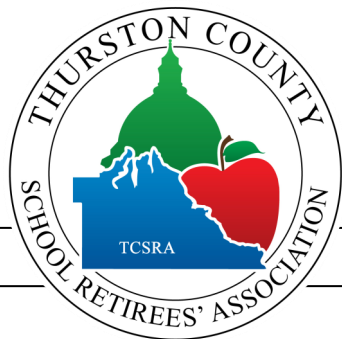




# Bits & Pieces

[www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/](http://www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/) November 2025

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

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**Do you groan when you open your mailbox and find it full of paper?** If that's you, you could be a good candidate to discontinue your paper copy of *Bits & Pieces* and receive it via email. You could cut down on paper coming into your home and help our unit save on printing and mailing costs.

In order to go paperless, you'll need to join the WSSRA email list. Emails that deliver our newsletters are sent using Constant Contact, a secure delivery service that uses encryption and regular security audits to protect user data.

But wait! Even if you want to continue receiving paper copies of our newsletter—and no one will blame you for that—keep reading! There are other important reasons for joining the WSSRA email list. *(By the way, you are already on the list if you receive Bits & Pieces via email every month, perhaps in addition to your paper copy.)*

Emmett Mills, WSSRA Legislative Coordinator, uses email to notify us of time-sensitive calls to action. A few times a year, he will send emails asking all members to sign in pro or con on a bill or to email or call their legislators. Emmett's emails always have suggested text, which you can revise, and links to the correct legislative website pages. It's all so easy! WSSRA also sends announcements about their free webinars to all members, state-wide. Content information and links for registering are included. Finally, we also send emails with information and reminders about mini-grants.

Ready to sign up? Go to [wssra.org](http://wssra.org), and scroll to the bottom of the homepage. Fill out the form and click on "Submit." You will probably receive a "welcome" email from WSSRA. In addition, you will receive an email from Constant Contact, asking you to confirm your email address. [Click on the link to finalize this process.](#)

If you want to receive *Bits & Pieces* only via email, sign up at [wssra.org](http://wssra.org) and wait until the first e-copy appears in your inbox. Have patience; it could take a month or more! On the cover email of each issue, you'll find instructions for going paperless. Questions? Contact **Sharon Dennis** at 360-438-5351 or at [sed6501@outlook.com](mailto:sed6501@outlook.com).

**Patty Gee TCSRA President**

## LEGISLATIVE REVIEW & PREVIEW

November is the perfect time to turn our attention to the Legislature. Emmett Mills, our WSSRA Legislative Coordinator, will be on hand to fill us in on where we currently are with our legislative goals, and where we still need to go.

Emmett was born and raised in Oregon. He moved north and attended Western Washington University, where he majored in political science with an emphasis on American politics. In 2019 Emmett began working for the Retired Public Employees Council of Washington. After gaining a wealth of experience in that position, he joined WSSRA as Legislative Coordinator in June of 2024.

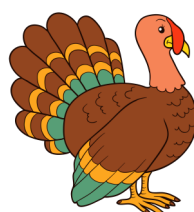
Emmett is a strong believer in working together as a team, moving forward to accomplish goals. Emmett believes that anything is possible when a group speaks with one voice and is dedicated to working tirelessly to make change. He will need our support!

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



**Pat Slosson, Hospitality Committee**

**Friday, November 21, 2025 – 12 Noon**  
**Indian Summer Golf and Country Club**



Menu: A traditional Thanksgiving dinner with turkey, mashed potatoes, and green beans

**OR**

Stuffed Portabella mushroom (GF, DF, 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, November 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](mailto:dazicar88@gmail.com), or call me **no later than noon on Friday, November 14**, at **253-381-2592**. To be added to the email list for notification, please send me your email address.

*ZiNita Carrell, Email Committee Chair*

## LEGISLATIVE REPORT

A late-September update from the Economic and Revenue Forecast Council brought bleak news for the 2026 Washington State Legislative Session. State revenue is on track to fall \$500 million below expectations over the next two years. This means that the legislature will have to find ways to cut spending and/or raise more revenue. Unfortunately, the legislature addressed a \$12 to \$16 billion shortfall earlier this year. While next year's \$500 million shortfall won't be nearly as large, few "easy" options remain on the table.

