

# Connections

A Publication of VEA-Retired



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## VEA-Retired Elections Coming in January

By Pat Kennedy

It's almost time! VEA-Retired elections will be held January 24-26, 2018. This year, we will be electing a new president, vice president, 2<sup>nd</sup> at-large member to the VEA Board, council representatives from even-numbered Congressional Districts, as well as delegates to the 2018 VEA and NEA assemblies. Special elections for council representatives from CDs 3 and 7 are also being held, and these two seats are for one-year terms (2018-19). The VEA Delegate Assembly will be held April 19-21, 2018 in Hampton, VA, and the NEA Representative Assembly will be June 30-July 5 in Minneapolis, MN.

There are two methods to vote, either electronically or by paper ballot.

**Electronic Voting** – The voting site will be open from noon on Wednesday, January 24<sup>th</sup> until noon on Friday, January 26<sup>th</sup>. Members may vote using any personal computer or device that has Internet accessibility. Those who do not have a computer/device may go to a library or other location that has public Internet accessibility. To access the voting link, go to the VEA website ([www.veanea.org](http://www.veanea.org)) and click on the "Election Central" link on the right. You will need your VEA/NEA membership ID number that begins with three zeroes followed by seven other numerals. Your VEA/NEA number can be found on your membership card, a VEA or NEA publication (in the mailing address area), or by calling the VEA. Enter your name exactly as requested, and then click "Enter." Biographical information on each candidate may be accessed by clicking on the candidate's name on the electronic ballot. Be sure to click "Submit" or "Vote" at the end of the ballot to cast your vote.

**Paper Ballot** – To request a paper ballot, contact Barbara Rackley (1-800-552-9554 or [brackley@veanea.org](mailto:brackley@veanea.org)) no later than Wednesday, January 3, 2018. Paper ballots will be mailed to those who requested them on Friday, January 5<sup>th</sup>. All completed paper ballots must be postmarked or hand-delivered to VEA headquarters by the close of business on Tuesday, January 23, 2018. Ballots received after this date will not be counted. Please note if you request a paper ballot, you will not be eligible for electronic voting.

Votes will be counted on January 29<sup>th</sup> and candidates will be notified of results on February 2, 2018.

Please remember to vote! EVERY VOTE COUNTS!



## President's Column



VEA-Retired Council  
President Eddie Fifer

This is the time of year when we give thanks, give gifts, and make resolutions. We are thankful for our family and friends, we give to the special people in our lives, and we make resolutions to better ourselves. I suggest that we expand our individual worlds to include public education, our profession, and our association.

We can be very thankful that so many of our recommended candidates won in the last election. Many of us gave our time and money to help these public education supporters in their campaigns. In our mission to promote and protect public education, it is great to have supporters from the top down in Richmond as well as in our counties and cities.

As retirees, we give our time in our schools as coaches, mentors, tutors, and substitute teachers. We also help VEA active members in their activities. We are the epitome of "once a professional, always a professional." We continue to work for our profession long after we retire.

If I may, I am asking that we all include VEA-Retired in our resolutions for the new year. Continue to work for our association. If you have not been active, look for ways to start getting involved. Continue to be a part of your local chapter. If there is not one near you, start one. Grant funds are available and fellow VEA-Retired members are willing to help. Our membership continues to grow and we are a vital part of the VEA. As I always say, "together, we can make a difference."

## Important Lobby Day Information

For those who may be planning to attend Lobby Day, please be advised that the General Assembly Building has closed. It will be torn down and rebuilt over the next four years. Legislative offices and committee rooms have moved to the Pocahontas Building located across Bank Street from the visitor's entrance to the Capitol.

The Pocahontas Building is small and crowded. The hallways are narrow, there is almost no seating, there are only a handful of elevators, there is no lobby outside the committee rooms, and there is no cafeteria. Please be prepared when you come to Richmond.

Please make appointments to meet with your legislator (or aide) before you head to Richmond. It will likely be impossible to maneuver and "drop in" on any office.

The House Education Committee room only seats about 140 people and no standing will be permitted. We are told this rule will be strictly followed. Overflow seating with closed-circuit TV will be available, but the location has yet to be determined.

The cafeteria in the Sun Trust building across the street will be available, but you must go outside to get there.

