

NSEA-RETIRED ADVOCATE

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NSEA-Retired Members Organize to BUILD POWER IN DENVER

NSEA-Retired delegates joined more than 300 retired educators from across the country in Denver for the 2026 NEA-Retired Annual Meeting, held June 30 and July 1.

Under the theme of “Building Power,” delegates conducted association business, elected national leaders and looked ahead to the role retired educators can continue to play in strengthening public education and their union.

Members also had plenty to celebrate. NEA reported that NEA-Retired grew by 3,643 members during the past year. Attendees raised more than \$13,000 for NEA’s political action committee during the two-day meeting as they prepared for the 2026 midterm elections.

NEA-Retired President Anita Gibson reflected on the contributions retired

educators have made throughout their careers and the role they continue to play in their communities.

NEA President Becky Pringle also recognized the decades of experience retired members bring to the union, telling delegates their leadership remains important to the work ahead.

“Your voice matters. Your experience matters. Your leadership matters,” Pringle said.

NEA Vice President Princess Moss and Secretary-Treasurer Noel Candelaria also addressed the gathering, emphasizing the power retired educators have through the relationships and community connections they have built over their careers.

Delegates elected and reelected several NEA-Retired leaders during the

meeting, including Gibson as president and Brenda Hare McGown of Kentucky as secretary. Their terms began Sept. 1.

OEA-Retired also brought national recognition home to Nebraska, receiving an award for its newsletter.

Following the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting, NSEA-Retired members continued their work in Denver as delegates to the 2026 NEA Representative Assembly (RA).

Delegates considered new business items, resolutions and other issues affecting NEA members, public education and the students educators serve.

For NSEA-Retired delegates, the two national gatherings provided back-to-back opportunities to participate alongside retired educators from across the country and then as part of Nebraska's delegation to the NEA RA.

Top photos (left to right): NSEA-Retired Vice President Roger Rea accepts an award for the OEA-Retired Newsletter from NEA-Retired President Anita Gibson. Pat Etherton and Arlene Rea attend the 2026 NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner. **Bottom photo:** NSEA-Retired delegates smile ahead of the NEA Representative Assembly business meeting.



A Denver Detour to Lakewood Landmark Casa Bonita



While in Denver, a few NSEA-Retired members made time for a visit to Casa Bonita. The distinct pink palace is known for cliff divers, caves, theatrical performances and, of course, sopapillas.

The Lakewood landmark opened in 1974 and underwent a \$40 million-plus renovation from late 2021 through spring 2023, according to 5280 Magazine. After featuring Casa Bonita in a 2003 episode of "South Park," creators and Colorado natives Trey Parker and Matt Stone purchased the restaurant for \$3.1 million in 2021.

Renovations included rebuilding the kitchen, repairing the famous diving pool and making accessibility and safety improvements. The owners also brought in acclaimed Denver chef Dana Rodriguez to overhaul the menu while preserving many of the quirky attractions generations of visitors remember.

For NSEA-Retired delegates, the stop offered a little Colorado history and nostalgia between days of association business in Denver.



KNOW THE RISKS: Subcontracting as a Substitute Teacher

This summer, NSEA-Retired President John Heineman received an email from Lincoln Public Schools announcing a change to the district's long-term substitute program. Like many retired educators, Heineman continues to substitute teach in his local district.

Beginning Aug. 4, LPS partnered with education staffing company ESS to manage its long-term substitute program. Long-term substitutes who wanted to continue in those positions were invited to become ESS employees. The change applies only to long-term substitutes, not the district's entire substitute program.

For Heineman, the message brought home an issue NSEA has been monitoring across Nebraska: subcontracting school positions traditionally filled by district employees. Substitute teachers, paraprofessionals, transportation, custodial services and other positions may all be turned over to private companies.

For NSEA-Retired members who return to work in public schools, the change in employer can have important consequences. Once an educator becomes an employee of a private contractor rather than a public school district, NSEA membership benefits and protections they previously relied on, including professional liability protection, may no longer apply. That makes it important for retired educators to understand who will actually employ them before accepting a subcontracted

position and what protections they may be giving up in the process.

A Growing Issue

NSEA members in metro and rural districts are increasingly monitoring subcontracting proposals. ESS is only one of several private staffing companies operating in education. Other companies districts may contract with include Amergis, Presence, Kelly Education, Edustaff and Aya.

