

# Retiree Advocate



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## RESOLUTIONS FOR THE “NEW YEAR”

As the new school year begins I’m reminded that, since kindergarten, I’ve always been on a school calendar. Even though I’ve been retired for more than 5 years, I still enjoy waking up and realizing the only things I *have* to do are activities I *want* to do.

So what I decided to do in the first two months as President of CTA/NEA-Retired was participate as a delegate in the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and the NEA Representative Assembly in D.C., attend the CTA Presidents Conference in San Jose, and our own CTA/NEA-Retired Planning Meeting in Long Beach.

### Be Part of the Prop 55 Campaign

For the next few months my/our attention will be mostly focused on the upcoming election, specifically helping pass Prop 55. Passing *The Children’s Education and Health Care Protection Act of 2016* is essential for our California Public Schools to be adequately funded and continually improve. **I want us all to be part of this campaign.** More information on Prop 55 and other CTA-supported initiatives can be found in this newsletter.

### Continue to Fight Unfair Social Security Offsets

There are other long-standing or “chronic” issues that I will continue to work on. Within the first few days of becoming President, I received an email asking why our organization “has not gotten the Social Security Offsets repealed yet?” After lobbying, writing letters and speaking against the GPO/WEP for close to 20 years, I certainly feel the frustration and disappointment along with the tens of thousands of retired members impacted by these unfair laws. Congress appears to be packing up without any relief for retirees. I tried to assure the writer that we, CTA and NEA, have been and will continue to tackle this issue. Perhaps with a more responsive new Congress, hmmm? More details are available in this newsletter and by visiting [www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org).

### Improve Long Term Care and Prescription Affordability

Letters and emails also arrived asking about the soaring cost of long term care and the burden of high-priced prescription medicines. Recently, a notice was sent that my premiums are increasing by 85%. These serious “national crises” are definitely on our agenda as well.

As a CTA affiliate, CTA/NEA-Retired works with our lobbyists in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. As part of CTA’s Governing Body also known as State Council, we help write proposed legislation on these and other issues important to retirees and educators. Our lobbyists at the CTA Governmental Relations office in Sacramento then take these proposals to the California State Legislature. As CTA/NEA-Retired delegates elected to the NEA

Representative Assembly, we decide NEA’s positions and also propose legislation that our NEA Lobbyists and our NEA Board Members fight for on Capitol Hill.

Working on these issues this school year is what, “I want to do!” I ask that you please join in and help us make this a better world for our members, students, families and communities.

Marc R. Sternberger  
PRESIDENT  
CTA/NEA-Retired



## JOIN THE FIGHT TO REPEAL SOCIAL SECURITY OFFSETS

By Ed Foglia, District 2 Director

There is no issue of greater importance to CalSTRS retirees than repealing the offset provisions to Social Security – Government Pension Offset (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP). Within NEA, 15 states are impacted by the GPO/WEP offset provisions with all state affiliates having a huge investment in saving and strengthening Social Security.

The GPO reduces Social Security benefits paid to spouses or survivors when either has earned a pension from a government job that was not covered by Social Security (such as CalSTRS). This reduction is equal to two-thirds of the amount of the pension payment from non-covered government work.

“The WEP reduces the Social Security benefits of people whose work histories include jobs covered and not covered by Social Security.”

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The GPO and WEP affect only about 3.5 percent of U.S. households, but can have a significant impact on those households by reducing the value of lifetime Social Security benefits by roughly one-fifth.

I, too, am disappointed and frustrated in the lack of progress made in getting these laws repealed.

We are not alone in this fight! The retired members on NEA Board of Directors, the

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## PHOTOGRAPHS

*Retired Members*



CTA/NEA-Retired was well represented at the September 19 CARA Town Hall in Carson, CA.

## CARA HOLDS CANDIDATE AND TOWN HALL FORUMS ON SENIOR ISSUES

By Pat Ryan, CARA Representative

In September, the California Alliance for Retired Americans held 14 Regional Town Halls in order for members across the state to meet candidates in key Congressional and State Races as well as hear where the candidates stand on issues of importance to seniors. Some of the issues discussed were Medicare, Social Security, protecting pensions from privatization, prescription drug benefits, affordable community-based long term support and services (e.g., long-term care), safer streets, increasing transportation services, and affordable housing. Information was also presented and discussed about important State Propositions on the November 2016 ballot.

I attended the forum in Carson on September 19 sponsored by the Los Angeles County and San Gabriel Valley CARA Teams. Congresswoman Janice Hahn was the forum's keynote speaker, and she did an excellent job presenting her positions on healthcare, pensions, Social Security and Medicare.

