



Bits & Pieces

www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/

March 2025

Unit 28 of the Washington State School Retirees' Association
Serving retired and active school employees and our community.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

WSSRA Legislative Buddies are active each legislative session providing up-to-date information to their assigned legislator. They will have emailed their legislators nearly 14 times by the end of the session. Emmett Mills, WSSRA Legislative Coordinator, provides a prepared message each week. It is important that legislators know what is going on with retirees, and it is important for legislators to know that retirees are paying attention to them. TCSRA has six people setting aside time to be a Legislative Buddy.

This year the session will end on April 27th. This is a budget year, and a budget is written for the next 2 year biennium. The WSSRA Legislative Buddy's contact with their legislator is more important than in previous years, as it is estimated that there will be a \$10 billion to \$12 billion deficit looming. The Legislative Buddies will be communicating to their legislators weekly, explaining that we can no longer wait for a permanent Plan 1 COLA. TRS1/PERS1 pensions have lost at least 25% since 2011. In our case, my husband has lost 50% of his pension value since his retirement in 1992. We struggle. It is time to restore fairness to Plan 1 retirees.

You can help by contacting your legislators. Call 800-562-6000 and leave a message for your legislator. Just a short message such as, "Please support and vote for the Plan 1 permanent COLA, SB 5085. We are the only retirement plan without a permanent COLA."

Patty Gee, TCSRA President

In Memoriam

We note the passing of **Sally Ware** and **Irene Clise**. We offer sincere condolences to their families and friends.

WELCOME BACK, ART DOLAN! "Discrepant Science Events"

We are delighted once again to welcome Art Dolan to our March meeting to share a fascinating presentation, this time with a new twist. This year Art is drawing on his science background for a presentation on "Discrepant Science Events."

After serving in the military during the Viet Nam war, Art became a science teacher in Spokane Public Schools. In 2003, after retiring from teaching, Art relocated to Olympia and began researching his Revolutionary War roots, discovering the Sons of the American Revolution..

Based on his research, Art developed and has presented five Revolutionary War themed programs for TCSRA: "George Washington's Secret Navy," "Espionage, The Second Oldest Profession," "Stars and Stripes Revolutionary Road," "Thomas Paine: A Reflection on the Revolution," and "Women of the American Revolution."

Art is a dynamic, entertaining speaker and we can not wait to hear about "Discrepant Science Events." This change-of-pace presentation is bound to be fascinating! You won't want to miss it!

Bobbie Andreas/Hospitality

[Bring a friend, and be sure to make reservations for your entire party. See page 2 for reservation info.]



Friday, March 21, 2025—12 noon
Indian Summer Golf and Country Club



Honey Dijon Chicken
OR
Stuffed Pepper (V)
Dessert: Chef's Choice



(\$20 includes tax and gratuity)

LUNCHEON RESERVATIONS



I will be sending out emails to remind you of our upcoming luncheon. Please respond to that email if you plan to attend. We need our reservation count by **noon on Friday, March 14.**

If you **do not receive an email**, or if you **need to cancel or add to your** reservation, email me at dazicar88@gmail.com, or call me at **253-381-2592** **no later than noon on Friday, March 14.** Please do not call the restaurant with reservation changes.

To be added to the email list for notification, please send me your email address.

ZiNita Carrell, Email Committee Chair

LEGISLATIVE REPORT



Despite a state budget deficit of around \$12 billion over the next four years, the 2025 Legislative Session is off to an incredible start for WSSRA.

As legislators explore creative solutions to close the budget gap, Democratic leaders in the Senate have identified a way to restore an ongoing COLA to TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees. Substitute Senate Bill 5085 would merge TRS 1 and PERS 1, which are both underfunded, with Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters (LEOFF) Plan 1, which is overfunded by \$2.9 billion. The LEOFF 1 surplus would be used to fully fund TRS 1 and PERS 1 and provide retirees in those plans with an ongoing COLA, all while saving the state \$600 million over the next four years.

