

# Action Line

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## Legislation proposes to eliminate job security for teachers

Two bills recently introduced in Olympia – by both Democrats and Republicans – would significantly change the employment status of Washington teachers by eliminating job security provisions that are part of our contract. The bills, Senate Bill 5399 and House Bill 1609, would base teacher layoffs on principal evaluations, as well as institute a statewide policy for in-district transfers that would override local bargaining contracts.

Currently, teacher layoffs are implemented by seniority. Under the new bill, if a teacher is given an unsatisfactory evaluation, that teacher would be laid off before others. But no appeal process exists for evaluations. An evaluation is final unless the principal decides to change it. In other words, when a teacher receives an unsatisfactory evaluation from a principal, the teacher can't formally appeal the content of the evaluation to the principal's supervisor or to district administration to revise the evaluation, no matter how inaccurate or unfair the teacher believes the evaluation is.

Further, if a teacher is laid off, the bill eliminates his/her recall rights. Under the existing system, teachers who are laid off are on a call back list based on seniority. If a position opens up in the district, the teacher is automatically hired back. The new legislation would eliminate this call-back requirement, and only guarantee the teacher an interview.

If an individual school sees a decrease in enrollment, teachers are now given a job in a different building if there is an opening. The proposed legislation takes away this safety net by laying off the teachers whose school's

enrollment went down instead of moving them to other openings in the district.

The bill proposes that all teachers would be ranked according to their evaluations. If a layoff occurs, the lowest-ranked teachers would go first. If there was a tie, district seniority would be used as the tie breaker, regardless of how many years a teacher taught in the state. (Currently, state seniority is used for layoffs so that experienced teachers who change districts are not risking a layoff by giving up their district seniority.)

All due process rights would be gone under this bill. Teachers would not be able to appeal their dismissal. The evaluation decision by the principal would be final. When teachers are dismissed now, they have the right to a hearing to appeal the decision. While no one wants bad teachers in our classrooms, employment decisions need to be based on more than a 30-minute principal observation.

Several Gates Foundation funded organizations, Stand for Children, and The League of Education Voters, are lobbying heavily to get this bill passed.

It's important that you let your legislators know your opinion on these bills. Simply go to [www.ourvoicewashingtonea.org](http://www.ourvoicewashingtonea.org) from your home computer. Remember that district computers or resources should not be used to contact legislators. We encourage you to contact them today to ensure that they hear the point of view from teachers who are working in our classrooms.

## Executive Board

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## Reclaim your health

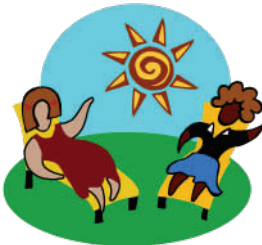
It's easy to ignore your health when you are dealing with the demands that are placed on you at work and trying to cope with your everyday life. Premera Blue Cross invites you to take the WebMD Health Quotient online health assessment.

WEA Premera Blue Cross members have been sent invitations to take this personalized assessment. The first 10,000 Premera subscribers (and their dependents 18 years of age and older) who complete the assessment between February 1 and April 11 will receive a \$50 check.

How do you access the online health assessment? Simply follow these steps:

1. Go to [www.premera.com/wea](http://www.premera.com/wea)
2. Click on "Take the Health Quotient"
3. Complete the confidential assessment (takes about 20 minutes)

The confidential assessment will give you personalized advice and support to help you on your way to improving your health. Your assessment may also qualify you for free coaching to receive the extra support you may need.



## Pre-retirement workshop

There is still space in the March 18-19 pre-retirement seminar. This workshop covers retirement information for teachers on Plans 1, 2, and 3. Even if you're not going to retire in the next couple years, the workshop can help you plan for that happy day.

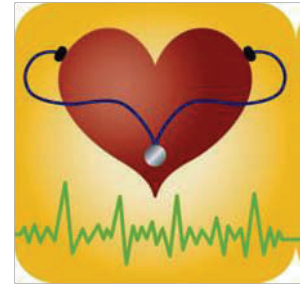
The workshop is put on by WEA-Retired. Call the VEA office if you would like a registration form or [e-mail Bonnie Larson](mailto:Bonnie.Larson@vea.org), and ask her to send you a form. You can also download a form from the [VEA website](http://www.vea.org). Registration is on a first-paid basis.

## Free health screenings

On March 3, WEA Select Medical plan enrollees may take part in a free health screening. VEA has forwarded an e-mail and registration link from WEA Select to all members.