NSEA Director of Advocacy Jason Wiese said subcontracted workers may not have the same benefits and protections as district employees, including access to the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement System and workplace protections available through NSEA.

"Subcontracting can look like a simple solution on paper, but local associations need to look beyond the initial price tag," Wiese said. "The real question is what a district may be giving up in return, from experienced employees and workplace protections to accountability and continuity for students."

The LPS announcement illustrates that distinction. Long-term substitutes may continue working in the same schools and classrooms, but those who transition to the new program become employees of ESS rather than the school district.

LPS told substitutes that ESS employment includes weekly pay, health benefits beginning on the first day of employment, training opportunities, incentives and bonus programs. But

retired educators considering working through a private contractor should also understand what may change, including whether NSEA workplace and professional liability protections still apply.

Subcontracting can also complicate accountability. While districts remain responsible for serving students and families, personnel decisions involving subcontracted workers may be handled by a private company rather than directly by the district.

What to Watch For

Retirement does not necessarily mean losing touch with what is happening in local schools. Many NSEA-Retired members continue to substitute teach, attend school board meetings, volunteer in schools or maintain relationships with former colleagues.

That makes retired educators another important set of eyes and ears when districts begin discussing staffing changes.

Watch school board agendas, budget discussions and staffing proposals for references to outsourcing, contracting or requests for proposals involving work currently performed by district employees.

If you learn or suspect that subcontracting is being considered in your district, contact your NSEA organizational specialist or call NSEA at 800-742-0047. NSEA can help assess the proposal, identify potential impacts and determine next steps.



NSEA-Retired members sort and hand-count ballots during the 2025 election. NSEA-Retired currently conducts elections using paper ballots mailed to voting members and returned in postage-paid envelopes.

NSEA-Retired Seeks Input on Voting Options

The NSEA-Retired Board of Directors is exploring whether electronic voting could be an option for future NSEA-Retired elections and is asking voting members to weigh in.

Input Needed

Currently, NSEA-Retired elections are conducted using mailed paper ballots. Voting members receive a ballot by mail along with a postage-paid envelope to return their completed ballot.

The board is exploring an electronic voting option that would comply with requirements of the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act, or LMRDA, which establishes safeguards for union elections. Electronic voting is already used for many NSEA elections.

Before considering a change, the board wants to know what members think and whether electronic voting would be practical for NSEA-Retired. A member survey will help gauge interest in electronic voting and provide a clearer picture of how many members would need another way to access voting information.

Pros & Considerations

Moving to electronic voting could reduce the cost of printing ballots,

envelopes and return postage while making the voting process more convenient for members who regularly use email.

Access is also an important consideration. Not every NSEA-Retired member has a valid email address on file. If electronic voting moves forward, members without an email address would still need a way to participate. Those members could receive a postcard by mail with voting information and a unique link to cast their ballot online.

Any future system would need to balance potential cost and convenience with the goal of ensuring every eligible NSEA-Retired member has an opportunity to participate.

Survey Timeline

On Sept. 8, voting members with email addresses on file were sent a SurveyMonkey survey asking whether they prefer to continue using mailed paper ballots or would be interested in electronic voting. Each member received a unique survey link that can be used only once.

Fall Conference registration information sent Sept. 21 will remind members to look for the SurveyMonkey email and complete the survey. On

Sept. 23, another email will be sent directly to members who have not yet responded. Members who have already completed the survey will not receive the reminder.

The survey will close Oct. 1.

What Comes Next

After the survey closes, responses will be compiled and reviewed by the NSEA-Retired Board of Directors. The results will help leaders gauge member interest in electronic voting and determine how many members may require additional communication to participate.

The survey is for information-gathering purposes and does not change the current election process. Any next steps will be considered after member feedback has been reviewed.

NSEA-Retired voting members are encouraged to complete the survey by Oct. 1 and help inform the discussion about how future elections are conducted.

Survey Help

If you are an NSEA-Retired voting member and did not receive the SurveyMonkey email, contact NSEA at 402-475-7611 to make sure your contact information is up to date and learn how to participate.

Newly Retired LEA Members Tour Saro Cider

LEA-Retired members gathered Aug. 5 for an afternoon at Saro Cider in Lincoln's Telegraph District, where they were joined by several recently retired Lincoln Public Schools educators.

The outing gave longtime and newly retired educators an opportunity to connect while learning more about the local cidery. During a tour of Saro Cider, participants learned about the cider-making process and the history of the venue and its place in the Telegraph District.

