



*Skagit-Island-San Juan  
Unit 21  
School Retirees' Association  
May 2017*



**WSSRA Unit 21  
Board Members/Contacts**

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bland3@hotmail.com

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**Treasurer:**

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Mim Ambrose  
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**Health Committee:**

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**Historian:**

Bonnie Green

**Legislative:**

Bruce Boyer  
bnpboyer@msn.com

**Membership:**

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babsann09@comcast.com

**Newsletter:**

Joyce Moon  
joycevmoon@gmail.com

**Outreach:**

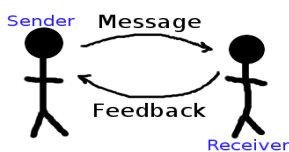
Reidar Ytgard  
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**Retirement Planning:**

Lonnie Keown  
lonnie.keown@gmail.com

**Social Media Addresses**

- **WSSRA.org** (for updated organization news and legislative news)
- **SISRA21.org** (Facebook-Website for local news and updates)
- **WSSR-PAC**  
1928 Circle Loop  
Lacey, WA 98503  
[www.wssr-pac.org](http://www.wssr-pac.org)



# WANTED

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# YOU

**Yes, you! We need helping hands and thinking brains to keep Skagit-Island-San Juan Unit 21 alive and active. We need to hear what you want Unit 21 to do for you. Inside you will find a survey asking what you think are the most important functions for Unit 21 to perform. Please take time to complete the survey and return it to us.**

**We need your help in making this a fun and worthwhile organization for all.**

Washington School Retirees' Association

70th Annual Convention

June 5-7, 2017

Pasco, Washington

## WSSRA State Legislative Team Report

Barbara Robinson, Bruce Boyer, and Diane Visten were your representatives from Norwest 1, along with Tim Knopf and Rita Requa. WSSRA Members from all across Washington state met with our legislative Director Peter Diedrick and our WSSRA lobbyists to go over our objectives and any new developments in the legislature since our last visit in February.

Our members met with every legislator or their representative assistant to promote and protect our pension benefits. For two days we traveled from building to building and office to office catching the legislators on the fly or by appointment. Each day we reported back to our team, who was supportive, who needed more information and how our issues were being addressed.

Some of our visits included Rep. Dave Hayes, Senator Barbara Bailey, Rep. Kris Lytton, and, along with Tim Knopf (from Sno-Isle Unit) Rep. Kristianson, and Rep. Pearson. Following a de-briefing, we adjourned for the day.

We also met Rep. Koster, with Tim Knopf, and then met with Rep. Morris, and Rep. Smith. Information was left with Rep. Erickson, Rep. Van Werven, and Senator Ranker.

During all of these meetings, WSSRA priorities were stressed. With some of the legislators we are able to share pictures of their visits while they were in attendance at our Unit events. We also wrote personal thank you cards to each, detailing again our appreciation for their consideration of each of our issues. We make contact throughout the year not only during session. They are beginning to recognize our faces and we are often welcomed with a smile and serious consideration.

In all of the meetings, the legislators were congenial and expressed support for our needs to raise or maintain benefit levels. The problem, as always, is funding.

Your representatives stressed the fact that retirees were falling farther behind each year, and it was becoming harder to catch up each year that funding was not restored. It will be important for all members of WSSRA to be active in contacting their legislators as the process moves forward to let them know that we are concerned, and dedicated to making progress. Your representatives do their best, but personal stories make all the difference.

Our team is proud to represent the association, and be able to spread our mission and needs to the legislators. It is important to help the retirees who need it most, and this is our goal for the year.

B. Robinson, D. Visten, B. Boyer, Legislative Team



### Unit 21 Legislative Representatives at work for you

1. Rep. Jeff Morris, Barbara Robinson, Bruce Boyer
2. Diane Visten, Rep. Kris Lytton, Barbara Robinson

## Legislative Update

On March 22 And 24 Diane Visten, WSSRA State Legislative Board Members from our local unit were in Olympia to talk with our elected legislators and senators. The report they gave me after their visitation was one of cautious optimism, but with a dose of political reality. They were able to meet with Reps. Dave Hayes, Kris Litton, Dan Kristiansen, Kirk Pearson, John Koster, Jeff Morris, Norma Smith and an assistant for Senator Barbara Bailey. Diane stated that "The legislators were congenial and expressed support for our needs to raise or maintain benefit levels. The problem is always finding."

On April 13 I received a legislative update from Peter Diedrick, Legislative Director for WSSRA. The following are comments from his communique.

### END OF SESSION UPDATE

The 2017 Washington State Legislative Session is now in its final stage. Bill cutoffs have passed, and any legislation that has not passed or is not tied to the budget is considered dormant for the remainder of the year. The rest of the legislative session will be devoted to budget and McCleary negotiations. The 2017 Regular Legislative Session is scheduled to adjourn Sunday, April 23rd.

