



# Retiree Advocate



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**Orval Garrison, President**

*CTA/NEA-Retired*

## PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Spring of 2023 has been a busy time for CTA/NEA-Retired. The March NEA Summit and NEA-Retired Conference were held in San Francisco. That meant that CTA and CTA/NEA-Retired were “host” state helping to make both events successful. Each year the NEA Summit brings together NEA state leaders and members from across the nation to share issues and challenges facing educators in the public school arena. NEA organizers contacted me requesting a cadre of retiree volunteers to assist. I am proud to report that sixteen of our retired members signed up. The NEA organizers had nothing but compliments for our California retiree volunteers. Three cheers and thank you to all who helped!

The NEA-Retired Conference in San Francisco was also a success with many retirees from the various state NEA retired affiliates converging on the city to exchange strategies

for growing retired membership, implementing continuous membership programs, and highlighting the value of Member Benefits in retirement. Keeping retirees aware of and involved in political initiatives that protect and improve pensions was also a focus.

Very soon thereafter, CTA/NEA-Retired conducted its own Retired Issues Conference in Santa Clara March 16-17. (See article on page 4.)

Winding down the 2022-2023 school year, our Liaisons who attend all CTA Service Center Council meetings in the state routinely express how important it is for Active chapters to share the names and contact information of member retirees. I attend the Service Center Council Chairs Committee meetings at CTA State Council, and I also emphasize the importance of making this contact.

CTA/NEA-Retired also sponsored four Retirement Issues webinars this year, the last occurring in April. These free webinars, presented by CTA Staff Rose Luna and Mitch Olson, target those getting closer to retirement. Sharing information about CalSTRS, CalPERS, Social Security, Medicare, and Member Benefits reinforces the importance of staying connected to CTA and NEA in retirement. I’m also proud to report that the CTA/NEA-Retired CalSTRS Cadre continues to have a strong voice at CalSTRS Client Advisory, Board and Constituency Meetings.

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## NED CURTIS RECEIVES THE 2023 CTA/NEA-RETIRED ELLEN LOGUE “WHO” AWARD

CTA/NEA-Retired takes pride in announcing that Ned Curtis has been selected as our 2023 WHO Award recipient. He was chosen by the WHO Award Selection Committee which considered multiple nomination forms before selecting him.

Ned Curtis has a long history of activism in support of public education with both CTA and CTA/NEA-Retired. He was a biology teacher with the Apple Valley Unified School District for many years, president of AVUTA (Apple Valley Unified Teachers Association) and chaired the San Bernardino County Presidents Coalition. He also served on CTA State Council for multiple terms, was involved in various CTA political campaigns for candidates and initiatives, and helped to pass local school bonds at a time when bonds were not passing California. It is evident that Ned Curtis has contributed significantly to public education before and after retirement.

Soon after retiring, he became involved with San Gorgonio-Retired in the San Bernardino/Riverside/High Desert area, where he served five years as president. Along with others in

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## PHOTOGRAPHS Retired Members

## BOARD REPORT by Debra Sheehan, Secretary-Treasurer

CTA/NEA-Retired Board of Directors  
Meeting (1-27-2023)

**Action Items:** Approved the following motions: the allocation of scholarship money for the coming year: two \$1,000 Russo Scholarships and four \$1,500 Pedretti Scholarships; changing Lifetime dues from \$550.00 to \$600.00, with appropriate Annual and Pension Deduction rate adjustments, effective September 1, 2023; asking CTA to investigate a process to allow Pre-retired members to pay dues over time; and extending the \$300 Chapter financial assistance program to December 31, 2023.

### Reports:

1) **CTA Legislative Advocate Seth Bramble** presented an update on legislation. He shared that 41% of those elected to the legislature are women and that many committees have new chairs. Seth said that the current budget deficit could impact projects.

2) **CTA Secretary/Treasurer Leslie Littman** spoke of the difficulties and financial barriers for students getting a credential and affording student teaching. She talked about the slow, steady decline in membership. Leslie mentioned two potential and dangerous initiatives for the 2024 election cycle.

3) **CTA Vice-President David Goldberg** spoke of the need for a stable funding source and a focus on Community Schools and County School Board races.