While passage of the bill would be a huge win for both retirees and the state, it faces opposition from police officers and firefighters, who want to see the surplus used to increase their benefits. LEOFF 1 and 2 members already get COLAs every year and received an additional retirement bonus in 2023.

On February 13, the Senate Ways & Means Committee voted SSB 5085 out of committee with nearly unanimous support from lawmakers in both parties. It now heads to the Senate Rules Committee, where it will wait to be “pulled” and scheduled for a floor vote. It must pass the Senate by March 12.

In the House, the bill faces strong headwinds. House leaders appear to favor other potential uses for the LEOFF 1 surplus. Instead of an ongoing COLA, they may give TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees another one-

(Continued on page 4: See “Legislative Report”)

WHAT DO EDUCATION, SHOPPING, AND EATING OUT HAVE IN COMMON?

Math. That’s what education, shopping, and eating out have in common.



Over several weeks I saw glaring examples of math vs. spending; it’s called “making change.”

I watched a teller get \$10.50 in cash for a \$3.50 bill. Stymied he was with those “extra” coins.

Then in a minimart the register was down; the customer gave \$10 for a \$4.15 bill; the teller was clueless what to give the client back in change so grabbed her phone.

Finally, a hardware teller grabbed some bills when I gave a \$20 for a \$12.30 cost, and when I counted the change before I left (as I do), I found \$17.70 in change. I returned the extra; he thanked me profusely.

So, as we dive into AI, tech gadgets, and credit cards, let’s not forget the reality of humans trading currency. Math is at the root of those interactions. And I wonder if a core skill of “on the spot, in your head” currency math is given enough emphasis, whether it’s in curricula, at home, or elsewhere.

While working in a burger booth for years, I always asked kids in front of their guardians how much I owed them, even offering a pen and paper. They were proud when correct. But, as I gave back change, I shorted them a buck or five. As they walked away, I asked, “Did you count it?” Seeing they got shorted, lesson learned: count it first.

Let’s do what we can to help youngsters we know or teach to learn “making change”—and the ethics of returning overpayment! It sure will come in handy if that phone battery dies, store registers lose power, or YOU have to make change at a garage sale. Right?

Gery Gerst, Education Committee

SAVE PAPER WITH EMAIL ONLY!

If you would prefer to receive only emailed copies of *Bits & Pieces* rather than paper ones in the mail, please send your request to **Sharon Dennis** at sed6501@outlook.com.

All issues will be sent in PDF format from the WSSRA office via Constant Contact, a secure emailing service.

BIRD FLU UPDATE: A Highly Pathological Avian Influenza (HPAI, Bird Flu)

In *The New York Times*, "First Bird Flu Death in U.S. Reported in Louisiana," January 6, 2025, the authors stated that, "a Louisiana patient who had been hospitalized with severe bird flu has just died, the first such fatality in the United States. The patient was older than 65 and had underlying medical conditions. The individual became infected with the bird flu virus variant, H5N1, after exposure to a backyard flock and wild birds," according to state officials. "There is no sign that the virus is spreading from person to person anywhere in the country, and Louisiana officials have not identified any other cases in the state."

"I still think the risk remains low," said Dr. Diego Diel, a virologist at Cornell University. "However, it is important that people remain vigilant and avoid contact with sick animals, sick poultry, sick dairy cattle, and also avoid contact with wild birds."

Dr. James Lawler, director of the University of Nebraska's Global Center for Health Security states, "The more widely the virus circulates, particularly infections in humans and other mammals, the higher the risk that the virus will acquire mutations that adapt the virus for human disease and transmission." He says, "This puts us all at risk. An individual who is simultaneously infected with both the bird flu virus and the seasonal flu might provide H5N1 ample opportunity to acquire the mutations it needs to spread efficiently among people."

The Washington State Department of Health reports that there have been 14 cases of human avian influenza in the state, none lethal, all caused by exposure to infected poultry.

