



Whatcom Connection

Newsletter for **ACTIVE** School Employees & Public School Retirees of Whatcom County March/April 2025

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LegislativeHotline

1-800-562-6000

*NEW VOLUNTEER!

*More Volunteers/
Participants Desired!

*Vice president-You will work with the president and Executive Committee.

*Chair positions

available:

- ⇒ Health Services
- ⇒ Legislative
- ⇒ Programming/
Events

Welcome Back to a Rejuvenation Year for WCSRA!



MUSIC AND MIND

Unit 32 Whatcom County School Retirees' Association is pleased to invite you to our **2nd general membership meeting of 2025 on Thursday, April 17th!** We will meet at the Ferndale WECU Education Center located at 5659 Barrett Road in Ferndale. WECU is located on the east side of I-5. Handicapped parking and restrooms are available. For those not needing handicapped parking, please park in the last three rows of the lot.

We will begin at 9:45 with signing-in, socializing and announcements! Our meeting begins 10:00 followed by the program at 10:15, lunch at 11:00 and adjournment around 11:45. This **free lunch** will include a variety of deli sandwiches, chips, a salad and cookies for dessert! Drinks will also be provided.

Our program will feature Gayle Cloud, MT-BC, the director and founder of Cloud Music Therapy. She is passionate about how music therapy can transform lives. Gayle will be available for a short Q & A session. This outstanding presentation is one event you will not want to miss! Be sure to invite a friend.

Mark These Dates for Your Planning!

- ♦ Legislative Session 2025 follow @www.wssra.org
- ♦ April 17th– Bring Gardening Basket Items for WSSRA
- ♦ June 2-4 WSSRA State Convention-Yakima
- ♦ July 17 Summer Crab Cruise– Tickets @ <https://whales.com>



From our Legislative Director-Emmett Mills:

We have exciting news to share! On March 3, the Washington State Senate **passed legislation to restore an ongoing COLA for TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees.** Substitute Senate Bill 5085 would give TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees the same annual benefit increase that members of TRS/PERS/SERS plans 2 & 3 receive. This would be achieved by merging TRS 1 and PERS 1, which are both underfunded, with Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters (LEOFF) Plan 1, which is substantially overfunded. In addition to providing an ongoing COLA, the bill would fully fund all pension plans and help the state balance the budget, saving \$600 million over the next four years.

The bill passed with the support of 28 of 30 Senate Democrats. Senator Marko Liias (D-Edmonds) and Senator John Lovick (D-Mill Creek) joined all 19 Senate Republicans in voting against it.

SSB 5085 must now pass the Washington State House of Representatives, where it faces an uphill battle. The House has its own plans for the LEOFF 1 surplus. Instead of merging TRS 1, PERS 1, and LEOFF 1, House leaders want to transfer the entire LEOFF 1 surplus into the general fund via House Bill 2034. This would effectively block us from restoring an ongoing COLA this session.

As the Senate and House have differing approaches to the issue, an agreement likely won't be reached until Democratic leaders in both chambers negotiate a final budget near the end of April. **From now until then, we must work harder than ever to convince our State Representatives to pass SSB 5085.** Please keep an eye on your email for opportunities to get involved. If you haven't received any emails from us, please visit www.wssra.org to join our email list.

TAKE ACTION TODAY!

We can make enough noise to be clearly heard by all of our legislators, and today we start with three easy steps!

#1-Write an article to your local newspaper or to the Bellingham Herald. We want PERS 1 and TRS 1 treated like all other state pensions in the State of WA. They need and deserve a COLA.

#2-Contact your legislators, whether you email or phone, send a message to all, that the retired teachers of this state in TRS1 and PERS 1 **MUST** get the COLA this session.

Call the Legislative Hotline

[1-800-562-6000](tel:1-800-562-6000)

[1-800-833-6388](tel:1-800-833-6388) (for hearing impaired)

State District 42 Legislators

[Representative Alicia Rule](#)

[Representative Joe Timmons](#)

[Senator Sharon Shewmake](#)

State District 40 Legislators

[Representative Debra Lekanoff](#)

[Representative Alex Ramel](#)

[Senator Liz Lovelett](#)

#3-Find a friend and get them involved in this issue!

We love our firefighters and our state, but pensions should never be used to balance state budgets (like in 2011) and the overbudgeting for firefighters (90% male) and the underbudgeting of PERS1 and TRS1 (80% female) needs to be fixed in 2025!

Can you help?

If you are planning on attending the April 17th meeting at WECU in Ferndale, we would like to have **you bring a small gardening item** for our WSSRA convention basket. Each year our executive members, build a basket that will be auctioned off at the convention. **All proceeds go to the WSSRA Foundation.** This foundation helps support scholarships awarded to high school and college students going into the field of education. This year our theme is gardening. Small items like seed packets, gloves, a sweet treat or small gardening tools would be excellent additions to our gardening themed basket. We will add a generous gift card to make our basket complete!



Crab Cruise 2025 Thursday, July 17th

Make this summer special by making your Crab Cruise reservations today! Either go online and make reservations at:

<https://whales.com>

or simply call 360.738.8099

Remember you pay in advance, but save that receipt and WCSRA will reimburse you \$20 for each WCSRA member. Want to SAVE more? Join the executive board and we will reimburse you \$30!



Do you have an email address? Did you know that you can get this newsletter electronically? **You can receive legislative updates as they are available!** By adding your email address to the WSSRA website you can:

- ◆ Save our organization lots of money-emails are **FREE!**
- ◆ Get your newsletter at least 1 week sooner than by mail.
- ◆ Never miss a newsletter due to vacation plans.
- ◆ Reduce the amount of paper used in each mailing.

Simply log in to [WSSRA.org](https://wssra.org) and update your information!
<https://wssra.org>

You've
Got
Mail



**WCSRA
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Bellingham WA 98228**

**PRSRT STD
U. S. Postage Paid
Bellingham WA
Permit Number 249**

Return Service Requested

2025 DUES
\$7 per month-Yearly total \$84.00

Why not try a automatic dues deduction? ADD is just \$7.00 monthly from your retirement pension.

Or

www.wssra.org Membership tab

Current and retired school employees are eligible!

**WCSRA
MAKES A DIFFERENCE!
YOU CAN TOO!**

We consider ourselves educators for life. If you are or have been a certificated or classified school district employee in the state of Washington- from superintendent to school nurse or behavioral psychologist to bus driver- YOU are welcome at the Washington State School Retirees' Association!

Active Employees Welcome!