

Connections

VEA-R VIRGINIA
EDUCATION
ASSOCIATION RETIRED

a division of VEA

Continuing the Commitment Dec., 2014



We Need Your Vote!

It will soon be time to vote for your VEA-Retired officers and delegates to the NEA and VEA Representative Assemblies. There are two ways to cast your vote, by paper ballot or electronically.

If you want to vote by paper ballot, you need to ask for one no later than January 8, 2015 by emailing brackley@veanea.org. All paper ballots must be postmarked or hand delivered to the VEA office by the close of business on January 20, 2015. Ballots received after this date will not be valid.

To vote electronically, go to the VEA website (www.veanea.org) and locate the link to the election site. Click on the link and follow the directions. You will need your VEA/NEA membership ID number (which starts with three zeroes followed by seven other numerals), and can be found on your membership card, a VEA or NEA publication (in the mailing address area) or by calling VEA. Enter your name exactly as requested and hit enter. The directions for voting are on the ballot, which will list all candidates. Information on the candidates may be accessed by clicking on their name.

You must hit submit, or vote, at the end in order for your vote to be counted. The electronic voting site opens at 12:00 (Noon) on Tuesday January 20, 2015 and closes at 12:00 (Noon) on Friday, January 23, 2015.

VEA-R Regional Meetings Stupendously Successful

VEA-Retired held four meetings for retired members across the state. Overall, almost 100 retired educators gathered to gain information, catch up with old friends and share a meal.

The VEA-Retired Central Virginia Regional Meeting was held on October 8, 2014 at the Central Library in Chesterfield County. The fun and informative meeting included a presentation by Roger Gray on the VEA 2015 Legislative Agenda. Eddie Fifer reviewed VEA benefits and Pat Kennedy discussed VEA-R Elections. Dominic Formosa gave an informative presentation on social media. It was a fabulous meeting filled with important information as well as a great time to meet with other retirees! *By Linda Marks*



The Piedmont annual Fall Retired Regional Meeting was held at New College Institute, Martinsville, VA. The first-class event was attended by a large group of retired teachers. The seasonal decorations set the mood for excellent food, fellowship, presentations, and door prizes. Katherine Harrison and her committee did an outstanding job organizing

this annual meeting. As part of the opening, Katherine ran a slide show of the NEA Outreach to Teach held at the national meeting in Denver this past July. Both VEA-R and SVEA members were featured in this show.

Evalyn Chapman gave a warm welcome followed by VEA-R Council members President R. Eddie Fifer, Vice President Debbie Jessee, and district representatives Martha Wood and Ralph Booher. During the Meet and Greet council members had an opportunity to talk individually with members and to discuss recent events that related to retired members.

During lunch a very special recent VEA Friend of Education joined the meeting. Former State Senator William Wampler, Jr., who now serves as the Executive Director of New College Institute, gave an overview of its mission and special features. William recognized Debbie Jessee, Eddie Fifer, and Ralph Booher for their long-standing friendship while he served in the Virginia State Senate. A second special guest was Chris Daniel, former VEA Uniserv Director, who emphasized the need to bring proper identification when voting. While retired, Chris is still very active and is still working for retired members.

Judy Hodge introduced the guest speaker, Dr. David Martin, retired superintendent of Henry County Schools. He gave a very inspirational and encouraging speech. Following his remarks, door prizes were distributed and there was an adjournment. Guests were then provided with an enjoyable tour of the Institute. *By Ralph Booher*



In Hampton Roads on October 16, members of Districts 1, 2, and 3 gathered at the Golden Corral in Hampton. After enjoying the food and socialization, we listened to a local lawyer, Stephen Grobel. He offered suggestions on what we could do to help those who survive us. These suggestions included information about wills, trusts, real estate, and even making sure there is another name on the safe deposit box.

Announcements included VEA-R Lobby Day on January 29. It was an enjoyable and informative afternoon that ended with a door prize distribution. *By Rita Cooper*

NOVA's meeting was at the Fort Meyer Officer Club. Michael May, former teacher and financial planner, entertained the appreciative group.

Fall 2014 VEA Board of Directors

By Dennis Joseph Pfennig

The VEA Board of Directors held its first formal meeting of the academic year October 17-19, 2015 and covered a multitude of topics. Both VEA-Retired President Eddie Fifer and VEA-Retired Council member Dennis Pfennig took an active part in the discussions/debates.

Among items presented and positively voted upon were: VEA Board Norms, the election of five VEA Board members to the VEA Elections and Campaign Practices Committee, extension of the VEA Executive Director's contract for another three years, allowing the VEA President to fill a vacancy in the position of VEA Director on NEA Board until an election to fill can be held, the wearing of black by VEA members the third Friday in October to promote awareness of domestic violence, the FitzTurner Commission taking over administration of the B. Parks Scholarship, laying the groundwork for a study of revising the VEA's UniServ structure, ESP representation on the VEA Board, the planning of a rally April 18, 2015 in

Richmond in coordination with the State PTA in support of public education, support for an outside group advocating for an end to gerrymandering of state and Congressional election districts, a move to eliminate cyber delegates to VEA conventions, and investigation into adding an Associate Membership category in the VEA.

