounds worth of much-needed food to Saint Joseph's Food Bank.

This impactful event not only provided essential supplies for families in the area but also showcased the power of community involvement and the spirit of giving that defines the holiday season.

The event was marked by the presence of both current and retired teachers, many of

whom returned to support the students in their charitable endeavor.

Students from Mallett School actively participated, walking along the sidewalks with their teachers and retired educators, each carrying canned goods, dry goods, or products suitable for local households.

The sight of every student involved in this meaningful activity was truly inspiring.

A Tradition of Giving:

This food drive has become an annual tradition in Franklin County, especially around Thanksgiving. Organized as part of the Franklin County Retired Educators Association's "Day of Caring," the event highlights the importance of community service and the role of educators in nurturing compassion and civic responsibility among young people.

Event Details and Safety Measures:

The activity began at 9:30 AM on Monday morning and continued until noon, ensuring all students had the opportunity to personally deliver their donations to Saint Joseph's Food Bank.

Local police officers and safety personnel were present throughout, guiding the students as they walked along sidewalks and crossed streets, ensuring a safe and orderly procession.

Their support, along with the attentiveness of teachers, guaranteed that every child was accounted for and secure.

Moments of Warmth and Gratitude:

The day was filled with smiles, warm greetings, and a sense of accomplishment as students, teachers, and retired educators worked together.

The community's grati-

tude was evident in the cheerful interactions among participants and in the satisfaction of knowing that their efforts would provide tangible relief to families in need.



Photos from the event, to be featured in the next issue of *The Clarion* will capture the memorable moments as students walked with their teachers and local police officers, embodying the spirit of service and teamwork.

The Franklin County Retired Educators Association extends heartfelt thanks to all the children, teachers, and safety personnel who participated and made the event a safe and successful celebration of caring.

The tradition of the Day of Caring continues to reinforce the values of empathy, generosity, and community—reminding everyone that the greatest gifts often come from working together for a common good.

Article and photos submitted by Gary McGrane

What is Day of Caring?

Every September the 16 affiliates of MEA-Retired plan projects as part of our Day of Caring Program.

Some affiliates choose to collect school supplies to donate to a school in their county.

Some affiliates go into the schools to help teachers prepare for the upcoming school year by mounting bulletin boards, laminating, photocopying, weeding gardens, and volunteering to assist our active educators.

All of these activities allow our members the opportunity to communicate with other educators as a new year begins.

By volunteering in our schools, MEA retirees provide a great service by assisting with the never ending tasks associated with the beginning of a new school year.

Examples of the variety of projects undertaken by our affiliates have appeared in the December *Clarion* and a few more will be featured in the February edition.

While some groups do not always send articles or photos in for publication, be assured that our affiliates are all very active connecting in their communities.

All of our affiliates make it a point to give back to the community.

Our 'Day of Caring' extends well beyond the beginning of September.

Thank you to our
MEA-Retired Affiliates
for
Making a Difference!!

Hancock County Retired Educators Association

The Hancock County Retired Educators Association chose the Trenton Elementary School to be the recipient of their Day of Caring efforts. Members collected school supplies to donate to the school. In addition to the supplies, they also purchased four \$25 gift cards for the school, to be used as needed.



Priscilla McFarland, Hancock County Retired Educators Association President, presents donations from her affiliate to Trenton Elementary Principal, Crystal DaGraca.

The principal, students, and staff at Trenton Elementary were thrilled to receive these gifts.

York County Retired Educators Association

YCREA selected the Hanson Elementary School in Lyman, ME as the recipient of our 2025 Day of Caring efforts to do "Something Special" for a school in York County.

At our September meeting we collected school supplies as well as monetary donations.

We also presented Principal Carmen Carpenter a sizeable check to be used as needed for students and staff.

Debbie Butler and Jan Cerabona delivered our gifts to the school.

We were also able to visit with a new Kindergarten teacher who was a recipient of a scholarship from YCREA four years ago!

It was an unexpected surprise to have a recipient of our scholarship starting her first year at the school we had selected for our Day of Caring.



Hanson Elementary School principal Carmen Carpenter accepts donations from YCREA representatives Debbie Butler and Jan Cerabona



A trunk full of school supplies ready to be delivered to Hanson Elementary



A first year teacher and former recipient of a YCREA scholarship

This is our 16th year of developing and carrying out Day of Caring projects. We have to give a big shoutout to our members who, every year, exceed our expectations to do "Something Special" for a school in our county.