4) **Vice President Dana Dillon** announced that the Bylaws Committee is reconvening to revisit our Bylaws and Standing Rules. She discussed a member suggestion to hold our elections regionally, not state-wide as is done now. NEA Bylaw 811A prohibits this as violating the one member – one vote rule, since our regions have different numbers of members. Dana reminded us that our policy making body is our General Membership meetings.

5) **Secretary/Treasurer Debra Sheehan** stated that our membership is at 20,257 as of December 20,

2022. This is an increase of 348 from last December. The balance for the Russo scholarship is \$9,118 and \$207,300 for the Pedretti Scholarship. She presented and explained the reallocated 2022-2023 budget process. Budget items have remained unchanged for many years, while our membership and the number of State Council Representatives have increased. CTA has increased our 2022-2023 budget to better serve our needs. Debra proposed a change in the dues amount. After much discussion, Lifetime dues were adjusted from \$550 to \$600 for parity with NEA-Retired. Annual and Pension Deduction dues will change proportionally. CTA will again be asked to establish an installment plan for pre-retired memberships. 6) **President Orval Garrison** spoke about the Community College Association outreach about forming a CCA statewide chapter. He shared that Governor Newsom's executive order regarding the 180-day break in CalSTRS service expired in March 2022 and told of members having questions about Districts adhering to the law. The annual CalSTRS earnings limit is \$49,000. The Board's decision to extend for one additional year the terms for alternate seats ending in 2024 is to be brought to the Annual March Meeting for consideration.

7) **Board Members** shared the work they are doing with their chapters to increase membership and participation. Hybrid meetings have been very successful. Ethnic Minority-at-Large Director Mary Rose Ortega announced two Ethnic Minority Scholarship winners.

8) **CTA Staff Consultant Brian Stafford** has started a RAN (Retired Action Network) update process. Our RAN was activated regarding Florida education issues on March 7 and an issue in the Central Valley on March 17. Members who are interested in reaching out to their legislators on important issues should contact their Board member.

## BOARD REPORT

by Debra Sheehan, Secretary-Treasurer

CTA/NEA-Retired Board of Directors Meeting  
(3-24-2023)

### Action Items:

Approved the following motions: to refer leadership approved Capital Area Retired Educators bylaws to the General Membership meeting; changes to the Standing Rules: right to appeal censure, suspension, and expulsion; participation at statewide political party meetings; and Interim Board Members.

### Reports:

1) **CTA Legislative Advocate Seth Bramble** told of interim positions taken: cleanup language on AB 1667,

watch position for amendments on SB 252 (divestment), and support for SB 765 (eliminating the waiting period to sub and changing the earnings cap).

2) **President Orval Garrison** reminded members that CTA/NEA-Retired members do have access to the CTA Disaster Relief Fund. Those applications now go to local CTA staff and then are forwarded to the CTA/NEA-Retired President for approval.

We are trying to expedite the increasing number of applications. Orval described the IRS tax-exempt status problems of several retired chapters who haven't filed correctly with the IRS over multiple years. CTA Finance department is looking into this for the impacted chapters. Orval reminded all chapters about the importance of attending the ongoing treasurer's training.

3) **Vice President Dana Dillon** presented each Standing Rule change individually, with rationale and approval of changes for the right to appeal censure, suspension, and expulsion; participation at statewide political party meetings; and Interim Board Members.

4) **CTA Staff Consultant Brian Stafford** and **Staff Support Nessa Connor** were given kudos by the Board for the excellent work they did on our Retired Issues Conference.

5) **NEA Director Ed Foglia** discussed HR 5, which reduces protections for LGBTQ+ students and students with disabilities. He asked members to call their Congressional Representatives and ask them to oppose HR 5.

## THE POWER OF DISRUPTION; OUR COLLECTIVE JOURNEY'S TOWARD JUSTICE SETS THE TONE FOR CTA'S EQUITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONFERENCE

By Mary Rose Ortega, At-Large Director

The 2023 CTA Equity and Human Rights Conference was held March 17-19 at the Santa Clara Marriott. This year's Conference theme was "The Power of Disruption: Our Collective Journeys Toward Justice." It began with a Women's Rights Committee (WRC) Forum followed by a Welcome Reception and Dinner.