The debate most important to VEA-Retired was the Board's unanimous decision to recommend to the spring 2015 VEA convention that regulations be amended to treat VEA-Retired the same as VEA districts when it comes to seats on the VEA Board. Presently districts have one seat for each 2000 members. If passed it means that VEA-Retired, with over 4000 members, will continue to hold two seats on the VEA Board and have the potential for adding a third when its membership climbs. Both Fifer and Pfennig were most pleased with the outcome of the debate and believe convention delegates next year will agree with the VEA Board on this issue.



Executive Director Philip Forgit sent this message to all VEA members.

As you know, the respective Boards of the VEA and Virginia PTA have agreed to join in a coalition leading toward a massive event in Richmond on April 18, 2015. I'm writing you now to update you on progress and to share our exciting new campaign theme and logo.

First, the theme. To be blunt, in Virginia there has been way too much lip service paid to the importance of our children and our public schools—and way too little support. Our leaders have let us down, and we have not held them accountable. You are all-too-familiar with the evidence, from the 17 percent decline in state funding support for K-12 (in real, inflation adjusted dollars) to the

program cuts and job losses at the local level. Five thousand K-12 education jobs were lost since the recession, even as student enrollments grew by over 30,000.

*Our joint campaign theme hits that issue head on, as it demands that Virginia “**Put Kids First.**” The crux of our message, endorsed by all in the VEA and Virginia PTA communities, is that real support must be given to making sure that every child in Virginia has the opportunity to reach his or her potential. That can only happen if we demand that our leaders put the interests of our children first.*

Why April 18?

Some of you have asked about the reason for scheduling a rally on April 18 (other than its fit around other events, school spring break schedules, and so on). Here's the best thinking on why from Robley Jones, our Director of Government Relations and Research:

“The 2015 General Assembly is a short one, with the veto session set to end on April 8. Immediately after, the staff members in the Governor's office, the money committees of the General Assembly, and the Virginia Department of Budget and Planning will begin to focus on the development of Governor McAuliffe's first proposed budget.

*We aim to make K-12 education the centerpiece of the public discussion of our state's investment leading up to that budget, and we are more likely to be able to fill a relative 'news void' at that time. There is no better time for education advocates to fire the first of many shots, calling attention to our need to **'Put Kids First'** and to adequately fund Virginia's Schools. Bringing education advocates to Richmond at this time will give early notice that we demand that the Governor and the 2016 General Assembly **'Put Kids First.'***

But April 18th is only the beginning. We have learned, most recently from our 'Black Friday'

efforts two years ago, that continued action on the local level will also be required to exert the pressure needed to bring about change. And, like Black Friday, we will call on our locals across the state to fashion their own activities to call attention to the consequence of underfunding our schools – larger class sizes, reduced course offerings, elimination of needed support positions, elimination of electives and extracurricular activities, and salaries not adequate to attract and retain high-quality personnel. Our goal will be to have constant action leading up to the presentation of the Governor's budget in December 2015. We know our challenge is great. We will continue fighting as long as it takes to reverse the disinvestment in the next generation.”

As many of you know, Robley was a participant as a teacher and VEA member in the VEA's last great rally at the Capitol. It was 1977 during the presidency of the legendary Dr. Mary Hatwood Futrell (who went on to become president of the NEA). That rally drew 7,000 advocates to support our schools.

We need to match that commitment today—and I know, with all of us working together, we can do it. We know in our hearts that we “**Put Kids First.**” We must demand no less from others. To make our case we must tell our stories and that will be a key drive during these next several months, along with mobilization for turnout on April 18th. The public and the politicians must hear the stories of teachers, education support professionals, parents and kids both on the incredible job our schools are doing but also how they do this in the face of the challenge of underfunding and inequity in resources and investment. I look forward to any questions you may have as we drive for April 18th, and beyond.

President's Column



On behalf of the entire VEA-Retired Council, I want to thank everyone who attended one of our regional meetings. You make all the planning and preparation worthwhile. I personally want to thank the Council members and those VEA-R members who helped make our regional meetings a success. This is a member-driven organization and you help make all of what we do possible. Keep reading the “Connections”, because we have something special already in the works for next fall.

I am a few months into my first year as your President, and I could not ask for a better council. Rest assured, you are well represented. Our bodies may be slowing down, but our minds are as sharp as ever. Everyone on the Council makes sure all decisions are made in your best interest. I, along with Dennis Pfennig, represent you on the VEA Board of Directors and we make sure we speak for you. Our own VEA staff person, Carol Donohue, keeps us all informed on VEA-R and VEA issues.

We are your elected representatives and we do what we can for you, but we need your help. Keep attending the VEA-Retired activities and events, participate in **VEA-R Lobby Day (Jan. 29th)**, and join the local VEA-R chapter in your area or start a new one. There is much we can accomplish if we all work together.