

June 2010

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Voice



The Power of a Great Education

Pennsylvania State Education Association | The Voice for Education

AFFILIATED WITH THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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PSEA Mission

To advocate for quality public education and our members through collective action

The Voice for Education

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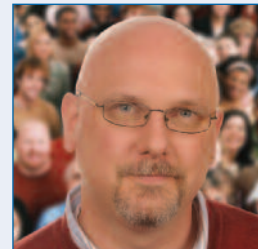
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Membership's might wins the fight

Rob Whyne was just trying to help a student, something he did daily as Selinsgrove High School's guidance counselor. But in this case, Whyne's helpful gesture cost him his job. That's when PSEA's membership muscle began flexing.



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Your membership matters . . . more than ever

by James P. Testerman, PSEA President

“Tough times don’t last. Tough teachers do.”

I can recall seeing and reading that statement many times—on lapel pins, T-shirts and posters—at different times during each of the last three decades.

That time-honored statement obviously should be updated to include education support professionals, but the essential truth remains. It should, however, include an additional axiom—tough teachers and tough ESPs last when they support each other and act collectively.

We are in one of the most difficult economic eras most of us have witnessed in our lifetimes. To make matters worse, revenues to support school funding lag behind the rest of the economy, so the eventual recovery is taking even longer to trickle to our schools. Hardly a day goes by when you don’t pick up the paper or read a story online about colossal proposed cuts to education funding.

NEA President Dennis Van Roekel recently pointed out what widespread layoffs to educators across the country would mean for our students and their futures.

“Massive class sizes, less attention to individual student needs, fewer services—all mean our children won’t receive the education they need,” Van Roekel said. “How can we give our children a world-class education when teachers and other education personnel are in unemployment lines instead of in classrooms and schools?”

It’s for this reason that we must remember that, during tough times as

well as during good times, our greatest asset is this Association. The power we have together—the power of a great union—and the involvement of members such as you are what will allow us to persevere and thrive. I know there are times when you feel overwhelmed by all of these challenges, particularly when the negative attacks seem to be coming from all sides. Together we have both power and clout unmatched by any organization advocating for the needs of children and public education.

We have many strong allies working with us—speaking up to advocate

students’ lives.

This year and next fall we need to continue to reach out to new hires and non-members at our work sites. Talk to them about the power of membership, and the strength they can add to your local association, to PSEA, and to NEA. Tell them how belonging to PSEA allows you to deliver the power of a



James P. Testerman

great education. And remember that when you join PSEA you have joined a union of professionals who are the pre-eminent voice for education and the leading force for labor in Pennsylvania.

That is why, even during these tough times, membership does not merely continue to matter; it matters more than

. . . we must remember that, during tough times as well as during good times, our greatest asset is this Association. The power we have together—the power of a great union . . .

for students, for educators, and for public education’s current and future wellbeing. Having friends who support public education is great, but we cannot ask them to do what we are not willing to do ourselves. Our voices must be heard by policymakers who want to underfund Pennsylvania’s public schools.


So the next time you get another one of those e-mails from that “Jim Testerman” guy, don’t assume that someone else will respond. I need you to raise your voice. I need you to say no to budget cuts that could literally cost you your job, or—if you are lucky enough to keep your job—I need you to say no to larger class sizes and no to cutting the support services that make a difference in our

ever.

On the U.S. seal, the American Eagle carries the motto *e pluribus unum*—out of many, one. This country believed in this concept with all its collective heart, and from it built a world power born from the modest beginnings of free thought, determination, and devotion to cause. PSEA has done the same throughout its 158-year history.

We won’t stop now.

We won’t rest in our advocacy for you or the children you serve.

So bring on the challenges that we must face—PSEA stands ready. Are you? 

E-mail Jim Testerman:
jtesterman@psea.org

"It"—the pending pension spike—is all about you

by John F. Springer, PSEA Executive Director

"It" is looming in 2012-13. You frequently read about "it" in the newspapers. You hear politicians talking about "it" at public forums.

"It" is the anticipated pension spike, and lost in the public debate are the lives that it affects.

The media and some legislators talk about the spike as if it is simply an isolated, esoteric, actuarial issue that will only affect taxes and school districts. They ignore the real people who have spent their lives on the front lines, making education their priority, exceeding every new demand, providing the power of a great education, all in exchange for the modest promise of a secure pension.

The spike's impact has not been lost on 13 PSEA and Student PSEA members who joined staff in creating a new video call-to-action called "Hands Off Our Pensions!" These members know that dangerous "solutions" being discussed in Harrisburg will actually hurt current and future members by causing divisions and generational conflicts that will result in lower salaries for everyone.