President, from Page 1

for growth, development, and cause for celebration acknowledging the many strengths we currently possess, culminating in a revitalization going forward.

Other new ad hoc committees have included the Budget Review Committee who made recommendations to the Board of Directors regarding membership dues and mileage reimbursement to name a couple.

The Stipend Review Committee will be convening for the first time in 10 years to consider compensation for leadership positions. They are expected to share their findings and recommendations with the Board of Directors in March.

The Special Project Committee is charged with locating and pursuing grants that can be used to support association committee work and other initiatives of a more general nature. A few of our existing standing committees have seen new chairs and a blend of existing and former committee members as they dig in on duties and execute new actions.

All the committees have been asked to prepare a written report outlining their goals with timelines and intended actions. This report is to be submitted and presented to the board of Directors in March. An article will later appear in *The Clarion* to share this information with membership.

Local Affiliates

Our local affiliates continue to be busy. Leaders and their designees have been provided with time during Board of Directors meetings to gather in groups to discuss their challenges and successes, and to exchange ideas and individual practices. There has been newfound recognition that many challenges are shared which has fostered common problem solving.

Affiliates have been asked how the association can best provide support to them. Ongoing efforts to actively support local schools, student's needs and active educators, and to develop new membership and engage current members has been acknowledged.

Many of our affiliates are doing great work in the community with libraries, food banks and providing scholarship opportunities to aspiring educators. I have personally made five visits to our affiliates around the state. Others in leadership have accompanied me or made separate visits.

More opportunities for visits are scheduled. This is always a rewarding experience to meet our members firsthand, sharing in their meetings and witnessing the good works being done in their communities.

Working with MEA

Efforts have been made toward improving communications and our working relationship with MEA and its leadership. This has been accomplished through ongoing meetings and joint strategic planning.

Next up in February is a meeting with our local affiliate presidents, MEA President Hargrove and me in response to a 2025 MEA-Representative Assembly, New Business Item (NBI-10).

We will discuss and design a pilot program with a few interested MEA-Retired local affiliates to bring them together with active MEA local associations intending to promote enhanced relationships, stronger connections and demonstrate active support between the groups.

I am pleased to report that MEA-Retired had a full complement of delegates (11) at the 2025 MEA Representative Assembly, the annual governance meeting of the organization. Resolutions (statements of belief), new business items (actions for the coming year),

election of officers, discussion and approval of the annual budget all took place.

There was also recognition of outstanding achievement of both internal and external groups, affiliates, and individuals who were celebrated at the annual dinner on Saturday.

MEA-Retired has active committee members on many MEA standing committees. These are individuals who are interested in serving by appointment of the MEA President, meeting with their committees 4 times a year. The voices of retirees are vital to the health of the organization. These individuals bring an expanded level of professional experience, often unique points of view and understanding that only retirees have to offer the governance process.

Engagement with NEA and NEA-Retired

Once again MEA-Retired had a full complement of elected delegates (6) at both the NEA Retired Annual Meeting and the NEA RA.

Both meetings were held in Portland, Oregon last June and July. Much networking took place. Other states were interested in the activities, initiatives and programs that are unique to Maine. We, in turn, often benefit by returning to Maine with new thoughts or ideas for programs that can benefit our members.

These meetings provide an opportunity for national and state leaders to meet, listen to concerns, and to share ideas that support and grow our organizations.

Also of importance, Maine MEA-Retired members hold active positions on several standing committees at the national level.

Upcoming MEA-Retired Elections

You can still make the April 16, 2026, filing deadline. Run and engage in our governance process at the state and

national level. For instructions and forms please visit:

mainecea.org/mea-elections. If you need assistance, contact Erin Noyes at

mea-elections@mainecea.org or 207.888.3855 The members of MEA-Retired Educators Association need your advocacy, demonstrated competency, commitment to the issues and concerns of retirees.

If you have not yet filed for the following elected positions, please consider doing so.

- MEA-Board of Directors/Retired (1 position, 3-year term)
- MEA-Representative Assembly (5 elected delegates and 10 alternates, 1-year term expiring 2027) May 15-17, 2026, South Portland, Maine
- NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA Representative Assembly (4 elected delegates and 1 alternate, 1-year term, expiring 2027) June 29-July 8, 2026, Denver, CO.

