



Skagit-Island-San Juan Unit 21 School Retirees' Association



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Legislative Update written on Feb. 5

During the Super Bowl event on Sunday, Feb. 2, I drove to Olympia in order to be there for the start of the WSSRA Legislative Committee morning meeting starting on Monday morning. At our first meeting, we were informed of the status of bills that our organization has an interest.

1. HB 1390 Co-sponsored by Rep. C. Eslick and Rep. S Shewmake, are both from our collective legislative districts. This bill is alive from last year, where it passed in the House, and got a little traction in the Senate, before falling off of the table at the final negotiations between the two houses. It provides for a 3% COLA up to a threshold of \$25,000 of pension.
2. SB 5400 is the companion bill in the Senate to HB 1390 and was co-sponsored by Sen. B. Bailey, before her retirement. This and the above bill are still "alive" during this 60 day session.
3. HB 1132 is an early retirement bill affecting those in Plans 2 and 3. No co-sponsors from our area.
4. SB 5178 is the Senate companion bill to HB 1132 and also has no local co-sponsors.

I was able to meet with our/your District Representatives and Senator for the 10th, 39th, 40th and 42nd Legislative Districts. Most of them stated that they had been hearing about a need for a COLA (your phone calls and emails). Some expressed a positive commitment, while others wanted to wait until the revenue forecast comes out on Feb. 19 before committing to anything with a state financial commitment. Revenue forecasts have been positive up to this point, but things like Boeing sales, the homeless issue, etc. could have a negative affect for us.

I will again be heading to Olympia on February 25th, lobbying your representatives and senator for another two days and will let you know via my email list as to what I find out after that trip.

What I can tell you is that I am grateful for the "stories" that you sent me. With the hub-hub about the open records requests, I first sent them via e-mail to the legislators that I would be meeting. (No issue with e-mails as they are easily retrieved if need be for a records request.) When I met with our local legislators I reminded them of the emails with attachments that I had sent before hand and then had a paper copy along with me to visually show them some highlighted items. Several told me that they had read them, and were touched by your personal story. This is especially true for those that have an interest in "senior issues". One of my last contacts even talked about the points before I could to even begin, so I know that your efforts did not go unnoticed.

So one last pitch, if you haven't sent me your "story" about how a lack of a COLA has affected you in retirement, feel free to send them to me and I'll make sure your reps and senator get them later this month.

Bruce Boyer, Unit 21 President and WSSRA NW-1 District Legislative Representative



We fondly remember those of our members who have passed away:

Mary Call Thelma Palmer

Kathleen Hurn George Miller Mike Fankhauser

A donation has been made to the WSSRA Scholarship Foundation in honor of each of these individuals.

Planning for Retirement

It's never too early! We are offering a FREE seminar on March 13, 5:00 – 8:30 PM, at the Burlington Public Library for all school employees, new and experienced, who are in the Plan 1, Plan 2, or Plan 3 State retirement system.

A representative from the Health Care Authority will be there to help you understand eligibility requirements for PEEB retirement benefits and your health care options in general.

In addition, Bill DeHon, who has presented in several schools already in our service area, will share information about critical elements in each of the Plans, including deferred compensation plans, defined benefits, defined contributions, beneficiaries, and TAP. If you've attended a seminar before, you might be wondering "What's new that I've missed?", "Can I retire early?", "What does it mean to retire?" Join us for an information-packed evening to find out the answers to these questions and more. Get the most out of the evening by being prepared. Know what Plan you are in. Log onto the DRS website (www.drs.wa.gov) and see what they have to offer (on-line seminars, handouts, forms), and print out your latest quarterly report.

We hope to see you on March 13th. For more information, advertising posters for each building will be available the week of February 10th. While this seminar is free, we do require registration so that we can make sure that we have enough seating, supplies, and handouts. You can register by contacting Lonnie Keown at lonnie.keown@gmail.com. **Registration deadline is March 5.**

Mini-Grant Report

Unit 21 is happy to report that in October of 2019 we sent notice to all school administrators in our service area about the opportunity for their staff to be awarded a \$150 grant with no strings attached. The only requirements were to get their application in on time and either be within the first 25 applicants or a WSSRA member (WSSRA member applications are prioritized over nonmembers). The applications we received were amazing in the scope of their purpose and thoughtfulness. As any school employee was eligible to receive a grant we had applications from all sectors of the school system from top to bottom of the scale.

Twenty five grants were awarded that represented eight districts and 14 schools. Ten awards were to WSSRA members and 15 to nonmembers. The awards were diverse in intention and ranged from classroom books to services to help homeless students maintain school attendance. We were thrilled to be able to help fund these projects and support such wonderful, thoughtful school employees who give so much to their school endeavors.

Joyce Moon, Mini-Grant/Scholarship Committee

Treasurer's Report February 8, 2020

Checking account Balance = \$7559.69

Savings account balance = \$7121.80

The Unit 21 Treasurer's books were audited on August 20, 2019 and found to be in excellent condition by WSSRA Secretary Eileen Wascison. Bruce, and his wife Pat, have done a wonderful job of tracking income, expenses and the documentation to back up all transactions. However they would love to see somebody else volunteer to do this task as Bruce wears many hats in WSSRA, both local and state levels. If you are willing to volunteer for this position please contact Bruce at bnpboyer@msn.com or 425-773-7809.

United States Census 2020

The 2020 census is easy. The questions are simple.

The census asks questions that provide a snapshot of the nation. The results affect your voice in government, how much funding your community receives and how your community plans for the future.

