



# Whatcom Connection

For **ACTIVE** School Employees & Public School Retirees of Whatcom County January/February/March 2026

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## Legislative Hotline

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 NEW Year for WCSRA!

Unit 32 Whatcom County School Retirees' Association is pleased to invite you to our **1st General Membership meeting of 2026 on Thursday, March 26th at 9:45!** 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. Our programming for this meeting will focus on medical coverage, options, questions and resources.

**Do you have Medical care questions or wonder about your options? We found some amazing experts and they are here JUST FOR YOU!**



**Keith Wallace is a partner with Trucordia Insurance services located in Bellingham. Focused on helping clients with Medicare, ACA, Group Benefits and Life Insurance, he has generously offered to speak at our March 26th, General Meeting!** Having started in the business in 1990, he has experienced many changes in the marketplace, including the launch of the Affordable Care Act. He serves as a Governor appointed representative of agents on the Washington State High Risk Pool and is currently the Secretary/Treasurer of the National Association of Health Insurance Professionals, the industry's leading trade association representing over 100,000 agents.

**Laura Ryan from the WA State Healthcare Authority** will give a brief overview of the PEBB retire program, discuss the differences and benefits of PEBB plans vs commercial Medicare plans, and reserve some time to address questions.

**Laura is the Retiree Benefits Manager for the Employee and Retiree Benefits Division at the Washington State Healthcare Authority.** She also serves as the contract manager for some of our Medicare plans at the WA State Healthcare Authority. Laura has worked on the SHIBA staff at the Office of the Insurance Commissioner and many years ago, worked in the customer service division for PEBB retirees. Her professional life of the past 15+ years has largely centered around Medicare.



**WCSRA is honored to have these experts on healthcare coverage options for our members!**

**We will begin at 9:45 with signing-in, socializing and announcements!** Our program begins at 10:00 with lunch at 11:30 and adjournment around 12:30. This **free lunch** will include a variety of deli sandwiches, chips, a salad and cookies for dessert! Drinks will also be provided. **Please Join us!**



## Meet Our New Mini Grant Coordinator-Isabel Farquhar

**Whatcom County School Retirees' Association Unit 32** is most pleased to announce that we have another new leadership board member !



**Hi, I am Isabel Farquhar, the new mini-grant coordinator for WCSRA-unit 32!** *I am very excited about this new roll. I have worked in the Ferndale School district for 28 years as a special education teacher. For the past 15 years I taught Developmental Preschool, and you need a lot of toys and materials to teach preschool! For 8 out of those years I applied and received mini grants from WCSRA. I had the best stocked preschool classroom because of the grants. I purchased science kits, math materials, books, emotional support materials, cause and effect toys. This is why I am so passionate to giving out mini grants to others because I have experienced firsthand what the money can do for the students. Please pass the word on to any teachers and staff members that you know that these grants are available to WCSRA members working in our public schools.*

If you are interested in volunteering, assistance is needed for both short and long term roles. Many jobs can be done from home or in person with your friends! Simply call, Lisa or Jerry, or email any member

listed on the front page of this newsletter, or simply come to a General Membership meeting! **While at a meeting, enjoy a free meal, a wonderful program, and join the team!**



*We ♥ our  
Volunteers*



### **Bylaws Update!**

Recently the WCSRA advisory and leadership board began the process to update the bylaws. This had not been done since 2008. The changes are minor and reflect changes required to comply with state board requests. Proposed changes will be provided upon request, recorded as the second reading (the first reading occurred during our last advisory and leadership meeting) and will be available for reading during the March 26th meeting. Thank you for your participation in this activity of business. (2nd Reading and vote)

# Mini Grant Summary for 2025-2026

## Bellingham School District

Julie Hunter- Wade King/Lowell Librarian	Books	\$400
Janae Hodge-BHS Spanish Teacher	Multi-cultural foods	\$400
Stephanie Strow-Shuksan IS/SS Teacher	Marketing/Business supplies	\$400
Catherine Gersich-BHS Art Club	Art club supplies	\$400



