



Whatcom Connection

For **ACTIVE** School Employees & Public School Retirees of Whatcom County

Fall 2026

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

Donna Starr

Condolence Notification

Isabel Farquhar

Mini Grant Coordinator

imfarquhar@gmail.com

Lisa Lockwood

Newsletter/Membership

360-380-4127

lisalockwood@comcast.net

*John Farquhar

Asst. Newsletter Editor

*Julie Hunter

Membership

WSSRA Office

1-360-413-5496

<https://www.wssra.org>

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
- ⇒ Scholarships



Welcome Back to a NEW School Year for WCSRA!

Unit 32 Whatcom County School Retirees' Association is pleased to invite you to our Fall General Membership meeting on October 15th at 9:30! 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 civics programming for this meeting will focus on election processes and local activism at the county, state and national levels of government.

We found some amazing experts and they are here JUST FOR YOU! Read page two to learn a bit more about our honored speakers. Following our programming, a free catered luncheon will be available. Lunch includes a variety of sandwiches, a salad, chips, a cookie and assorted beverages. Please join us on October 15th, 2026, from 9:30-12:45 at WECU in Ferndale!

We must grow and you can help!

WHY? In membership, more matters!

- ♦ **More members = More Political Impact** – We care deeply about your pension! In fact, your pension is our biggest concern. We want all public school employees to be able to retire with a pension that matters. Your pension must include cost of living benefits that NEVER expire or diminish due to inflation or rising health care costs!
- ♦ **More members = More Dollars** for Mini grants & Scholarships - We care deeply about current public educational employees and future educators, too! If you are actively employed or know someone interested in becoming a member of the public education process, we give money to help them reach their goals through scholarships and mini grants!

Please encourage your retired friends, and any active public education employees you know to join Whatcom County School Retirees Association today!



MEET OUR PRESENTORS!

October 15th, 2026 9:30-12:30
Ferndale WECU



A special thanks to WWU for providing this photo.

Dr. Todd Donovan is a Professor of Political Science at Western Washington University where he teaches classes on electoral systems, public opinion, and American politics. He has also served three terms on the Whatcom County Council ending his tenure in 2026. Dr. Donovan's recent research has included topics such as electoral system reform, election integrity, and public trust in democratic institutions. He has served as an expert witness in state and federal courts on election matters and has been cited by the United States Supreme Court. His opinion is often sought by national and local media on election-system topics including mail-in voting.

Elizabeth Boyle is currently serving her first term on the Whatcom County Council as the District 2 representative (North Bellingham). Councilmember Boyle's term ends January 2030.

Elizabeth is a former small business owner and organizational consultant focused on advancing issues around public health including housing, the opioid crisis, re-entry, and youth mental health. She is also a board member of the YWCA with a focus on housing and care for women and children.

In 2026, Elizabeth is the Chair of the Public Works & Health Committee and Vice-Chair of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety and Finance & Administrative Services Committees. She represents the County Council on a variety of community boards and committees, including the Bellingham Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Child and Family Well-Being Task Force, and the Developmental Disabilities Board.



Do you have Email?

If you have email and you still get this newsletter by mail instead of email, we would respectfully ask you to consider changing. Our newsletters cost nearly \$2,000 to print and post through the United States Post Office. Emailing our newsletters is FREE! If you are willing to receive your newsletters by email as an attachment simply contact the state office 1-360-413-5496 or go online. WSSRA <https://www.wssra.org>

From: Mini Grant Coordinator-Isabel Farquhar



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 members for putting 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! Last 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!**

Applications are now being accepted for the 2026-2027 school year. This year we will accept applications until November 15, 2026. Please access your application at:

<https://www.wssra-units.org/whatcomcounty/mini-grant-applications/>

If you have any difficulties or are not yet a WCSRA member, please contact Isabel or Lisa for assistance.

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 or email any member listed on the front page of this newsletter, or come to a General Membership meeting!



Be a part of our Health Care committee!



Give money to high school seniors and student teachers! Join our Scholarship Committee!



Take on legislation issues in Washington State that make a difference for all public school employees in retirement! Join our legislative committee!

2026 Legislative Priorities

Washington State School Retirees' Association

Page 4

- ◇ Restore an **automatic ongoing cost of living** adjustment for TRS 1 and PERS 1 retirees.
- ◇ Protect the \$183 Medicare Eligible Healthcare Subsidy.
- ◇ Make sure funding remains in the budget to reduce costs for retirees who get health insurance through the Public Employees Benefits Board.
- ◇ Fully fund pensions.
- ◇ Maintain actuarially recommended employer contributions to make sure we have among the healthiest retirement systems in the country.
- ◇ Improve health and pension benefits for members of Plans 2 and 3.



