



At the time of this writing, I have just returned from the annual NEA-Retired Conference in Phoenix, Arizona. President Elect, Julie Gomez, and I had the privilege of attending the Conference that for most part was financed by NEA-Retired dues dollars and in small part by dues dollars from MEA-Retired, for which I am grateful.

I spent one day of the Conference working with our current NEA-Retired President Anita Gibson, Alabama, who led a meeting inclusive of other state Presidents. I have come to know President Gibson as an engaging, open and progressive leader who always has her eyes set on organization development and improvement for its members. This is like the efforts and focus of the governance of the Maine Education Association Retired, through our own internal Association Review Initiative.

The greater balance of the time was spent on attending productive Professional Learning sessions focusing on a variety of topics. One session I found most helpful was, **Stronger Together: Uniting Aspiring, Active, and Retired Members for Collective Power**, presented by Connecticut Retired - President, Kate Dias. I was able to share a meal with Kate and other CT folks to talk informally about their efforts. In Maine, the leadership of MEA, MEA-Retired, and a few MEA-Retired local affiliates, are currently working to launch a pilot program that would us move in a similar direction. The Maine pilot program is being initiated by the adoption of New Business Item 10 (NBI #10) at the MEA Representative Assembly-May 2025.

A sample of other offerings included **Best Practices in Retiree Organizing; How to Develop and Apply for Year-Round Organizing Grants; Fueling Focus and Energy: How Educators Can Support Peak Performance with Nutrition, Sleep and Mental Clarity;** and **Beyond the Classroom: Reframing Your Skills for New Pathways and Pension Power**. Many of the sessions supported work that our own governance bodies and its committees are actively undertaking here locally.

This was the second NEA-Retired Conference that I have attended. Wherever it is, be it this Conference, the NEA Retired Annual Meeting, or at the NEA Representative Assembly, I never fail to benefit from the opportunity to network and learn from other state leaders.

I have once again returned to Maine with a renewed realization; we are doing great work to maintain and improve the lives of our members. In many states there are struggles and hardships that are daunting. Maine has experienced many similar struggles that we have been able to navigate through and overcome, but some unique challenges remain. I am left with a renewed affirmation that there are not many places in this country, that I would rather live and work. I am proud to call the State of Maine my home.

With your continued support, and the commitment of your elected and volunteer leaders of the Maine Education Association Retired, we will continue to make Maine a GREAT place to live, work and retire.

Molly Smith
President, MEA-Retired

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