Former Assemblymembers and candidates for State Senate (SD 35) spoke - Steven Bradford and Warren Furitani. Nanette Barrigan, candidate for Congressional District 44, also spoke.

The part of the program dealing with ballot measures gave our own Bonnie Shatun an opportunity to explain Proposition 55 and why its passage is essential in order to continue offering California's students the best education possible. Bonnie also answered questions about public schools and education funding that came up during the Q & A period.

Did you know that there are 44 million people in the U.S. who are over 65? And, they are more likely to vote than any other age group? In the 2012 election, 72% of them voted. The senior vote can make a difference in this election.

For more information about CARA or their November 2016 ballot recommendations, visit [www.californiaalliance.org](http://www.californiaalliance.org).

### \$100 ANNOUNCING \$100 2016-17 CTA/NEA-RETIRED CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

The local retired chapter recruiting the most new CTA/NEA-Retired Members will receive \$100 and be recognized at CTA/NEA-RETIRED's Annual Conference on March 3, 2017

Sign up NEW Members  
(NEA/CTA- Retired: Retired Life, CalSTRS Deduction and/or Annual Memberships)

Effective Membership Start Dates: September 1, 2016 to January 31, 2017  
(Includes new members signed up in Spring/Summer 2016 who became Retired Members Sept. 1)

Turn in: New Members' Names, Addresses and E-mails to [EKawasaki@cta.org](mailto:EKawasaki@cta.org)  
by February 7, 2017 to be verified and counted.



CTA/NEA-Retired's Executive Board along with their staff consultants met for three days in August to map out our goals and plans for the upcoming year, and participate in training on the Proposition 55 campaign.

## WE MUST PASS PROP 55 – THE CALIFORNIA CHILDREN'S EDUCATION AND HEALTH CARE PROTECTION ACT OF 2016

By Bonnie Shatun, District 3 Director



Help our children  
**THRIVE!**

Those of us who were teaching when the last recession reduced the funding coming into public schools can never forget the devastating impact on losing \$50 billion had on our classrooms and students. My first grade class size increased from 20 to 30 students. Programs were eliminated and supplies were limited, including books, paper and copies. Field trips were reduced or stopped, many school libraries were closed and furlough days cut into student instructional time as well as educators' salaries. Statewide, 30,000 teachers and 20,000 support professionals were laid off. Community college students faced large tuition hikes.

In 2012, together with the Governor and other organizations, we passed Proposition 30 which has begun to get school funding back on track. However, Prop 30 is set to expire and without extending it, schools will lose at least \$4 billion in funding the first year alone and the state budget will face a deficit of \$4 billion. We can't let that happen! But WE can do our part. Below are some talking points about Prop 55. In addition to voting, we need to talk with family and friends about the importance of passing Prop 55 and look for opportunities to share the information with individuals and groups in our communities.

- Prop 55 **does not** raise anyone's taxes. It continues the Prop 30 tax level on individuals earning more than \$250,000/year and joint filers earning more than \$500,000/year.
- Prop 55 **does not** continue the quarter-cent sales tax that was part of Prop 30. It will expire to the benefit of working and middle class families.
- Prop 55 **is expected** to generate an average of \$8 billion/year. Approximately half of that will go to K-12 and Community Colleges. Funds will also go to improve access to health care for low-income children, their families and seniors.
- Without Prop 55, schools will face a \$4 billion cut in funding the first year alone.

CTA also urges a YES vote on Propositions 58 and 52. Prop 58 gives parents and educators the freedom to choose the most effective instructional methods for their students. It helps them learn English and expand opportunities for kids to learn other languages. Prop 52 extends the current Medi-Cal hospital fee program that generates more than \$3 billion/year in federal matching funds. Medi-Cal helps provide health care services to over 13 million Californians, many of which are children and seniors.

**ALL CTA/NEA-RETIRED MEMBERS ARE URGED TO CONTACT THEIR LOCAL ACTIVE CHAPTER OR NEAREST CTA OFFICE AND VOLUNTEER TO HELP WITH PHONE BANKING AND OTHER CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES.**

For more information about Prop 55, visit [www.cta.org](http://www.cta.org) and click on the Campaign 2016 tab. A complete list of CTA-recommended candidates and ballot measure positions in your area can be found at [www.YourVoterGuide.com](http://www.YourVoterGuide.com).