After the general session on the second day of the conference, the workshop sessions covered the themes of Awareness, Capacity Building, and Action. I attended a workshop titled "Mutual Aid Societies-Mutualistas" which were developed in response to economic deprivation and institutional racism faced by Mexicans in Texas, New Mexico, California and Southern Colorado. These groups provided services not available due to legal and social restrictions. The presenter also provided examples of existing programs that help Latino and Black communities.

Another session I attended was "Everyone should take it, but not everyone should teach it." The presenters

provided a general overview of Ethnic Studies and discussed weaknesses in current program models in teacher preparation. They concluded with what could be done to better support teachers.

During lunch, there was a Keynote presentation by Ernest Crim III who is an Anti-Racist Educator and hate crime survivor. His book *The ABC's of Affirming Black Children* discusses 26 Black artists, activists, scientists, and speakers who dared to be great in the face of injustice and adversity. That evening at the CTA Human Rights Awards Dinner, CTA recognized the awardees for their outstanding commitment to social justice and promoting and protecting human and civil rights.

On Sunday morning, there was a forum on LGBTQ+ issues. Then CTA President Toby Boyd, in the closing keynote, spoke about the continued commitment and dedication of our members "who keep our social justice mission strong" and "for making Human Rights a priority" in CTA.

# CTA/NEA-RETIRED'S ANNUAL ISSUES CONFERENCE MET IN SANTA CLARA – IN PERSON

By Bonnie Shatun, District 3 Director

After several years of virtual conferences, our annual Issues Conference met in person March 16-17 at the Santa Clara Marriott. Masks were available for those who wished and there were many hugs and handshakes. People were glad to be together again.



CTA President E. Toby Boyd addressed the Conference for the last time as President and thanked retirees for their continued work in support of public education.

CTA President E. Toby Boyd addressed the body for his last time as President. He thanked retired members for staying involved, stressed that there's still a need for retired members in the Association and said whenever retirees were needed, we answered the call. He spoke about CTA's commitment to the concept of Community Schools with parents, students, educators and community members working together to decide what students need to be the best they can be. He concluded by saying he didn't

want to be only talking to us, he wanted to be talking with us and opened the floor up for questions.

There were workshop sessions focusing on numerous topics—travel, senior health research, Member Benefits, healthcare & Medicare, CalSTRS issues, computer security and social media, forming new local chapters, a preview of election 2024, and so many more. An effort is made to update topics and introduce new ones.

The conference was followed by our Annual General Meeting where the membership approved extending Alternate Board State Council terms from 2024 to 2025 and, after a presentation of how budget categories were adjusted to reflect 2023 priorities, the 2023-2024 budget was adopted. President Garrison and Secretary-Treasurer Sheehan also gave updates on our two scholarships. Two \$1,000 Russo Scholarships will be awarded to students in a speech therapy and audiology program. Four \$1,500 Pedretti Scholarships will be given to students in an elementary or secondary teaching credential program.

The Pedretti Scholarship balance is a stable \$207,300. The Russo Scholarship balance is \$10,868 and requires more fundraising.\*

Before the meeting was adjourned the **2023 Ellen Logue CTA/NEA-Retired State WHO Award**

was announced and presented to Ned Curtis from the High Desert Chapter. (See the article about Ned on page 1.)

\*To contribute to the Russo Scholarship fund, individual or chapter checks are to be made out to **CTA Foundation for Teaching and Learning**, with "**Russo Scholarship Fund**" in the memo line and mailed to Debra Sheehan, 3045 Capitola Road, Apt. 17, Santa Cruz, CA 95062.



Save the date!  
Next year the  
CTA/NEA-  
Retired Conference  
will be held February  
29 – March 1, 2024 in  
Southern California.

# NEA HOLDS LOBBY DAY TO ELIMINATE GPO/WEP – AND CTA/NEA-RETIRED WAS THERE

CTA/NEA-Retired was called upon by NEA legislative advocates to send two members to Washington, D.C. to participate in the NEA GPO/WEP Day of Action on May 16 in support of the repeal of the Social Security penalties commonly known as GPO/WEP. Board Members Karen Schuett and Patty Taylor, both former NEA Directors, represented California on this very successful NEA Day of Action.