In preparation for next session, WSSRA will continue to urge the Select Committee on Pension Policy to endorse Substitute Senate Bill 5085, restoring an ongoing COLA for TRS1 and PERS1 retirees. Fortunately, SSB 5085 would provide long-term savings of over a billion dollars for state and local governments. But we might also need to play defense. The \$183 per month benefit that the state provides retirees who get their health insurance through the Public Employees Benefits Board is not guaranteed. If the legislature wants to slash funding for retiree health care, it will be up to us to stop them.

It is more important than ever that our legislators hear from us. Getting in touch is easy. All you need to do is dial **1-800-562-6000** between 8 a.m. and 12 p.m. or 1 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. on a weekday. You'll be connected to an operator who will ask for your name and address and then type up your message and send it directly to your legislators. In your own words, tell them that the legislature needs to pass Substitute Senate Bill 5085 to restore an ongoing COLA for TRS1 and PERS1 retirees and to protect retired teacher and school employee health insurance.

Thank you for helping us make a difference.

*Emmett Mills, WSSRA Legislative Coordinator*

## AHHH! MEMORIES!



The usual gist of this column is a mega-perspective on things in education. This time, for fun, join me in going personal by engaging in a few questions to ponder and memories to summon. Surely, ALL educators can supply answers from their years of service, be you a bus driver, paraeducator, classroom or special education teacher, nurse, administrator, etc. I'll share mine, and then you pause and conjure up your OWN moments. And, if you never have, share with another.

**Funny moment:** Mine is when a kid "got me" by claiming he dropped his contact lens in class and we all went on a crawl hunt, only to have him stand and say "Got ya!" He did for sure! LOL. (Ok, now your moment!)

**Unexpected or unsettling moment:** For me this was the Nisqually earthquake. As I/we huddled under desks and walls rattled. I told them jokes from under my desk to calm them, and they in turn did too. Unexpected scary event; positive outcome. (Yours?)

**Most rewarding/heartwarming memory:** Mine was saving the life of a student over the phone (during class); he called me from home planning to end his own life; today we're still friends. The other is being asked by numerous former students to perform their weddings. Heartwarming memories to this day. (Your turn!)

**What "maxim" guided you in your career:** Mine was, "See kids for whom they can be, not who they are now; they're all human 'becomings.'" (What was yours?)

Following your answers, sit back and let the wonder, the challenge, the fulfillment, and the pride of being an educator in any role flood in and warm your heart and soul. As Thanksgiving nears, give thanks that ours is a profession which we can relish, individually and collectively. Now say, **"Ahhh! Lucky me!"**

*Gery Gerst, Education Chair*

Each month we will 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:

**Lana Yenne**

**Yelm Community Schools**



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

## HEALTH INSURANCE OPEN ENROLLMENT

Open enrollment for SEBB and PEBB insurance plans is **October 27–November 24**. (For non-PEBB Medicare supplement plans, the open enrollment period is October 15–December 7 for January coverage.) During this time you can make changes to your benefits, add or remove dependents, defer PEBB retiree coverage, or enroll if previously deferred.

The single subscriber monthly premiums for the PEBB Medicare supplement plans are as follows:

|                                          |          |
|------------------------------------------|----------|
| Kaiser NW Senior Advantage with Part D   | \$174.44 |
| Kaiser WA Medicare Advantage with Part D | \$220.61 |
| Premera Plan G (eligible by age)         | \$122.42 |
| UMP Classic Medicare with Part D (PDP)   | \$377.67 |
| United Healthcare PEBB Balance (MAPD)    | \$172.83 |
| United Healthcare PEBB Complete (MAPD)   | \$280.18 |

Those enrolled in Premera G will have to enroll in a stand alone Medicare Part D plan on the commercial market.

If you missed the PEBB webinar on October 7, you can view it by visiting [wssra.org](http://wssra.org) and clicking on Webinars. The Healthcare Authority website ([hca.wa.gov](http://hca.wa.gov)) has a tool allowing you to compare up to 3 plans. On this site, you can also find information on non-Medicare health plans, dental plans, and virtual and in-person benefit fairs.

For additional information, you can call PEBB Customer Service at 1-800-200-1004, Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m. You can also email PEBB at [HCAPEBBMedicare@hca.wa.gov](mailto:HCAPEBBMedicare@hca.wa.gov). There is also lobby service from 8 a.m.–4 p.m. The office is located at Cherry Street Plaza, 626 8th Avenue SE, Olympia.

*Gail Feagins, Health and Member Services Co-Chair*

### *In Memoriam*

We note the passing of **Jack Blain**, and we offer sincere condolences to his family and friends.

