



Whatcom Connection

Newsletter for **ACTIVE School Employees & Public School Retirees of Whatcom County** Fall 2025

WCSRA

PO Box 29503
Bellingham WA 98228
wcsra32@gmail.com

Jerry Finkbonner

President & Program
360-319-0580

jkfinkbonner@comcast.net

Carole Hanaway

Secretary

carolehanaway@yahoo.com

Scott Morrow

Treasurer

scott@elementarysoftware.com

Lisa Lockwood

Newsletter/Membership

360-380-4127

lisalockwood@comcast.net

Cheryl Frazier

Assistant Newsletter Editor

Donna Starr

Condolence Notification
Secretary

WSSRA Office

1-360-413-5496

<https://www.wssra.org>

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

YOU ARE INVITED TO OUR FALL WCSRA PROGRAM!

Our Speakers:

Dr. Greg Baker-Superintendent Bellingham School District
Dr. Kristi Dominguez-Superintendent Ferndale School District



Unit 32 Whatcom County School Retirees' Association is pleased to invite you to our **3rd general membership meeting of 2025 on Thursday, October 23rd**. 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 at 10:00 followed by the program at 10:15, a lunch at 11:00 and adjournment around 12:00. **Our 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 **Dr. Greg Baker**, Superintendent of Bellingham Public Schools and **Dr. Kristi Dominguez** Superintendent from Ferndale Public Schools. Dr. Baker will give an update on how Bellingham schools are doing and an overview of new initiatives, including information on two levy measures coming in the November election. Dr. Dominguez will share how Ferndale is using its limited funds, in partnership with its community to best support their students. We are very excited both have agreed to attend!

**A fun raffle will also be held, but you MUST be present to WIN!
Be sure to invite a friend!**

Mark These Dates for Your Planning!



- ◆ October 6– NW1-Mt. Vernon-Guests Invited-Contact Jerry
- ◆ October 9- Leadership Meeting-Ferndale Public Library 9:15
- ◆ **October 23-General Membership/Luncheon Meeting 9:45-12:00**
- ◆ 2025 Legislative Session 2025 begins-
Follow @www.wssra.org Legislative Tab
- ◆ November 13-Leadership Meeting-Ferndale Public Library-9:30
- ◆ **New! School District Ambassador Volunteers Welcome @11:15,
Then FREE lunch w/ NEW Ambassadors!**
- ◆ **November 15-Mini-grants DUE! WCSRA members Only!**

2025-2026 MINI-GRANT APPLICATION

Do you have a **GREAT IDEA** on how students could benefit from a project in class or for school? It is time to apply for the **2025-2026 WCSRA** mini-grant. Whatcom County School Retirees' Association has 20 grants up to \$400 depending on project needs.

Requests must directly involve or affect the education of children.

Please be specific in your request and specify one item or project. Grants are available to **members of WCSRA (TRS, PERS, SERS)**. (It is easy to join, for only \$7 a month, and can be taken directly from pay-roll). **You MUST be an actively employed teacher or classified staff WCSRA member to apply.** The membership application can be found at:

<https://wssra.org/index.php/membership/join>

or contact Lisa Lockwood, Membership at 360-380-4127, with any questions about the mini-grant or membership process.

Mini-Grant awardees will be invited to share photos, examples of the project, or other ways, to show WCSRA members how their donated monies were used.

DEADLINE IS November 15, 2025

Send the completed form to:

**Mini-Grants, WCSRA
Box 29503
Bellingham, WA 98228**

USE AN ELECTRONIC FORM:
OR @ [Mini Grant Application – Whatcom County School Retirees' Association – Unit 32](https://www.wssra-units.org/whatcomcounty/mini-grant-applications/)
<https://www.wssra-units.org/whatcomcounty/mini-grant-applications/>

Name: _____ School _____

District _____ Grade Level / position _____

Home Phone _____

Home email _____

Title of Project _____

Amount Requested _____

Briefly describe grant use and its intended impact on the class or school: (including costs.)

Please complete either this paper copy and mail to the address above, or complete and submit the online version, using the <http://wssra.org> website and Unit 32 online application for mini-grants, then submit.



From our Legislative Director-Emmett Mills:

The Select Committee on Pension Policy had a busy meeting on September 16. First, the committee received a report on the financial status of all state managed pension plans. When viewed in aggregate, the pension plans are nearly 100% funded. However, at the plan level, TRS 1 and PERS 1 remain 91% and 87% funded, respectively, while LEOFF 1 is 160% funded.