### LEGISLATIVE BUDGET PROPOSALS

Senate Republicans and House Democrats have released their respective 2017-2019 operating budget proposals. The budgets are wildly different from each other. However, both account for a budget deficit of approximately \$1 billion, and funding to resolve the McCleary ruling. The Senate budget appropriates \$43 billion and pays for McCleary through a statewide property tax and reductions in social service spending. The House budget spends \$45 billion and covers extra expenses through tax loophole closures and the creation of a capital gains tax on nonretirement large volume stock and investment gains. The tax rate would largely mirror Idaho's capital gains rate.

The House and Senate budget proposals both offer gains to school retirees. Within current budget constraints, cuts could easily have been on the table. Fortunately, retirees are in the position to be advocating of benefit enhancements.

The House budget restores health benefits that were reduced in 2011. At that time, legislators cut the Medicare Eligible Healthcare Benefit from \$183 per month to \$150 per month. The House budget increases the benefit to \$166 per month in calendar year 2018, and returns it to the full \$183 per month in the calendar year 2019.

The Senate budget proposal increases minimum benefits for TRS 1 retirees. TRS 1 retirees who have 25 years of service and have been retired for 20 years or those who have at least 20 years of service and been retired 25 years will get an additional \$27 per month in their pension checks. We are working to get this potential enhancement expanded to a larger population of retirees.

### STATUS OF WSSRA'S GOALS AND LEGISLATION

- **Medical Benefits:** Medicare retirees who purchase Medicare supplemental insurance from the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB) receive a discount on their medical insurance of up to \$150 per month. This discount was lowered from \$183 per month in 2011. The House budget proposal restores this benefit. The Senate budget proposal retains it at the \$150 level.
- **Plan 1 COLA:** WSSRA's request legislation, SB 5556 and HB 1484, have stalled due to their cost. Those bills would have provided an increase of \$2 per month per year of service credit for all TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees. The State Actuary priced that benefit enhancement at \$38 million per two-year budget. These bills are not dead, but sitting dormant unless they are funded in the state budget. A less costly proposal, SB5833, was sponsored by Senator Honeyford (R-Yakima). This bill would provide an additional \$27 monthly increase to TRS retirees who receive the Plan 1 Alternative Minimum Benefit. SB 5833 was priced at \$4 million per two-year budget. It passed the Senate unanimously and has been accounted for in the Senate budget proposal.

## Legislative Update continued

### STATUS OF WSSRA'S GOALS AND LEGISLATION (cont.)

- **Protecting Pension:** At this point, there are no proposed bills to reduce benefits or close pension funds.
- **Making Pension Payments:** State budget writers are on the track to make the actuarially recommended pension payments to the stat's pensions funds. This will keep pensions well-funded, and keep costs from getting driven up in the future.
- **Plan 2 Default:** The House passed HB 1560 to make TRS/PERS 2 the default plans for new school and state employees who do not choose a retirement plan. This would offer a more stable retirement for retirees, and offer a small savings for the state budget. HB 1560 has not been taken up by the Senate.

### NEXT STEPS

The legislative session is scheduled to adjourn on April 23rd, but that date appears to be a rosy projection. Independence Day would likely be a more accurate guess. Staff at the capitol have been instructed not to plan summer vacations, so that does not bode well for a timely adjournment.

As you can see from the above information, progress is being made on behalf of you and others in our organization, but nothing is ever assured until the final gavel is sounded at the end of a legislative session. If you have the opportunity to see, talk or write to your legislators/senator we need to keep reminding them of our legislative goals. Our voiced are being heard, but the more people that contact our legislators, the seriously we are recognized and consulted.

*Bruce Boyer, Legislative Chair, Unit 21*

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Treasurer:** As of April 2017



Checking Balance : \$3078.53 (Funds used for ongoing expenses of Unit 21)  
Savings Balance: \$6687.96  
Funds expended for scholarship = \$1500,

**Correspondence/Memorial:** The Skagit-Island-San Juan Unit 21 of the Washington State School Retirees' Association remember our friends and former members :



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- ◆ **Peggy Gaston** of Mount Vernon (former Unit 21 Secretary)
- ◆ **Pat Galbraith** of Mount Vernon
- ◆ **Fred Minahan** of Mount Vernon (long time Unit 21 member)
- ◆ **Bill Stendal** of Sedro Woolley (former Unit 21 President 1988-90 and 2000-2001)
- ◆ **Colin Verner** of Sedro Woolley (Pam Verner's husband)

*Eloise Stendal, Correspondence Chair*

**Health:**

*Mary Henderson-Jones, Health Chair*



**Historian:** Bonnie Green continues to tradition of collecting documents and/or mementoes about Unit 21's activities in a scrapbook format. Members send pictures, and written material to her for organization and preservation. The books are then stored at the Sedro Woolley Museum.