## COMMUNITY SERVICE

### **Turkeys Needed! What, no Turkeys?!**

November is the time when we at TCSRA open our hearts and checkbooks to support the **Thurston County Food Bank**. As I mentioned last month, the food bank is already straining to fulfill the growing needs in our community. So, imagine the strain of providing traditional holiday bags with turkey and all the trimmings for needy families when there are not enough turkeys! The food bank is suffering a million-dollar shortage due to federal funding cuts and is actively looking for creative ways to procure turkeys. For example, one idea is to ask people to donate the “free” turkey often given by local grocery stores to customers who spend a certain amount. Another idea is asking farmers and home gardeners to donate produce that might otherwise go to waste. Such donations would best be taken to the Mottman Road warehouse which has cold storage. It seems to me truly lamentable that food bank personnel and volunteers are in the precarious position of soliciting single turkeys from single individuals. So may I suggest that we at TCSRA increase our monetary donations insofar as we are able? Checks should be written directly to the Thurston County Food Bank. We will have baskets on the luncheon tables for your donations. Thank you!



**Mom Bags:** November is also the time when “mom bag” contributions are needed. For the past several years, I have assembled small gift bags with about six items for the moms of the Salvation Army Adopted families. Items may include especially nice toiletry items—soap, shower gel, lotion, etc.; winter hats, gloves, mittens, socks, or scarves; small candles in containers or larger decorative candles; small notebooks or journals; household items with or without holiday themes, such as potholders, napkins, tea towels, hand towels, and trivets; especially lovely or even funny holiday ornaments; treats, such as wrapped quality candy—think Lindt truffles—tea, or packets of cider or cocoa. This is an opportunity to re-gift unused items so long as they are like new and something that a mom might appreciate. Even though I suggested mugs last year, they are NOT a good idea because they required so much wrapping to avoid breakage. Similarly, jewelry is not a good idea because personal taste is so varied. An exception might be a holiday pin or earrings.



The November luncheon is the optimal time to bring donations, but there will be a collection box at the WSSRA office. I also will be happy to receive or pick up items through December 10. If you would like to help assemble the bags shortly after December 10, please let me know. I can be contacted at:

[sljonz@gmail.com](mailto:sljonz@gmail.com) (home) 360-866-8039  
or (cell) 360-480-0972

*Sally Jones, Community Service Chair*

**Thurston County School Retirees' Association**  
P. O. Box 3051  
Lacey, WA 98509-3051

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

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**REMINDER: LUNCHEON MEETING**

**Indian Summer Golf and Country Club**

**5900 Troon Lane SE**

**Friday, November 21**

**Lunch at 12 noon**

**GET READY – GET SET – CLICK!**

**IT'S MINI-GRANT TIME!**

The application link for our \$400 mini-grants is now available on the TCSRA website. Simply click the link to start the application process. All classified and certificated TCSRA members who work in Thurston County public schools are eligible to apply.

Please note that no applications will be accepted after the deadline of **November 30**. Recipients will be notified in December, with checks being distributed in January.

**DONATIONS TO THE  
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**

At this time of the year you may be looking for a nonprofit 501(c)(3) for donating part or all of your Required Minimum Distribution. Our TCSRA Community Foundation spendable fund is used to award mini-grants for special projects to TCSRA members who are public school employees. We are building this fund so that it can be sustainable long term, and we welcome your contributions.

For more information, go to our website: <https://www.wssra-units.org/thurstoncounty/>

***BITS & PIECES***, the newsletter of the Thurston County School Retirees' Association, is published nine times a year, September through May, as a membership service. It is a means of communication between officers, committees, and both retired and active (not-yet-retired) members.

Letters to the editor from members are welcome and will be published when space is available. The editor will determine when letters will be published and when in doubt, shall consult with the president. The following guidelines are specified for letters to the editor:

- Letters must not exceed 150-200 words.
- Only one letter per year from the same writer will be accepted.
- Information must be accurate.
- Language must be appropriate.
- Content should be of general interest to the membership.
- Opinions expressed by the writer do not necessarily reflect policies or positions of WSSRA or TCSRA.
- Name, address, phone number must be included.

*Editor: Pat Slosson, 360-561-3232.*

**Information for the December 2025 issue is due by November 10.**

*Please email copy to [pslosson1@comcast.net](mailto:pslosson1@comcast.net).*