The Center for Disease Control reports that at least 66 people have been infected by the virus in the U.S. this year. Nearly all of the cases have been in people who worked on farms with infected cows or poultry.

Most people have had mild symptoms, often conjunctivitis, or pink eye, and respiratory symptoms. However, globally, there have been about 500 human deaths reported in the past 20 years, most of them in Southeast Asia.

The HPAI has been circulating in wild birds for several years and in dairy cattle for about a year. The outbreak has shown no signs of abating, affecting more than 900 herds in 16 U.S. states.

You can protect yourself by wearing **personal protective equipment** (PPE) if you have direct or close (within six feet) contact with sick or dead wild and domesticated animals, their feces, or anything in their environment. Also, do not prepare or eat uncooked food, such as unpasteurized (raw) milk, raw

cheeses, or raw eggs and do not feed them to your pets. Cats in multiple states have died from drinking virus-laden raw milk. Prevent cats from hunting wild birds or other mammals.

In the U.S., since the start of the outbreak February 8, 2022 to February 12, 2025, 157.81 million birds have died or been culled. HPAI has been detected in a total of 1,557 flocks in 50 states plus territories. Of those, 739 flocks have been commercial, and 818 flocks have been backyard. These statistics are current from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Pat McLachlan, Health and Member Services

Each month we randomly draw the name of one of our "active" (not-yet-retired) members, who will receive a Starbucks gift card in the mail.

This month's winner is:



**Sylvia Getzendanner
Tumwater Public Schools**



Check this box each month to see if YOU are the lucky member.

Welcome, New Members:

Active, not-yet-retired members are underlined.

Lillian Trejo

Pam Singleton

Troy Oliver

Amee Opincarne

Kathleen Utterback

Tammy Caskey

Sam Hunt

Sheryl Obrien

Brianna Selin

Daniel Mason

Timothy Hartzell

Cassie White

Johanna Dowler

James Sobotka

Cassidy Gudgeon

Rachel McKaughan

Cindy Tobeck

Nancy Evans

Julie Ferris

Dixie Reimer

Angela Burke

Shannon Dixon

Matthew Epplin

Christopher Haffner

Melissa Johnston Cota

Michael Kelly

Joel Komschlies

Scott Leduc

Meredith McCann-Leo

Please report any address and telephone number changes to the **WSSRA Office** at:

360-413-5496 or michele@wssra.org

BITS & PIECES, the newsletter of the Thurston County School Retirees' Association, is published nine times a year, September through May, as a membership service.

Editor: Pat Slosson, 360-561-3232.

Information for the April 2025 issue is due by March 13.

Please email copy to editortcsra@gmail.com

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LEGISLATIVE REPORT *(Continued from page 2)*

time COLA in 2025. SSB 5085's fate will likely not be decided until the Senate and House negotiate a final budget in the closing days of the legislative session in late April. Together, we must work harder than ever to make sure this bill passes and justice is restored to retired teachers and school employees.

Emmett Mills, WSSRA Legislative Coordinator



COMMUNITY SERVICE

Failing vision. It is scary, and it happens to a lot of us as we age.

If you have been diagnosed with low vision due to macular degeneration or glaucoma, or your eyesight is failing beyond what can be corrected with glasses, you may find help at the Lions Low Vision Resource Center of Olympia. They have equipment and devices to try out and take home which can make life with limited vision a bit easier.

Available resources include CCTV-type magnifying

machines, hand-held magnifiers, and an array of ingenious tools, such as talking clocks or alarms.

The center is run entirely by volunteers who help with training on devices like phones and demonstrate the latest high-tech devices for low-vision assistance. They may even connect you with someone else who struggles with vision loss.



The center is open on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

All visits are by appointment, but they are FREE.

Call the Lions Eyeline at 360-790-8667. The center is located at 2600 Martin Way E.

For more information, google "Lions Low Vision Resource Center" in Olympia.

Sally Jones, Community Service Chair



"March 4th, the only day that's also a sentence." — John Green