Find out your important health numbers – your blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, and body mass index (BMI). Once you know these numbers, you can begin to take charge of your health. This screening is voluntary and confidential. Space is limited, so make your appointment today.

If you did not receive the VEA e-mail explaining this program, e-mail [Bonnie Larson](mailto:Bonnie.Larson@vea.org) at the VEA office and she will forward a copy to you.



## Read Across America

For the past several years, with the help of Vancouver Barnes and Noble, VEA has purchased thousands of books for school libraries. This year, due to our own budget challenges, we will try something different.

On March 2, from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m., we will be "taking over" Barnes & Noble. School librarians will make up wish lists and the community may purchase books for particular schools. This event will also be a book fair, which means that up to 25 percent of the proceeds purchased with a book fair flyer will be donated back to school libraries. We plan to have as many students represented as possible. In fact, the first 15 schools to book an event will receive a \$100 gift card to Barnes & Noble.

How can you help?

- Save the date and join us!
- Find a group of 15 or more students with something to show off. This can be anything from a performance to artwork or project displays.
- Forward the voucher to absolutely everyone you know and encourage them to stop by the store and buy something or see our fabulous VSD kiddos do wonderful things.



This is a great way to get the entire community involved in supporting our school libraries. VEA will be sending an e-mail with a voucher to all members. We hope you will spread them far and wide. There will also be some in the store for anyone who needs one.

NEA's Read Across America program, which is in its 13th year, focuses on motivating children and teens to read through events, partnerships, and reading resources.

This national reading celebration takes place each year on or near March 2, the birthday of Dr. Seuss. Across the country, thousands of schools, libraries, and community centers participate by bringing together kids, teens, and books – and you can, too!

## VEA forms Special Ed Mythbusters Squad

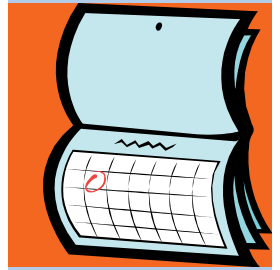
VEA is in the process of developing a brain trust of special education members. Our goal is to help dispel rumors and myths that often surround special education.

WEA is calling this group the Mythbusters Squad. This committee will also advise VEA leadership and the bargaining team regarding our response to district proposals and initiatives.

Our first group of 10 people will train with WEA expert, Mark Anderson. We hope to provide opportunities for additional training as the committee gets off the ground. Mona Rominger, specialist trustee on the VEA Executive Board, is the committee chair.

Special ed teachers who would like to be part of the committee or be part of future training should contact [Mona Rominger](#) or their building rep.

## Calendar items



February 1	Rep Council
February 8	Executive Board
February 10-12	Gyroscopes
February 21	Presidents' Day
February 22	Executive Board
March 1	Rep Council
March 2	Read Across America at Barnes & Noble
March 8	Executive Board
March 17-19	Sparks
March 18-19	PoliSparks
March 18-19	Pre-retirement seminar
March 22	Executive Board
April 4-8	Spring break
April 12	Rep Council
April 19	Executive Board

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## What is VEA for? What are our values?

Over the last several weeks, the VEA Executive Board has been developing a values statement.

In difficult times, it's easier to navigate when we can articulate what we are for, instead of saying no to what we are against.

In February, we shared a PowerPoint presentation about our values with the rep council and sent an electronic copy of the presentation to each rep. We want all members to see the presentation and give us feedback.

If your building has not yet had the presentation, talk to your building rep to set up a VEA meeting in your building.

## Tax deductions for educators

If you were an eligible educator in 2010, you can deduct up to \$250 of your qualified expenses. This is in addition to your association dues.

If you and your spouse are filing jointly and both of you are eligible educators, the maximum deduction is \$500. This deduction is recorded on Line 23 of Form 1040.

An eligible educator is a K-12 teacher, instructor, counselor, principal, or aide who worked in a school for at least 900 hours during a school year.



## Deduct your association dues

Planning to work on your taxes soon? Don't forget that you can deduct most of your association dues from your income tax. Details are in the January newsletter and on the [VEA website](#).



## Would you like to be a part of the VEA Executive Board?

In April, members will have the opportunity to elect new VEA board members. Open positions include president, 1<sup>st</sup> vice president, 3<sup>rd</sup> vice president, treasurer, and specialist educator trustee.

Nominations will close at the March 1 rep council meeting. Any VEA member may run for one of these positions. Candidate forms are available from the [VEA office](#) or from building reps.

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