**Membership:** Last year the governor of the state of Washington declared a week in March as School Retiree Appreciation Week. March 13-17 was set aside this year. The Mount Vernon School District invited school retirees in this area to attend a school board meeting where retirees recognized for their years of service. Over 18 retirees representing all walk of school employee jobs (there were maintenance people, bus drivers, teaching assistants, teachers and administrators) from several different school districts. The best part was the pride of each person for the job they had held and how many years of service they provided. It was a great evening for all.

*Barbara Robinson Membership, Chair,*



Darrel and Mary (Henderson) Jones



The entire 18 retirees that attended the celebration



## Membership:

### EMAIL NEWSLETTER AVAILABLE!

Are you interested in getting your Unit 21 newsletter via email? It's faster, comes in color, and is more convenient.

If you would like this service please contact:

**Bruce Boyer**  
**bnpboyer@msn.com**  
**Thank You!**

### ADDRESS CHANGES

**Please let us know if you have moved and have a new address.**

**Send new addresses or contact information to :**

**babsann09@comcast.net**  
**Or**  
**bnpboyer@msn.com**  
**Thank you!**

Please support your **WSSR-PAC** with a check today. Your dues do not go to support this valuable service; they depend totally on fund raising events and individual contributions. Make checks payable to:

**WSSRA-PAC Treasurer :**  
**WSSRA-PAC**  
**1928 Circle Loop**  
**Lacey, WA 98503**  
**Thank You!**

### "Refrigerator Poster" SISJSRA Calendar

Event	Date	Time	Location
<b>Membership:</b> <u>What can I do as a member of WSSRA?</u> I'm busy, I work, I don't like meetings! All these are valid reasons NOT			
Unit 21 SISJ Board Meeting	May 8, 2017	10:00 am	Bruce Boyer's Home
WSSRA Convention	June 5-7, 2017		Pasco, WA

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Bow, WA 98232

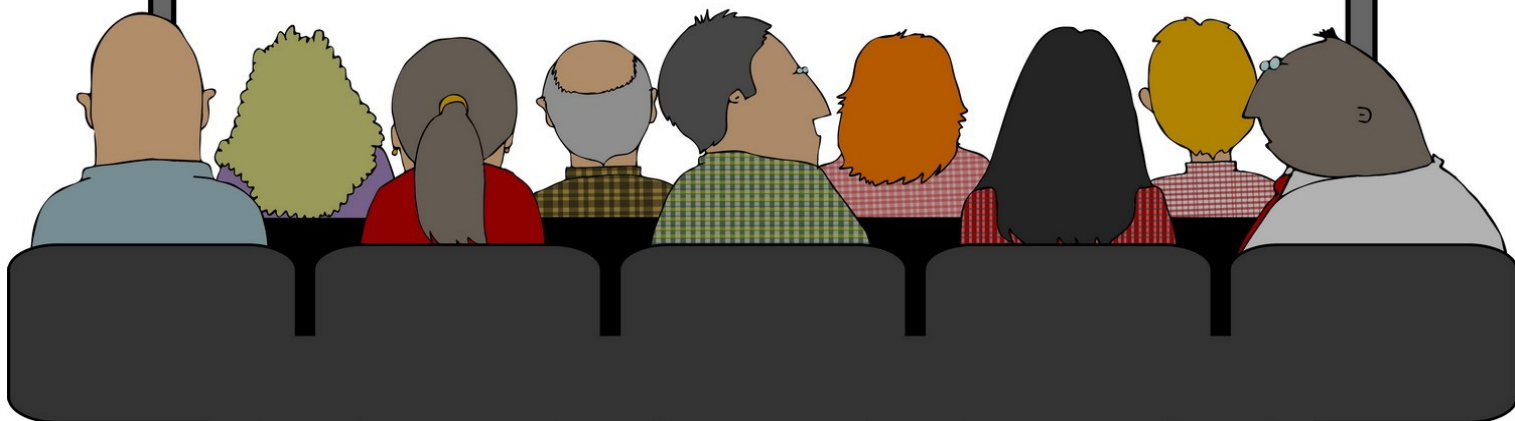
Skagit-Island-San Juan Unit 21  
WSSRA School Retirees'  
P. O. Box 66 U.S.  
Burlington, WA 98233

**Come join us at the**  
**Washington State School Retirees' Association**  
**70th Annual Convention**

**June 5-7, 2017**

**Pasco, Washington**

Meet your fellow retirees from across the state, learn about advances in retiree benefits, catch up on association news, and just plain have fun.. For more information go to **WSSRA.ORG..**



## Most current news from Olympia