CTA/NEA-Retired Northbay met on September 14 in Santa Rosa. There was a great luncheon welcoming new Sonoma County Retired Educators and a lively discussion about the fall campaign. We are so lucky to have our retired brothers and sisters working hard to help pass Proposition 55.

# THE 2016 NEA REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY SETS THE COURSE FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR

By Alen Ritchie, NEA-Retired Executive Council

CTA/NEA-Retired's 17 delegates to the 2016 NEA RA joined approximately 7,000 other delegates from across the nation to enjoy an exciting, inspiring and VERY busy seven days in Washington, D.C. from July 1-7. This RA opened with a moving tribute to the victims of the Orlando shootings and recognition of others lost to violence.

In her opening address, President Lily Eskelsen Garcia spoke about the "real world out there and it's not a safe place." She continued on to say, "...that dangerous world needs us...united educators are a powerful antidote to fear and divisiveness." Lily also took aim at "demagogues who use fear and divisiveness for their own political gain." And then she took on Donald Trump specifically for his "racism" and "sexist" comments about women in addition to his "ignorance of our Constitution." She contrasted his candidacy with that of Hillary Clinton's by saying, "she's fought for children with disabilities and children with dreams. She's fought for women and unions and working families all her life." Lastly, Lily urged the delegates and NEA members to "use our power in choosing our next president - and no matter who SHE is - you will have a voice in shaping the future of this country."

One of the high points for many was the appearance of the U.S. Presidential Democratic nominee, Hillary Clinton. We

were treated to an address that included many positive promises for education and educators. She said, "I have this idea that when we're making decisions about education, we should actually listen to educators...and, if I'm fortunate enough to be elected president, educators will have a partner in the White House - and you'll always have a seat at the table." She also stated that, "as President, I'll launch a campaign to modernize and elevate the profession of teaching...and we need to be serious about raising your pay...we also should pay support staff better." In her speech, Hillary emphasized that "supporting educators means supporting unions... I'll fight back against the attacks, and stand up for your right to organize and bargain collectively."

Later in the week, 84.1% of the delegates voted that NEA recommend Hillary Clinton for President.

We heard inspiring addresses from the Teacher of the Year Jahana Hayes and from CTA's ESP of the Year Doreen McGuire-Grigg. Another important vote was on Bylaw Amendment 1a, which passed with an 81.6% vote to approve language for the UTLA merger.

One of the most work-intensive parts of the RA is discussing and voting on the New Business Items (NBIs). An NBI is something that someone wants NEA to "do" in the coming year. Out of this year's



Former Secretary of State and candidate for President Hillary Clinton addressed the NEA Representative Assembly in July. In her speech she said, "I have this idea that when we're making decisions about education, we should actually listen to educators."

125 NBIs, three were of special interest to retirees and all three passed.

- NBI 10 calls for a Spring 2017 Day of Advocacy on Capitol Hill, focusing on Social Security reform, including the repeal of the Offsets.
- NBI 14 directs NEA to request that our recommended candidate for President, Hillary Clinton, write a letter to NEA members stating her support of the repeal of the Social Security Offsets.
- NBI 15 (submitted by Ed Foglia) directs NEA to present a summary to the 2017 RA about NEA's efforts to save/strengthen Social Security and repeal the Offsets. Included will be descriptions about what is being done now, what will be ongoing and what will be proposed for the future.

## JOIN THE FIGHT TO REPEAL SOCIAL SECURITY OFFSET

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CTA Delegation and ALL the other 179 Board Members from states all around, not just the impacted 15, have been lobbying Congress for repeal EVERY TIME they are in Washington, D.C. for a board meeting. Four times a year, for at least the past 20 years, NEA Board Members lobbied for pending bills, collected sponsors for proposed bills, and brought letters and petitions to our Representatives in Congress. At other times, they have visited home offices of legislators, arranged for State Legislatures to pass proclamations against the Offsets, spoken at rallies, and urged writing and emailing campaigns. In addition to the NEA Board Members, CTA and NEA staff, and retired members have been actively writing and proposing legislation, testifying in hearings, and lobbying for more than 20 years on this issue. I know that many of the leaders of CTA are also personally affected by these laws so this issue has always been on the front burner.

We all have been getting the "run around" from the members of the U.S. Congress, the only ones who can change/repeal these laws. When the Obama Administration took office, we (NEA) secured a promise that he would sign an Offset Repeal Bill, "if it got to his

desk." The NEA Board Members went to Capitol Hill and signed up a majority of the House Members from both parties as sponsors for a bill we had introduced. Then, the economic downturn came, and our closest friends in Congress were unwilling to pass a legislature bill with an \$80 billion price tag.