In conclusion Thank you for you indulgence in joining me in this journey of the past eight months. There is much more that could be said.

I hope that this has been informative and provided you with a clearer understanding of the workings of our organization.

Most of all I want you to understand that you are served by an amazing group of dedicated individuals. We continue to work hard for you, but we also take time to play, enjoy and to appreciate one another.

I am very privileged and honored that you have entrusted me with the office of President.

Please do consider joining us at the level with which you are comfortable.

Convention, from Page 1

colleagues from all parts of the state.

A popular activity at our event is the PAC raffle. If you have an item to donate please bring it to your affiliate president to deliver to our April 6 Board meeting.

Our PAC raffle coordinator, Corley Byras, will take it from there. Please don't forget to visit the raffle table before lunch. It is a great way to support PAC and to, perhaps, walk away with a treasure.

The festivities begin at 9:30 with an invocation, National Anthem, a message from a MEA representative, and some housekeeping announcements.

From 9:45-10:15 members will get another chance to view exhibits, vendors, book swap, and the PAC table. This will give those who did not have time earlier, or who travelled from a distance, to view at their leisure.

The 2 breakout sessions fol

low shortly from 10:35- 11:10 and then from 11:20-11:55.



A member of the Axe Loggers from breakout session presenters

A buffet lunch will be served from 12:10-12:50. Help will be available for those who need it.

Following lunch we will be treated to a performance by the Q-Tips. They are a comedy group from Dover-Foxcroft who often perform for fund-raisers.



Travels to Asia- Karen Cookson



The Q-Tips Comedy Group

Our business meeting will begin at 12:30. MEA-Retired members will be voting on Resolutions and Bylaws

A memorial tribute to those who have passed away during the last year will be presented.

Awards will be handed out as we recognize the good and important work our members are doing.

We always need volunteers to help out with setup/cleanup and other tasks. If you live close enough to Augusta please consider lending a hand. Setup begins at 7a.m.

The plan is to wrap up the day's events by 3:00 p.m. We typically do end by 3, and often earlier.

The committee has planned an exciting and fun day for you. Please consider attending and ask a friend to join you.

You will find the Registration Form on Page 11. Send it in now before it's too late!

Order your MEA-Retired Merchandise Today!!

Maine Educator



Long-sleeved Denim Shirts @ \$47
Short-sleeved Denim Shirts @ \$42
Navy Blue Hats @ \$25
Red, Iris Blue Tee Shirts @ \$23
Red, Ultramarine Golf Shirts @ \$37
Lapel Pins @ \$10
Prices include tax and postage/handling

Name _____ Email _____

Mailing Address _____ City _____ State _____

Zip _____ Tel. _____ Affiliate _____

Qty.	Item	Size	Color	Unit Price	Total Cost
	Sizes S. M. L 1X or 2X: Add \$2 3X or 4X : Add \$4				
	Total Remittance				

Questions? Contact Rena Kearney at rkearney@ainop.com or 207-429-9041. Prices include tax and postage/handling.

Make checks payable to MEA-Retired and mail to Rena Kearney, PO Box 377, Mars Hill, ME 04758.

(Items produced by Cushman's Embroidery, Presque Isle, ME)

Winter Greetings from the Higher Education Association of Retirees (HEAR)

At this time of the year, we offer the warm greetings of winter to you, your family, and friends.

We are grateful for the connections we make among former colleagues, and neighbors.

Yes, as we celebrate milestone birthdays, and for some of us, it can be a year of illness-free, healthy, and happy days.

But for some, we have needs or know others who do.

HEAR is hoping to identify some of the needs of our members and other educators, particularly those who have retired from an institution of public higher education.

We hope you can help us. We would appreciate it if you would simply answer the following questions.

If you have done this via an earlier email, we thank you. Please know that if you have additional information to share, simply complete it again in this format.

Give us your ideas, thoughts, and ways we can help each other (including yourself).

We would appreciate your reply no later than **March 1st** so that we may address these needs as soon as possible.

We have included mailing addresses for returning your ideas:

**J. Conroy, 205
Norton Hill Rd,
Dover-Foxcroft, Maine 04426**
or
**Deb Killam,
P.O. Box 99, Detroit, Maine
04929.**

And as always, if you can use email send it to:

**jconroy@maine.edu -or-
deborah.killam@maine.edu**

QUESTIONS

1. What are the needs of retired higher educators in your area?
2. Are the needs of K-12 retired educators in your area different? If, yes, how?
3. Are there individuals, groups, or organizations in your area that are helping meet the needs of retired educators? If yes, please share their contact information with us, if you can.
4. Do you know anyone who specifically needs help? If yes, can we contact you for more information? If yes, how should we contact you?