Next, the committee reviewed that state's long-term economic assumptions and made recommendations to the Pension Funding Council. These assumptions are key to pension funding, as they help determine pension contribution rates for employers and employees. The committee recommended raising the assumed inflation rate to 3% (from 2.75%) and raising the assumed general salary growth rate to 3.5% (from 3.25%), while holding investment rate of return and membership growth at 7.25% and 1%, respectively. **If these recommendations are followed by the Pension Funding Council and the Legislature, it should result in pension contributions increasing for employers and employees.**

Finally, the committee received an update on the study of two proposals affecting the surplus in the LEOFF 1 pension plan. As discussed in previous articles, **SB 5085 would merge TRS 1, PERS 1, and LEOFF 1, while restoring an ongoing COLA for TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees. HB 2034 would sweep the LEOFF 1 surplus into the State's general fund.** So far, feedback has been received from three of the six entities that will be contributing to the report. **The Department of Retirement Systems reported that both proposals would be implementable**, although HB 2034 would be easier to implement. The Office of the State Treasurer recommended caution with both bills, but would be more comfortable with SB 5085. The Washington State Investment Board determined that HB 2034 would require advance planning and result in transaction fees, while SB 5085 would not affect its work. The final report will also include feedback from the Office of the Attorney General, the Office of the State Actuary, and Ice Miller, a law firm contracted with the state. The final report is expected to be ready by November 18. **WSSRA is pushing the committee to officially recommend SB 5085 to the Legislature.**



You've
Got
Mail



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.**

***MAIL returned to WCSRA costs nearly \$1.00 and you do not get to read it, unless you go online anyway...**

So- Log in to [WSSRA.org](https://wssra.org) and update your information!

<https://wssra.org>

Use the Contact Us tab

What did WCSRA do this summer?

JUNE

2024-2025 WSSRA CONVENTION YAKIMA



Honoring Richard “Dick” Anderson

Nominated by Whatcom County Leadership, **Dick was selected by WSSRA as an honorary member.** To be selected for this honor the member must be at least 90 years old, been a WSSRA member for at least 20 years and must have served in a state leadership role, been a community volunteer and/or active committee member. **Congratulations, Dick, and thank you for your many years of dedicated service!**

Remembering our Beloved Celebration of Life Service- Remembrances of Our Friends and Colleagues from Whatcom County

Velora Apeland Timothy Binderup Garrett Day
Carol Ericsson Thomas Funk Leroy Galley
Lawrence Kiehn Judith Knudsen Karen Lyon
Ronald Marshall Richard McConchie John Plesha
Joanne Praetzel Gloria Reinhardt Donald Rieland
Karolyn Schwartz Charles Wellman Larry Young

**Always in our thoughts, forever in our hearts,
Forever remembered, forever missed.**

Memorial Quotes-Botanical Paperworks (edited)

Did you help?

We would like to **thank the many who donated enough gardening items to build TWO baskets for auction at the WSSRA Convention this year!** These baskets and others from around the state, along with games, raffles and other donations, brought in over \$10,000. **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. Our theme was gardening. Thanks so very much if you were among those who donated items!



JULY



THANKS FOR ATTENDING!-

Crab Cruise 2025

If you missed this wonderful event, consider attending next summer!

Want to SAVE \$? Consider joining the executive board and saving \$30 on this cruise next summer!

If you would like to attend an annual convention, please join us. Ask Jerry or Lisa how to participate! Next year’s convention is at the Great Wolf Lodge, June 8 – 10, 2026, in Grand Mound, WA.

Please attend our meeting!

Did we say...
"WE HAVE A FREE RAFFLE!"



HOW IT WORKS!

You arrive at the WECU in Ferndale at 9:45 on October 23rd. Enter the building, we are on your left, located by bathrooms. Enter the Education Center, and sign in on a numbered line. That number is "your number" and your entry into our raffle! Later in our program (usually during our lunch), we draw a random number. If it is yours, you win!

WSSRA 2025-2026
President: Dottie Stevens
Theme: "We are Better Together"
WSSRA

HELP WANTED!

Become a part of a better team!

We are looking for 1-3 people to become ambassadors to a district. Our Unit 32, all of Whatcom County, has 7 districts: Bellingham, Blaine, Ferndale, Lynden, Meridian, Mt. Baker and Nooksack Valley. Each Ambassador team would be joined and given all the resources needed to award mini-grant money and a certificate to selected mini-grant winners. This is a great way to see old friends and colleagues while awarding needed dollars to our active members. If you have an active certificated or classified friend or family member, who is not currently a WCSRA member, signing them up is easy. Go online to wssra.org Click on the **WEBSITE** button, then click on the **Join WSSRA** button. Choose the method preferred for payment. PRESTO! They are now a member and if an active employee, (someone currently working for a public school) they may apply for a mini-grant, too! Retired friends make GREAT new members, as well! This is a fun, once a year volunteer opportunity! Interested? Contact Lisa Lockwood or RSVP by email (addresses on front page of newsletter) and attend our November 13th Leadership meeting at the Ferndale Public Library from 11:15-11:45. A lunch will be provided following this brief meeting.

**WCSRA
P. O. Box 29503
Bellingham WA 98228**

**PRSR 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!