



## **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, its 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 is (made up of elected officers and other office holders at the state level and committee chairpersons) and the Board of Directors is (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, May to the end of April, 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 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, 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 Membership Survey, will be recording results, and a 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 cause for celebration acknowledging the many strengths we currently possess, culminating in a revitalization movement 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, sharing this information with the 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 supports to them. Ongoing efforts to actively support local schools, student's needs and active educators and to develop new membership and engage current members have 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 to witness the good works being done in their communities.

## **Working with Maine Education Association**

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 locals associations intending to promote enhanced relationships, stronger connections and demonstrate active support between the groups. This effort will be updated in future Clarion Newsletters.

I am pleased to reflect 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 while celebrated at the annual dinner the Saturday night at the RA.

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 (RAM), who along with the elected delegates from MEA represented the interests of Maine retirees at the NEA-Representative Assembly. 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, 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 by 5:00pm. Run and engage in our governance process at the state and national level.

For instructions and forms please visit: [\*\*maineaea.org/mea-elections\*\*](http://maineaea.org/mea-elections). If you need assistance, contact Erin Noyes at [\*\*mea-elections@maineaea.org\*\*](mailto:mea-elections@maineaea.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 2028) June 29-July 8, 2026, Denver, Colorado

## **In Conclusion**

Thank you for your 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 what level you are comfortable, at the local affiliate or state level. You will be welcomed wherever.

For information about joining a local affiliate near you or loads of other news and resources. Check out our incredible website, [\*\*mearetired.org\*\*](http://mearetired.org) or Facebook page, **Maine Education Association-Retired**.

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