Sara Bernardy, Partnership Specialist from NW WA Community Partnership and Engagement Programs, U.S. Census Bureau spoke at the NW 1 Coordinating Council meeting in January. Units from Whatcom, Skagit, Island, San Juan, King and Snohomish counties attended this meeting. She visits trusted organizations to get the word out about the census plus help ensure that all people are informed of the process.

All people will receive an invitation to answer the 10 questions in Mid-March. People will have an option to fill out their census questions online, by mail or by phone. Information on those options will be sent out in the mail. Census day is April 1, 2020.

Some things to note:

If your mailing address is a Post Office box you will not receive an invitation in the mail. You will have a census worker come to your home.

If you live in a group residence like a retirement home, a dorm or other place where many people reside but are not related or living together, you will not receive an invitation. Those people will have a census person come to the residence to provide the census information.

This census is very important as we need an accurate count of the population to receive the monies to support the programs such as Head Start, Title 1 grants, Social Services, Crime Victim Assistance, Special Programs for the Aging and many many more important community needs.

Your answers can only be used to produce statistics. By law, all responses to the U. S. Census Bureau household and business surveys are kept completely confidential.

Join us to spread the word about the importance of the 2020 Census and help ensure a complete and accurate count.

Holiday Luncheon

Last December 11 marked Unit 21's annual Holiday Luncheon. Again, we gathered at the Skagit Golf and Country Club to welcome guests and members to start the Christmas season out right.

This year we hosted Representative Dave Paul, from the 10th district, who spoke to us concerning his plans for the year in Olympia. We were delighted that he attended, as he was the only member of the legislature who did so.

We were happy to honor retiring Mount Vernon School Superintendent, Carl Bruner with a certificate of appreciation for his long career in education. Also honored with a certificate of appreciation in recognition of his work was Anacortes Superintendent, Mark Wenzel, who is leaving the district.

Retiring State Senator, Barbara Bailey, was awarded a certificate of appreciation as well as a lovely plant. She shared some of her experiences through the years during which she represented district 10.

Other guests were our Western Washington student teacher scholarship winner, Carrissa David, and Heidi Hixon, from Mount Vernon School district. Heidi spoke to us concerning the problems of homeless students in Mount Vernon Schools.

State Director, Alan Burke, also spoke concerning our goals for the upcoming legislative session.

The food was delicious, as always, and we feasted on ham, scalloped potatoes, salad, bread, and cookies for dessert.

Our entertainment was outstanding, and Clarence Wash performed Christmas songs on the piano, as well as singing.

We sold chances on some lovely baskets, which funded gift cards for homeless students in Mount Vernon School District. Many made donations as well.

Our attendance this year, was 39, and many of those numbers were guests. Each year it seems that we have a smaller group attending this wonderful event.

The board is considering changing the date next year to a Saturday, so that active members could come. We would appreciate hearing from YOU about that idea.

—
Diane Visten, Holiday Luncheon Chair-

How Your Volunteer Work Counts

School employees tend to be generous with their time and talents. In our fall Unit newsletter, I wrote that our State WSSRA would be collecting the number of "volunteer" hours that our members did this year. This information will be used when we work with our legislators to help them see that we give back to our communities and thus see us as more than a budget item. I will need to send this report into the Lacey office the middle of March. If you did volunteer work since last August, please e-mail me the approximate number of hours that you performed and I'll include them along with those our board members have accumulated. ***E-mail to: bnpboyer@msn.com*** Thanks for your time and input.

Bruce Boyer, Unit 21 President

Membership Notes:

I want to welcome all our newest members. Our unit has grown over 40 members in the last year. That is great news. However, we should have grown over 100 members! Why? You might wonder.

WE are the best and the biggest group that works every year to protect and to promote school employee pension benefits. There are two weeks in February that your Skagit, Island, San Juan members are walking the halls of the Washington State Legislature buildings to speak to your legislators about your pension benefits. The reason we need to grow our membership is so we can go to Olympia and say we are speaking for many school employees. Numbers talk when we are down there! So lets continue to grow and lets make the next years count be over 100. Call **me**, email me or message me on facebook with a name of a friend or co-worker and tell me to send them a membership form. Let's do this together. You can be such a great member committee member just by getting one person into our group.

Join us!

The next step is just as important. We are having a board meeting on May 11th. You are invited to come and see what we are all about. We have a few dedicated workers and we need a few more to support the work that we do. We always have good food and lots of laughs along with the serious work we do. Contact any-one of us for a location and a time.

Barbara Robinson, Membership Chair

Help Wanted!

As you read through the newsletter please consider joining us in the activities your board is involved in. We would welcome some new faces and ideas as we work to protect and improve your retirement benefits and our community involvement that goes beyond legislative endeavors and reaches into schools and communities in a variety of ways. We fund scholarships, mini-grants, food banks, and local social services. We need new people who are willing to become involved in these activities. Come join us at one of the meetings listed below—we would love to have your new ideas, fresh thoughts, and energetic enthusiasm.

Skagit-Island-San Juan Unit 21 Calendar

Event	Date	Time	Location
Unit 21 Board Meeting	February 17, 2020	10:00 am	Royal Star Restaurant 2300 Freeway Drive Mount Vernon,
Retirement Seminar	March 6, 2020		Burlington Public Library 820 E. Washington Ave. Burlington, WA
NW-1 Coordinating Council Meeting	March 9, 2020	9:45 am	Royal Star Restaurant 2300 Freeway Drive Mount Vernon,
Unit 21 Board Meeting	May 11, 2020	10:00 am	To be determined

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Happy Spring