Thank you for your time.
We hope you can relax and stay warm!

**Article written by HEAR
officers: Debbie Killam,
Vice President, and
Jane Conroy, President.**

Jack Kinnaman Scholarship Fund How to Donate

By Bob Jean, member of the committee

The NEA-Retired Jack Kinnaman Scholarship Fund was established in honor of Jack Kinnaman, the then-serving NEA-Retired Vice President.

At his demise, the family wished to establish a scholarship program in his honor, thus beginning a much needed assistance activity for worthy aspiring educators.

In the first year of the program in 2002, a scholarship of \$1,000 was awarded to one recipient.

As Retired members have continued to generously donate, the amount has greatly increased to five scholarships of \$3,500 each.

To be considered for this award, Aspiring Educators must submit an application.

The NEA-Retired

Jack Kinnaman Scholarship Committee selects the winners, who are announced at the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting.

To donate you can use this link:

[https://
donatekinnaman.com/](https://donatekinnaman.com/)

To donate by mail send your check to:
**National Education Assoc.
Attn: Jack Kinnaman
Scholarship Fund
1201 16th St. NW Ste. 414
Washington, DC 20036**

Checks need to be payable to: **NEA Foundation**

In the memo line:
**Jack Kinnaman
Scholarship Fund**

"I ask that you please support the NEA-Retired Jack Kinnaman Memorial Scholarship Fund by making a donation that will make a difference not only in the education of our winners, but also five, ten and twenty years from now as these students become excellent educators."

Quote from Rich Kinnaman, Jack's son.

Please consider making a donation to this important fund.

74th MEA-Retired Convention & Annual Meeting

“The Many Hats of MEA-Retired”

Keynote Speaker

The Q-Tips (comedy group)

April 30th, 2026

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,
affiliate displays, buffet lunch,
entertainment, annual business meeting, fellowship**

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

(1) Axe Throwers (2) Travelling to South Asia (Karen Cookson)
(3) Legislative Updates (John Kosinski) (4) Medrhythms (Healing with Music)- Brian Harris

Session 1- 10:35-11:10 _____ 1st choice _____ 2nd choice
Session 2- 11:20-11:55 _____ 1st choice _____ 2nd choice

**This form may be duplicated-submit a separate registration form for each registrant.
Registration is to be postmarked by April 14, 2026**

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

Book table at convention

Tables will be set up for our FREE book swap. Bring books you have read and take books donated by others. You do not have to bring books to participate.

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

February 1: Leadership Award Bios & Photos

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

March 15: Necrology Reports indicating names of all deceased who contributed to the education of students in any role.

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



Membership Committee Report By Kay Grindall– Chairperson

Special appreciation to members of our MEA-Retired Membership Committee: Paul Bouchard, Julie Gomez, Linda Prescott, Mike Smart, and Rosie Smith for their faithful great work!

Each committee member is responsible for three affiliates to whom they send the monthly lists of retirees we receive from MEA.

They check in periodically with their affiliate's membership chairperson to see how things are going and glean information, answer questions, and just

be a conduit with MEA-Retired.

The revised draft of MEA/MEA-Retired membership applications was discussed at length and with Lisa Collins and Alex Bellamy at MEA. Suggestions for more clarity and consistency were discussed.

We received their responses and Lisa and Alex revised membership applications which are available on our **mearetired.org** website.

Instead of three different applications, there are now only two—one for

Pre-K thru Grade 12 for educators and ESP and one for HEAR.

A reminder about our year-end report for the convention booklet:

- A. Membership tally as of 2/1/2026 Minus Number of deceased members over the past year (2/1/2025--2/1/2026)
- B. This year's membership tally MINUS last year's membership tally.
- C. Divide 2/1/2025 membership number by B to get a percentage of growth

For example, in Kennebec County: (2/1/2025) 88 members MINUS 0 deaths of members during 2025 = 88 (2/1/2026) 96 members MINUS 88 = 8 divided by 88 = 9.1% increase

Questions? Call me at 207-512-0027

Invite a retiree to join MEA Retired!

Direct them to our Website @ mearetired.org

THANK YOU!