Following the tour, members and guests spent time socializing while sampling a variety of ciders and enjoying hors d'oeuvres. The gathering provided an informal setting for recently retired educators to meet other LEA-Retired members, reconnect with former colleagues and learn more about the community that continues beyond their careers in Lincoln Public Schools.

Twenty-five members and guests participated in the event, which was chaired by Lesa Christiancy and Shelley Clayburn. NSEA-Retired provided funding for the tour and hors d'oeuvres.



Come and Get It!



Lincoln Education Association-Retired helped new Lincoln Public Schools teachers stock their classrooms through its annual Come and Get It event, held July 29 through Aug. 3. Fifty-two educators selected free classroom materials donated by recent LPS retirees, giving books, organizational materials and other resources a second life while saving new teachers money. Funding from NSEA-Retired, Delta Kappa Gamma, Alpha Delta Gamma and individual donors provided additional essentials, including notebooks, pens, pencils, dry-erase markers, tissues and glue sticks. Sheri Paden chairs the annual event, which connects retiring educators and the district's newest teachers through a practical exchange of classroom resources.



Land, Legacy and Learning

Every educator has retirement dreams. For Art Tanderup, it meant moving back to the farm, farming, spending time with kids and grandkids, involvement in church and other organizations and traveling to all those bucket-list destinations. That was the lesson plan. Just like most lesson plans, reality causes adaptation.

A couple of years after retirement, Art and his wife, Helen, were thrown into the middle of the Keystone XL pipeline battle. They knew that they had to stand up to protect the water, the land and the people. They joined forces with environmental groups, farmers, ranchers and tribal nations. They created great relationships with the Lakota, the Ponca, the Omaha, the Winnebago and others.

It was discovered that part of their farm is on the historic Ponca Trail of Tears. Art and Helen worked with the Ponca to help restore their lost Sacred Corn. In 2018, they gave 10 acres of their farm to the Ponca Nation.

This year, Art was invited to give the keynote presentation at the Nebraska Native Youth Gathering. The topic was "Land Back." The conference was held in West Point with 300 participants from across the state. The gathering centered on the idea of honoring the Sacred Hoop: body, spirit, heart and mind.

In June, they helped plant the Ponca Sacred Corn at the tribe's old headquarters and powwow grounds. This is the 13th year of helping restore the corn.

Also in June, Art and Helen spent several days with New Red Order, a Native documentary crew. They began their time together by seeing a screening of the award-winning film "Aanikoobijigan" (ancestor/great-grandparent/great-grandchild) at The Ross in Lincoln. The film is about the repatriation of ancestors from libraries, archives and museums.

The focus of the new documentary is giving land back. Besides the film, they hope to develop a guide to giving land back. The crew spent time at Art and Helen's farm, with another land back family, with Ponca tribal leadership and at the corn planting. They also traveled to Little White Buffalo Girl's grave in Neligh. The people of Neligh gave land back to the Ponca for the gravesite. At this time, there is no projected film screening date.

Art Tanderup's lesson plan was interrupted. Much learning occurred. As they say, "An old teacher never stops teaching."



Fell

Paul Henry Fell, longtime educator, editorial cartoonist and contributor to *The Voice*, died June 28 at age 80.

Fell attended Peru State College and played football. The Massachusetts native made Nebraska his lifelong home and built a career that combined education, art and journalism.

Fell taught high school art and coached in Auburn before serving as a college art professor. He later became the editorial cartoonist and newsroom artist for the former *Lincoln Journal*, a position he held from 1984 to 1992. Following the elimination of that position, he launched Paul Fell Cartoons, a freelance cartooning and illustration business that served newspapers, media organizations and NSEA publications. His illustrations and cartoons became familiar to Nebraska educators, bringing humor, insight and a distinctive artistic voice to issues affecting public education. Alongside his career as a cartoonist, Fell taught in the art department at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, where he shared his expertise and perspective with a new generation of artists. He often said he was grateful to make a living doing what he loved most: drawing.



Rea



Koch Johns



Schiefelbein



Fall Fun With LEA-Retired

Honoring Outgoing NSEA-Retired Board Members

The Nebraska State Education Association-Retired extends heartfelt thanks to three outgoing board members whose dedication, leadership and service have strengthened our organization and supported retired educators across the state.