The current Congress has received several bills this session, but has not moved any of them out of committee for a vote. Frankly, the chances of this group of Representatives and Senators doing anything productive from now to the end of the session is close to zero. In fact, there have been indications that the current Congress would like to make cutbacks to Social Security!

That is one of the reasons why this election is crucial. It is important to elect officials who want to strengthen Social Security and repeal GPO/WEP. Hopefully, in January, the new Congress will be more willing to listen and make the changes needed. With a new Congress sworn in, NEA's lobbyists will be ready to bring repeal proposals, find sponsors and begin the process again.



Thirty members of CTA/NEA-Retired attended the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C.

## NEA-RETIRED DELEGATES MEET IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

By Sharon Fitch Boudreau, District 4 Director

“Still doing it!” The phrase that NEA-Retired added to the *Unite, Inspire, Lead* theme for the NEA Representative Assembly. This was a true description of the retired educators who gathered from all over our country and were active during their careers, and continue to unite, inspire and lead in their associations and communities. The two-day meeting was packed with information and many calls-to-action.

Our California Delegation which was led by our new president, Marc Sternberger, was almost 30 strong with 17-elected California state retired delegates, and strong contingents from UTLA-Retired and San Francisco-Retired (UESF). The CTA/NEA-Retired state delegates were also representatives to the NEA RA. We heard committee reports, considered new business items pertinent to retirees and voted for officers for NEA-Retired. We honored members and two students for their accomplishments with the Distinguished Service Award and Membership Awards. These awards help recognize the hard work that has resulted in retired membership leading all other NEA membership categories for several years in a row. Marc was proud to accept an Award for Membership Growth on behalf of CTA/NEA-Retired. The two honored students each received a \$2,500 Kinnamon Fund Scholarship from money raised by NEA-Retired members.

NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia, NEA Vice President Becky Pringle and NEA Secretary/Treasurer Princess Moss were all guest speakers, and shared with us how vital NEA-Retired is to the strength of NEA. Lily recognized that we, the retirees, are the history of the NEA. We have fought the battles and won the victories that have made NEA the strongest professional union in our nation. Becky recounted how NEA, in 2015, took on the specter of institutional racism that denies rights to many Americans and this RA will adopt a new policy to address this issue aggressively. Princess spoke at length regarding the New Educators Program and how retirees are an integral component.

The New Educator Program is targeted towards the concern that teachers are leaving the profession faster than they are coming in -- in alarming numbers. NEA has started hundreds of conversations with new educators in order to develop uniform questions to ask new hires

such as, “What can the association do to help you?” Every region has a New Educator Organizer to collect this information and lead the training programs. Retirees are recognized as a valuable resource to mentor and guide new educators. That’s why NEA-Retired is being

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called on to be a key component of this exciting program and we look forward to it being implemented.

We were treated to great presentations. NEA’s Director of Government Relations Mary Kusler reported on the work being done to eliminate the unfair Social Security offsets. California’s own Alice O’Brien, who is now NEA’s General Council, spoke about why who is appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court is important. She listed a number of Supreme Court decisions which have protected public schools, the rights of students and our members for a number of years as well as some recent ones (such as Citizens United and limitations on the Voting Rights Act) that were unfavorable.

All-in-all, it was an information packed two days in our Nation’s Capitol.



NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia addressed the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and said that retired members fought the battles and won the victories that have made NEA the strongest professional union in our nation.



# Retiree Advocate

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## THE CTA/NEA-RETIRED SCHOLARSHIP IN MEMORY OF SHARILYNN GARDELLA RUSSO

This CTA/NEA-Retired Scholarship, established in 2013, are given in memory of Sharilynn Russo to provide financial aid to students pursuing a college degree, credential, or certification for a Speech Pathology and/or Audiology-related career in public education in an accredited institution of higher education.

Donations are always gratefully accepted! *Please also consider making a donation to the scholarship in honor or memory of members of the teaching profession and loved ones.* Make checks out to the **CTA Foundation for Teaching and Learning** with the following notation: **Sharilynn G. Russo Scholarship** in the memo line of your check.

Checks should be mailed to **KC Walsh, 100 N. Rodeo Gulch Rd. Sp 183, Soquel, CA 95073-2047**

### PRE-RETIRED MEMBERS

If you retired this year, you must notify CTA membership by calling 650-552-5278 or send an email to [membership@cta.org](mailto:membership@cta.org) notifying them of your change in status. Otherwise, you will not be able to run for office or vote in CTA/NEA-Retired elections.