How can YOU help? Sign up for legislative emails! Then use your email or your voice to let legislators know these issues matter!

[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)

Washington State School Retirees' Association PO Box 5127 - Lacey, WA 98509 Contact: Emmett Mills - emmett@wssra.org - cell: (541) 602-4806 - office: (360) 413-5496 ext. 2



Dates for your planning needs!

October 14	Pre retirement webinar	PEBB Retiree Health Insurance Webinar
October 15	WCSRA General Membership Meeting 9:30-12:30 Ferndale WECU	
October 27	Pre retirement webinar	Retirement Planning Webinar — Health Insurance & Early Retirement
November 3	General Election Day. If you are registered to vote, your ballot is mailed automatically and there's no need to request one. Confirm or update your voter registration information today at VoteWA.gov .	
March TBA	WCSRA General Membership Meeting 9:30-12:30 Ferndale WECU	
June 7 – 9	Tri-Cities Convention Center-WSSRA 80th CONVENTION	

We look forward to seeing you at the WSSRA convention!

Go Bag and Stay Bin

Are you prepared for the possible emergency that might require you to leave your home? The average number of climate- and weather-related disasters per decade has increased nearly 35% since the 1990's. Emergencies often are unpredictable. But you can still plan for them.

According to Tara Parker-Pope, **No matter where you live, every home should have a “go bag” and a “stay bin”.** The go bag is what you grab when you leave the house to get to an emergency room or to evacuate in a hurry. The stay bin is a two-week stash of essentials in the event you need to remain home without power or heat. The hardest thing preparing your go bag is getting started. Parker-Pope started with a Ziplock bag and added her passport, birth certificate, other important documents, and a pair of reading glasses. Later, she added a phone charger. According to an emergency room doctor it is the most requested item in the E.R. Because of Covid-19, she added masks which are also helpful if the emergency is a fire or a chemical spill.

Recently, she upgraded her bag to a reusable silicone bag and added emergency cash. Smaller bills are useful just in case cash registers are down. You will not have to shell out large bills and forego change. She added a list of phone numbers so family could be notified if she landed in an E.R. If your cell phone/electronic technology is inoperable and you have not memorized phone numbers, a phone list is a must.

Some people will create more extensive go bags, including tools, compass, fire starters, etc. **The go bag is for short term emergency evacuation.** Add a first-aid kit, essential medications, dental needs, flash-light, and batteries. For nourishment, pack bottles of water, protein packed bars for the evacuation route or trip to the ER. If you have little children or a baby, prepare go bags for their needs. They may include diapers, formula, nutritious edibles, change of clothing, and a comforting toy, books, or games. Be sure to add children's documents to your primary go bag. If you have pets, they will need a go bag with leashes, portable bowls, food, and favorite toy.

Remember, the go bag is grabbed as you head out the door. You may not have enough time to start a go bag from scratch. But you could pre-prep go bags and add foods, correct sized diapers, and medication before you leave.

If you need to hunker down at home, the **essentials for a stay bin may be already close at hand.** Parker-Pope suggests gathering items together in a plastic bin or two. The go bags would be a good start. The stay bins would have enough supplies for two-weeks including bottled water, non-perishable foods, pet foods, toilet paper, and personal hygiene supplies. In the event of a power outage, head lamps would be a good item to have in your stay bin. It will free up hands to gather flash-lights, lanterns, candles, lighters, and extra blankets around the house. Your bin should include a battery-powered or crank weather radio (weather reports automatically receives emergency broadcast signal from the NOAA network), solar chargers for cell phones, duct tape, multi-purpose tool, trash bags for sanitation, handwipes, and sanitizers.

For additional information on emergency supplies go to the National Preparedness Month :: Washington State Department of Health The city of Milwaukee has a helpful checklist for building your go bag. The website Ready.gov has a checklist to help you build your stay bin.

Tara Parker-Pope, Is Your ‘Go Bag’ Ready? New York Times, Sept. 6, 2021

National Preparedness Month is a U.S. observance held every September, led by FEMA's Ready Campaign since 2004, to encourage individuals, families, and communities to prepare for emergencies such as natural disasters, power outages, and other hazards.

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

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

Return Service Requested

**Want to JOIN?
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 certifi-
cated or classified school district em-
ployee 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!