Vice President Roger Rea is recognized with deep appreciation for more than 25 years of service to the NSEA-Retired Board. His long-standing commitment, steady leadership and thoughtful guidance have made a lasting impact on the work of the board and on the members it serves.

We also thank Patsy Koch Johns, Capitol District Director, for her valued service and representation. Her dedication to the Capitol District and her

contributions to the board have helped ensure that the voices and interests of retired educators remain strong and well represented.

Our gratitude also goes to Dan Schiefelbein, Elkhorn District Director, for his service and commitment to NSEA-Retired. Through his leadership and involvement, he has contributed meaningfully to the board's mission and to the educators of the Elkhorn District.

Roger, Patsy and Dan leave with our sincere appreciation and best wishes. Their years of service reflect the spirit of professionalism, advocacy and fellowship that defines NSEA-Retired. We thank them for their many contributions and wish them well in the years ahead.

LEA-Retired members will have plenty of opportunities to connect this fall through monthly meetings at Sheridan Lutheran Church.

In September, speakers from Madonna Wellness will join members following a fundraising breakfast provided by The Waffleman. The October meeting will feature information from Aging Partners, while Brad Anderson with 10/11 Weather will speak to members in November.

Members will also have an opportunity to participate in a gift card raffle to help raise funds for association activities.

LEA-Retired will wrap up its 2026 events with a holiday luncheon in December. Entertainment will be provided by The Lug Nuts, led by former educator Bob Deschaine.

Medicare Insurance Seminars coming this fall!

Each fall, NSEA-Retired partners with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska to present information seminars on Medicare across the state. The seminars cover the basics of Medicare, the coverage options available with Educators' Medicare Supplement, and how to select a provider for the drugs you take (Medicare Part D providers).

Five in-person seminars are scheduled this year. There will also be three seminars held via Zoom for those unable to attend a live event. The tentative seminar schedule is Nov. 4, Nov. 10 and Nov. 12. Times will vary. A postcard with details about the seminars (including the locations) will be sent via U.S. mail to members who are between the ages of 62 and 75 later this fall. The seminar schedule is posted on www.nsea.org/retired.

BCBS In-Person Sessions

Morning sessions: 9:30 - 11:00 a.m. (check in at 9 a.m.)

Afternoon sessions: 1:30 - 3 p.m. (check in at 1 p.m.)

Lincoln	Tuesday, Nov. 3 Jack J. Huck Continuing Education Center - Rooms 302 and 303 (301 South 68th St. Place)
Norfolk	Wednesday, Nov. 11 Northeast Community College - Lifelong Learning Center, Suites F and G (701 East Benjamin Ave.)
Ogallala	Thursday, Oct. 29 Educational Service Unit 16 (314 West 1st St.)
Omaha	Thursday, Nov. 5 OPS TAC Building - Boardroom, 2nd Floor (3215 Cuming St.)
Kearney	Wednesday, Oct. 28 Educational Service Unit 10 - Room B (76 Plaza Blvd.)



Museum of Nebraska Art to Host NSEA-Retired Fall Conference

NSEA-Retired members will gather Thursday, Oct. 22, at the Museum of Nebraska Art (MONA) in Kearney for this year's Fall Conference. The event will offer a day of learning, conversation and connection in a unique setting showcasing Nebraska's artistic heritage.

MONA is home to a collection of works by artists with ties to Nebraska, offering visitors an opportunity to experience the people, places and stories that have shaped the state's history and culture through art. NSEA-Retired members will also have time to explore the museum during the conference.

A tentative lineup of speakers and presentations includes Nebraska Commissioner of Education Dr. Brian Maher; RaLynn Jacobsen, elder care coordinator with the South Central Nebraska Area Agency on Aging; NSEA President Tim Royers with an NSEA update; Roxie Quick with 8 to

October

22

Great; and Theresa Ritta-Olson of Educational Service Unit 10 with "Caring for Yourself After a Career of Caring for Others."

Sessions will cover a range of topics relevant to members in retirement, from staying

connected to public education to navigating caregiving and prioritizing personal well-being. The conference also gives members from across Nebraska a chance to reconnect, exchange ideas and stay involved in the work of NSEA-Retired.

MONA is at 2401 Central Ave. in Kearney. The event is free for all NSEA-Retired members, and guests are welcome to attend for \$10.

Don't miss this opportunity to connect with fellow retirees, hear from insightful speakers and immerse yourself in the art and stories showcased at MONA. To register, visit nsea.org/retired under Calendars, Events & Registrations.