VEA's Lobby Day is Monday, January 22, 2018 and VEA-Retired's Lobby Day is Thursday, January 25. Please be prepared and bring your patience with you.



The Pocahontas Building  
900 East Main Street  
Richmond, VA 23219

## VEA Board of Directors - October 2017 Meeting

By Dennis Joseph Pfennig

The fall meeting of the VEA Board of Directors took place on October 20-21, 2017 at the Hilton Richmond Hotel in Short Pump. President Jim Livingston called the meeting to order and began by addressing VEA's successes over the past year, including VEA's strong showing at Lobby Day this past January; the successful Teachers of Color Summit; the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the union of VEA and the Virginia Teachers Association; the Virginia Supreme Court ruling, which VEA argued, preventing the publication of teachers' names along with student test scores; and the restructuring of Reggie Smith Organizing School. President Livingston added more work must be done on membership and he asked each member to reach out to non-members. The most common reason given for not joining VEA is, "nobody ever asked me."

Kathy Burcher, VEA's Government Relations Director, then provided an update on the status of the gubernatorial race, highlighting what is at stake in this election and encouraging Board members to help get out the vote. The remainder of the evening centered on the revision and strengthening of VEA's Strategic Plan. This is done every three years to ensure VEA knows its priorities, has clear direction and concrete goals, and knows how to best deal with future challenges.

Day two saw recognition of two new caucuses, reports from most VEA divisions, authorization for a new administrative assistant position, and approval of two committee recommendations. Selected highlights from reports and actions of the day include:

- J Earl Wiman, a former NEA Executive Director, spoke of the need to establish a VEA Foundation, which would enable VEA to expend funds in ways not presently possible. The Board will be updated on any developments in January.
- J Eddie Fifer, VEA-Retired President, addressed the body on the positive redesign of the *Connections* newsletter and the need to remind members to pre-join VEA-Retired. VEA-Retired members can attend district meetings to talk about this.
- J NEA Directors reported the *New Ed Campaign* resulted in a 13% growth in membership over last year; and noted that while 16,348 elected seats were eligible at the 2017 NEA RA, only 7,191 of these were filled. Of those, 1,893 of were new delegates (26%).
- J Thanks to prudent fiscal care, VEA now has 10.25 months of reserves. The Budget Committee is on target to have a budget ready for presentation to the 2018 VEA Convention in the spring.
- J As of August 31, 2017, VEA-Retired had 4,822 members and will continue to be entitled to two Board seats. A third seat should be earned when we reach 5,001 members.
- J Honoring victims of the Charlottesville tragedy, a motion was adopted to donate \$200 to each of two memorial funds, the Heather Heyer Memorial Fund and a scholarship fund for the children of State Trooper Jay Cullen.
- J The Elections and Campaign Practices Committee's recommendation that a section of its guidelines – "a candidate for office may only send one (1) email every three days to VEA members" - be deleted was approved.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 5:06 p.m.

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**2017-18 VEA-Retired Council**

Eddie Fifer  
*President*

Pat Kennedy  
*Vice President*

Malia Huddle  
*Secretary-Treasurer*

Dennis Pfennig  
*Retired Member at Large,  
VEA Board*

Denise Davis  
*PAC Representative*

*Congressional District  
Representatives:*

Lola McDowell, 1<sup>st</sup>

Rita Cooper, 2<sup>nd</sup>

Open, 3<sup>rd</sup>

LaNette Desler, 4<sup>th</sup>

Sylvia Hutto, 5<sup>th</sup>

Sharon Helbert, 6<sup>th</sup>

Meg Gruber, 7<sup>th</sup>

Kathy Davis, 8<sup>th</sup>

Denise Davis, 9<sup>th</sup>

Marlene Parker, 10<sup>th</sup>

Bruce Smith, 11<sup>th</sup>

**We're on the Web!**

See us at:

[www.veanea.org](http://www.veanea.org)

# Chapter News and Upcoming Events

## Fairfax

*By Barbara Allen*

FEA-R, Fairfax County Retired Educators, and Fairfax Education Association members met with our state legislators at a breakfast on December 7<sup>th</sup> and a luncheon on December 8<sup>th</sup>. We presented our legislative agenda at those events.