More than 2.5 million Americans have their Social Security benefits reduced or lost due to GPO/WEP. The Government Pension Offset (GPO) reduces or eliminates the Social Security spousal or survivor benefits for people who get a pension from employment not covered by Social Security. The Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) can reduce earned Social Security

benefits for those who also receive a government pension of their own. The Social Security Fairness Act of 2023, House bill HR 82 and Senate bill S 597 would eliminate the GPO/WEP.

Karen and Patty visited some Members of Congress from California who had not yet signed on to co-sponsor the Social Security Fairness Act of 2023 and explained the bills and shared stories of how their constituents, who have dedicated their lives to public service, were being unfairly penalized. In one day they met with six Representatives in person, seven Congressional staff members and dropped off materials in four more offices.

House bill H.R. 82 currently has 281 co-sponsors and Senate bill S. 597 has 44 co-sponsors. It's been a long, hard fight and it's not over yet.



As part of the NEA GPO/WEP Lobby Day, CTA/NEA-Retired Board Members Karen Schuett (left) and Patty Taylor (right) met with Rep. Mark Takano (CD 41 Riverside) who is a longtime supporter of removing the penalties.

To email your Senators and Representative and urge them to support the Social Security Fairness Act (S. 597/H.R. 82), go to [NEA.org](http://NEA.org) and click on the red Take Action button.



More than fifty UTLA-Retired members attended their May 12 General Assembly to hear an outstanding presentation by CalSTRS CEO Casandra Lichnock who spoke about their commitment to "securing the financial future and sustaining the trust of California's educators." CalSTRS is also committed to low carbon investments throughout the fund and influencing business practices in the companies in which they invest. She shared the good news that, in California, CalSTRS members live longer than other retired groups. Did you know that there are 438 members over 100 years old receiving benefits?

# NED CURTIS RECEIVES THE 2023 CTA/NEA-RETIRED ELLEN LOGUE "WHO" AWARD

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the High Desert, he helped organize a new High Desert-Retired chapter.

In 2022 Ned was appointed to be a Liaison to the High Desert Service Center Council. He volunteers to staff Retired tables at various CTA conferences, is often seen covering the CTA/NEA-Retired table at State Council, and is very convincing at explaining to potential members the advantages of remaining connected to CTA and NEA in retirement. And, he is always the first one helping quietly behind the scenes to make CTA/NEA-Retired activities successful including spearheading his chapter's holiday toys, clothes and blankets drive, volunteering to be the field trip driver, sending letters to new retirees, and more.

Ned Curtis is certainly worthy of the 2023 Ellen Logue WHO Award, and we warmly congratulate him on receiving this recognition.



## PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

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This spring, because of two resignations, we conducted two elections for Board/State Council replacements using the Simply Voting online voting system. Members have elected Karen Schuett to complete a term on the Board for Region II and Patty Blume Taylor to complete a term

for Region IV. Both Karen and Patty also participated in an NEA Day of Action effort in May. (See article on page 5.)

Finally, time marches on, and costs seldom stay static. The last time the CTA/NEA-Retired Board voted to change dues was in 2018. The Board voted in January 2023 to change dues effective **September 1, 2023**. Annual dues will change

to \$85, Pension-deduction will change to \$68.40 (\$5.70/mo.), and Lifetime goes to \$600. We have advertised this change in all ways available to us— including Service Center Councils, emails to senior educators, and at conferences. Anyone joining Lifetime (one-time-payment) before September 1 may join at the current \$550 rate. Please share this with people you think should know.



A group of Stanislaus CTA/NEA Retired folks gathered on "The Big Stump" at Calaveras Big Trees State Park in May as part of the park's annual Dogwood Festival, a celebration of the flowering of the dogwood trees which, though technically an invasive species, display a beautiful contrast to the native sequoia redwoods. Chapter Secretary Paul Prescott, who is also volunteers at the park, led the group on an easy, 1½ mile stroll through the woods, adding anecdotes and historical tidbits. The nature walk was followed by lunch amid the sequoias, old-time live music, horse-drawn carriage rides, and wine tasting at nearby vineyards. According to Chapter President Llewellyn Boyle, "The event was consistent with the group's mission to conquer the fear of having a good time!

