

Action Line

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What do I get for my dues?

This question should not be answered as if you are purchasing a consumable commodity. Membership in a union of professional employees is not a purchase. Dues are the member's share of the costs of implementing the association's programs, which protect and advance the employee's interests.

"What do I get for my dues?" can be answered by referring to the basic core of the association's programs:

1. *Protecting employee rights.*
2. *Supporting programs to improve members' economic welfare.*
3. *Promoting and safeguarding better teaching and working conditions (bargaining).*
4. *Keeping the members informed.*
5. *Enhancing professional development.*
6. *Seeking public support for schools by advancing the cause of public education.*

"What do I get for my dues?" must be balanced against similar questions if they are to be raised in other parallel situations. For example:

Q. What do I get for my life insurance premium?

A. *An estate for my loved ones when I die.*

Q. What do I get for my home insurance premiums?

A. *Nothing, unless my home burns down or I suffer some other covered loss.*

Q. What do I get for my automobile insurance premiums?

A. *Nothing, unless I have an accident.*

Q. What do I get for my dues?

A. *Literally thousands of volunteers and professionals working on my behalf at all levels of government to protect and promote public education and the interests of children. These volunteers and professionals work to protect my job, to increase my salary and benefits, to protect and improve my retirement system, to make my views known at all levels, and to make my job easier to do and more rewarding as an occupational choice. In short – **CAREER INSURANCE.***

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Winter is coming. Are you ready?

When rain, flooding, and snow arrive, it's important to fully understand the intent of our contract language related to inclement weather and reporting to work (Article 10.2).

Certificated staff are expected to report to work on time. However, the district and VEA are concerned that individuals get to work safely. If trees are falling across your road or it seems unsafe even for a driver prepared to drive in the snow, common sense says to wait until conditions improve.



Being a nervous driver in the snow is not an excuse. You are expected to arrive at work no later than 30 minutes before students are due to arrive. You may want to plan a snow day carpool if you are uncomfortable driving in the snow. A harsh winter has been predicted, so it's a good idea to make sure you are prepared to get to work. Have a plan before you need it.

Information about school closures is updated on the district website, on the district snow closure information line (313-1401), and on television and radio stations. If you can't get to work because of inclement weather conditions, you may call in a personal leave day if you have one available.

VEBA results

Eligible VEA members were again almost unanimous in their vote to continue participation in the VEBA plan.

The VEBA plan allows certificated employees who have accumulated more than 180 days of sick leave to contribute their excess sick leave hours to a personal tax-free account to pay for qualified medical expenses. It also allows retiring teachers to contribute their unused sick leave days to a personal VEBA account.



Eligible teachers overwhelmingly wanted to encourage all teachers to save their sick leave days and not cash them in. People at this point in their careers said that they wished someone had discouraged them from cashing in along the way, pointing out that they would now be in a much better

financial situation when they retire.

Anyone who would like more information about the VEBA program may call the VEA office or visit the VEBA website, www.veba.org.

You MUST report suspected child abuse

It's important for all staff members to know that under Washington law, you are required to report any suspected child abuse or neglect to Children's Protective Services (CPS). Failure to do so could result in your teaching certificate being revoked, which would prevent you from teaching in any public school in Washington.

District policy directs principals or their designees to make a joint phone report to CPS, followed by a written report. However, if your principal or his/her designee does not make a joint phone report, you are not relieved of your responsibility under the law to make the report if abuse is suspected. Remember, CPS will make the determination of child abuse. Your responsibility is to report it.



Reports to CPS must be made as soon as possible, but no later than 48 hours after first suspecting that abuse/neglect has occurred—even if this means that you have to call CPS yourself in order to meet the deadline.

Be sure that a written report form has been filled out with one copy retained in the building office, one sent to special services, and one kept for your files. Keep your report in a confidential, locked filing cabinet and not left out for others to see or access.

WEA-Retired scholarships

WEA-Retired Dollars for Scholars program is offering up to five \$1,000 non-renewable scholarships. These scholarships are intended to assist WEA members to enhance their skills in a specific education area and/or

attain a teaching certificate. Go online for the [application and more information](#).

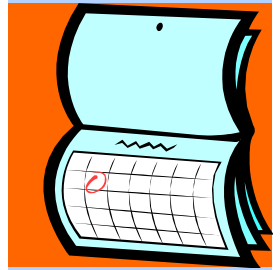


Gyroscope adventure



This week, all VEA members who have 10-20 years of total experience will receive an invitation and application form to participate in VEA's seventh annual Gyroscope Adventure, which will be held February 9-11. If you have 10-20 years of experience, be watching for your information.

Calendar items



December 6
Rep Council
5:00, Gaiser

December 12
Executive Board
5:00, VEA office

Dec. 19-Jan. 2
Winter break

January 3
Rep Council
5:00, Gaiser

January 9
Executive Board
5:00, VEA office

January 16
ML King Day
No school

January 17
VEA social

February 7
Rep Council
5:00, Gaiser

February 9-11
Gyroscope

February 13
Executive Board
5:00, VEA office

February 24-26
Pacific Region
San Diego

How about being an RA delegate?

You vote for people to attend RA, but do you know what it is? Actually, there are two RAs—the WEA RA and the NEA RA.

The WEA RA (Representative Assembly) is WEA's highest policy making body. Once a year, about 1,000 WEA members, elected by their peers, gather to discuss, debate, and vote on the policy decisions that set WEA's goals, priorities, and policies for the coming year(s).

The NEA RA is the world's largest democratic deliberative assembly. Taking place during the final week of June and the first week of July, the NEA RA is the primary legislative and policymaking body of the association and derives its powers from, and is responsible to, the membership.

Nominations for RA delegates were opened at the December rep council meeting. All VEA members are eligible to become RA delegates. Nominations will close at the January 3 rep council meeting, with voting to take place shortly thereafter. Interested members may complete a candidate form and return it to the VEA office no later than January 3. Contact your building rep or the VEA office for a form.



Financial planning

With the start of a new year almost upon us, it's a good time to look at your finances.

WEA approved Valic financial planner Cassie Johnson offers WEA members free financial advice related to saving, investing, planning, and retirement. She can be reached at cassie.johnson@valic.com and will be happy to meet with you.

NEA approved insurance company, California Casualty, offers homeowners and vehicle insurance to NEA/WEA/VEA members. Contact Sherry Hanacek via their [website](#) to get a free, no obligation quote.

The VEA office will be closed December 19-January 2

Happy Holidays