## Ferndale School District

Tami O'Neil-Eagleridge ES	Whale Museum trip	\$300
Sarah Steele-Central ES	Seating/science materials	\$400



## Lynden School District-Bernice Vossbeck ES

Leslie St. Lawrence-Paraeducator	Books for SPED	\$400
B.J. Ambercrombie	Creating calm space	\$300



## Mt. Baker School District

Erin Sauvola-Kendall ES 2nd grade	Allied Arts Puppet Workshop	\$300
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**Each year** when active WCSRA members ask, we answer with money to help them fulfill their creative dreams for their students! **We are so very proud of these members for putting their great effort into helping students beyond what is provided by their districts. Some need books others need outside talent. Our mini grants help WCSRA active public school employees make a difference for students! This year we helped 9 active public school employees from 4 of our 7 districts. Remember, any WCSRA member who is an ACTIVE school employee may apply for a school mini grant!**



Mini grants are available for application one time per year. Mini grants are advertised in the Whatcom Connection, the official newsletter of Unit 32 Whatcom County School Retirees' Association, and online @ <https://www.wssra-units.org/whatcomcounty/mini-grant-applications/> All applicants are screened for current membership in WSSRA. You may join WSSRA any time! Simply log in to [wssra.org](http://wssra.org) and complete the membership information under the tab Join/Renew WSSRA. If you list Unit 32 and Isabel Farquhar for the agent encouraging you to join, you will earn an extra \$10 for our unit!

# TRS 1 & PERS 1 Retirees Need a COLA !

## TRS 1 & PERS 1 Retirees

- \* Lost their annual COLA in 2011.
- \* They are the only retired public employees in Washington who don't receive annual COLAs.
- \* Since 2010, most pensions have lost at least 29% of their purchasing power.
- \* TRS 1: 26,639 retired teachers.
- \* PERS 1: 36,278 retired state, local government, and school employees.
- \* Average age: 80

## HB 1474 (This replaces SB 5085)

- \* Provides TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees with a one-time 3% COLA capped at \$110 per month.
- \* Endorsed by the Select Committee on Pension Policy.
- \* Helps retirees afford to remain living in the communities they dedicated their lives to serving.
- \* Reduces burden on social safety net by keeping retirees out of poverty.
- \* If HB 1474 does not pass, retirees will have to go 3 years without relief.

How can YOU help?

Contact your legislators TODAY!

[Legislative Hotline](#) [1-800-562-6000](tel:1-800-562-6000) For TTY for deaf or hard of hearing [1-800-833-6388](tel:1-800-833-6388)

Please contact legislators! This a short session so make that contact TODAY!





## Let's Build Some Baskets!

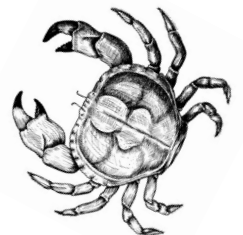
If you are planning on attending the **March 26th meeting at WECU in Ferndale**, we would like to have you **bring a small fishing or golf item** for our WSSRA convention baskets. Each year our executive members, build a basket that will be auctioned off at the WSSRA convention. **All proceeds go to the WSSRA Foundation.** This foundation **helps support scholarships awarded to high school and college students going into the field of education.**

This year we have plans for **TWO themed baskets!** Our themes will be fishing and golf! **Small items like hooks or lures, or fishing themed items for the kitchen or decor will make excellent additions for our fishing basket.** If you prefer golfing, you could donate golf balls or tees, golf books or any golf themed item! We will add a generous gift card to make our basket complete!



## Upcoming Dates for your Calendar

- \* **March 26 General Membership Meeting- 9:45-12:30**  
(Bring fishing or golf basket items)
- \* **June 8-10 WSSRA State Convention-  
Great Wolf Lodge-Grand Mound, WA**  
(Open to all members! Reserve your space with Jerry)
- \* **July 16-Unit 32 Annual Crab Cruise-  
6:00-9:00 pm**



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

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Want to JOIN?  
[www.wssra.org](http://www.wssra.org) Membership tab

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

Please send Check to:  
**WCSRA  
Box 29503  
Bellingham WA 98228**

Or

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

**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!**