# CHAPTER FOCUS: HIGH DESERT CTA/NEA-RETIRED

By Anne Johnson-Curtis, Region 3 Director and Former President of High Desert-Retired

High Desert CTA/NEA-Retired started formation meetings in 2015 to represent the entire desert areas of San Bernardino and Los Angeles Counties. By-laws were written and the organization chose officers in June 2016. As membership grew, the Los Angeles County portion pulled away to form their own chapter. High Desert CTA/NEA (the San Bernardino side) continues to meet in Hesperia.

When the pandemic started, the High Desert CTA/NEA-Retired Board struggled with how to continue to be active. We decided to start having monthly Zoom meetings. Our first presentation was on Emergency Preparedness. Members discovered that they were able to get just as much information through Zoom, as well as have time to talk and catch up with other members. At another meeting, we all shared hobbies and “survival” techniques that were helpful during the

pandemic. Once the pandemic eased, the Board added socially distanced field trips such as outdoor picnics, walks along the Mojave River, a trip to the California Botanic Garden in Claremont, and TGIFs with each member and guest bringing his/her own refreshments and sitting outside at least six feet apart.

When the High Desert-Retired group returned to in-person meetings, they changed to a hybrid format allowing members to attend in-person or virtually. Some of the topics included Wills & Trusts, “Up Close and Personal with Getty Art” by Docent Debra Breeding (a CTA/NEA-Retired member), Storytelling, and Political Updates and Member Benefits information by President Orval Garrison. Our most popular fieldtrips have been to Barstow Goldstone and Route 66 Museums (see photos), Poppy Fields, Singing Road and Movie in Lancaster, and Claremont/

Pomona College Friday outdoor concerts (preceded by brunch).

Our members also regularly participate in political activities, including phone banking in support of CTA positions on Propositions and against the Recall of Governor Newsom, writing postcards, working CTA/NEA phone banks to members and voters in other states, and joining marches and informational protests to support bargaining in local associations. Last November, three more of our members were elected to school boards, bringing our total of High Desert-Retired members serving on local school boards to five.

For more information, contact President Ken Kerr ([caseyk100@hotmail.com](mailto:caseyk100@hotmail.com)) or Membership Chair Gordon Williamson ([ghwkr3@verizon.net](mailto:ghwkr3@verizon.net), 760 628-8248).



Members of the High Desert chapter especially enjoy taking field trips that explore the rich history of the area. This picture shows them with the '65 Mustang at the Barstow Route 66 Mother Road Museum. There are also trains and transportation vehicles on the grounds for visitors to investigate, along with the Western America Railroad Museum and many displays and artifacts.



High Desert members also visited the NASA Goldstone Visitor Center. It's located on the second floor of the historic Barstow Harvey House and former hotel and railroad depot. Goldstone was created in 1958 by JPL to support the Pioneer program of deep space exploration probes. There are three Goldstone sites: one near Barstow CA, one near Madrid Spain, and one near Canberra, Australia. That's chapter President Ken Kerr in the astronaut suit.



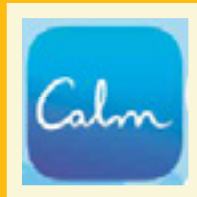
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As CTA/NEA-Retired members you now have access to **Calm**, an award-winning app for guided meditation, relaxation and sleep. It's now free for you and you can add up to five of your dependents. Whether you have 30 seconds or 30 minutes, **Calm** is there for you.

It includes guided breathing exercises; music tracks to promote focus, relaxation and sleep; guided meditations for anxiety, stress, gratitude; movement sessions; an entire library of soothing bedtime stories; and more.

To check out this benefit and log on, go to [CTAMemberBenefits.org/calm](http://CTAMemberBenefits.org/calm) to access the CTA Calm link. You will need your 10-digit CTA Member ID number. It's on the mailing label of this publication. For questions call CTA Member Benefits at 650-552-5200.