Our lobby day will be Thursday, January 25, 2018. All FEA-R, FCRE, and other northern Virginia retired educators are welcome to join our bus trip to Richmond (see flyer for details). A briefing on the latest issues will be given by VEA staff members, on the bus, in the parking lot behind the VEA building. VEA retirees from around the state who would like to join us are welcome to board the bus at the VEA building. (Please email [vearetired@veanea.org](mailto:vearetired@veanea.org) if you plan to do that so VEA may plan for parking.) For more information, please come to our meeting on January 11<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. at the FEA office, or contact Barbara Allen at [Barbarawallaceallen@yahoo.com](mailto:Barbarawallaceallen@yahoo.com) or 703-978-0470.

## Richmond City

*By Lola McDowell and Vashti Mallory*

What an exciting year! REA-Retired had a very productive meeting on October 17, 2017 at the 63Thirty5 Restaurant on Jahnke Road. We hosted an issues forum with the Richmond City mayor, school board and city council members. Retirees had a lively discussion with the invited guests as they asked questions about the direction for Richmond Public Schools and the City of Richmond. Attendees were told to feel free to contact their district representatives at any time with their concerns and/or suggestions. Also attending this meeting were VEA Vice President, James Fedderman and Denise Davis, VEA-Retired Council PAC Representative.

Co-chairs Lola McDowell and Vashti Mallory were excited to once again announce that REA-Retired has been awarded a NEA-Retired grant for 2017-18. With this grant, REA-Retired will continue its outreach to potential new members as it seeks to grow membership, participate in organizing projects, and hold a social justice seminar in April 2018. For December 2017, we have adopted the all-male class at J.L. Francis Elementary School. Further activities include a wellness informational session, and an end-of-year reception for newly-retired REA members from Richmond Public Schools.

## Shenandoah Valley

*By Bea Morris*

VARE (Valley Association of Retired Educators) was delighted to have Tom Allen, editor of the VEA Journal, as the speaker for our November meeting. He elaborated on several features of the latest Journal and gave a fond reminiscence of one of his teachers who is included in his book, Grace Happens. Grace Happens is a compilation of articles he has written for the Faith and Values Column in the Richmond Times-Dispatch. This year, VARE is supporting and encouraging teachers at the Minnick School, which is located in Harrisonburg but accepts elementary through middle school students with IEPs from five surrounding school divisions. Operating under the auspices of Lutheran Family Services, the goal of this school is to enable students with severe challenges to return to the public school from which they came. In October and November, VARE members brought gift cards to local stores and restaurants to be used by the teachers, not necessarily for school related activities and programs. It has been our custom to bring children's books to the December meeting. The books are taken to the Salvation Army to be included in the Christmas boxes they prepare for area children. We usually have a couple hundred books. Also in December, VARE will provide Christmas treats for a Minnick School staff meeting. Members are looking forward to the December program of music by a local middle school choir.



# **VEA-Retired Lobby Day**

**Thursday, January 25, 2018**



**Lobby your legislators on issues impacting retirees, VRS, and public education. Make your plans now!**

## ***Coming from Northern Virginia? Ride the bus.***

There is no charge to take the bus trip to lobby General Assembly members in Richmond. All retired teachers and education support persons are invited AND ENCOURAGED to join us. Here are the bus stops:

- 1. Fair Oaks Mall – Fairfax**  
*Departing at 6 am*  
1170 Fair Oaks Mall  
(pick-up between poles 55-58)  
22033
- 2. Little River United Church of Christ – Annandale**  
*Departing at 6:30 am*  
8410 Little River Trpk.  
22003
- 3. Cracker Barrel – Dumfries**  
*Departing at 6:45 - 7 am*  
17115 Dumfries Rd.  
22026

Upon arrival in Richmond, we'll make a short stop at the VEA building, where VEA staff will board the bus to provide an update of the latest issues. Then we'll travel to the Pocahontas Building and we'll meet with legislators during the morning. We will be able to eat lunch in the cafeteria across the street in the Sun Trust Bank building before our return home. The bus will leave the Richmond area around 3:00 and will return sometime between 5:00 and 6:00 to the stops that were made in the morning.

Contact Barbara Allen ([barbarawallaceallen@yahoo.com](mailto:barbarawallaceallen@yahoo.com)) or 703-978-0470 by **Monday, January 22** to let us know you will be attending and your preferred pick-up point.