The video premiered at the May House of Delegates, and it featured EA, ESP and student members from across the state: Patty Conner, Southern Region; Melissa Edge, Mideastern Region; Korri Brown, Southeastern Region; Craig Gunn, Western Region; Victor Fedeli, ESP Region; Mike Fanti, Northeastern Region; and Maria Alvarado-Gomez; Northwestern Region.

Student members were Lauren Knupp, Edinboro University; Jessica Ferlenda, Lebanon Valley College; Scott Zarbus, Lebanon Valley College; Morgan Smith, Millersville University; Damon Stanchak, Carlow University; and Student PSEA President Meghan

Draude Bergman, Carlow University.

These members place the pension spike in the context of important changes that have occurred in the past decade, changes some politicians only want to discuss in the abstract.

Standards and accountability have increased for public education professionals, and our members have met those challenges. Student performance improved, even while you made health care concessions and your pay struggled to keep pace with inflation. And now, after all of your on-the-fly adjustments and

write, call, e-mail, or visit your legislator in the coming months in defense of your pension. Circumstances will dictate some of what PSEA asks you to do; the nature of proposed bills in the General Assembly, or the attitudes of legislative leaders make the situation fluid. Quick



John F. Springer

action in response to these changing circumstances is essential; a rapid response is the best way to ensure that our voices are heard immediately, and that our reaction carries the maximum force.

Our message must be consistent, unified, and heard: Pennsylvania's public employee defined benefit pension plans have a dramatic and positive impact on our state's economy.

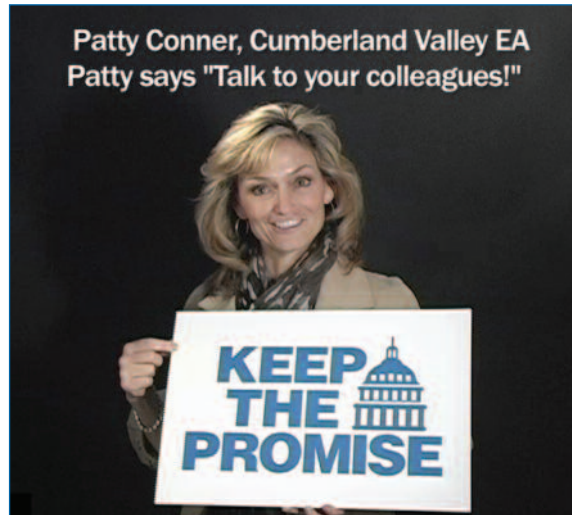
They are well managed and prefunded. They have not only helped buffer Pennsylvania's economy during this extreme economic turmoil, but have also provided for the wellbeing of

thousands of retirees and their families who received the retirement income they justly earned.

You've done your part, year after year, by contributing to your retirement with every paycheck. You didn't cause the spike, but how lawmakers deal with "it" affects you and your future.

And that's about as far from impersonal or esoteric as "it" can get. ▀

E-mail John Springer: jspringer@psea.org



sacrifices, do they thank you for a job well done? No. They propose that you get a pay cut.

As Patty poignantly puts it: "Huh?"

You've worked with the promise of a secure, defined benefit pension. Your colleagues want your help in reminding lawmakers to keep that promise.

Please watch the video online at www.psea.org/pensions—and witness the power of members, your colleagues, coming together to speak with one voice, in support of your profession and your pension. Their message is clear, and it is for you, the members of PSEA. Encourage everyone in your local to view it.

PSEA will be asking you to

Jobs at PSEA

For a list of all PSEA job vacancies, visit www.psea.org/jobs

Time can tarnish ‘Golden Goose’

Politicians and right-wing think tanks meddling with the public school employees’ pension system haven’t met Jack Yeager.

They haven’t shaken hands with Yeager, a PSEA-Retired member born mere months after the armistice that ended World War I.

They haven’t had a cup of coffee with the 91-year-old widower, or taken the time to consider Yeager’s financial condition in the wake of a 39-year teaching career at Montrose High School.

“My monthly retirement check is a little over \$900,” Yeager wrote in a letter to PSEA President James P. Testerman. “Without Social Security, I would be destitute.”

Too-steep teachers’ salaries? Yeager began teaching industrial arts for \$1,500 in 1942. His final average salary upon his 1981 retirement was \$17,609.

Fat-cat pensions? Concerned for his wife Ruth’s welfare should she survive him, Yeager opted for the reduced, fixed retirement rate that would continue to pay Ruth should he predecease her. His initial gross monthly pension was \$591.

In the nearly 30 years since, a modest five cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) have gradually increased his gross benefit to \$1,153. Deduct his health insurance and withhold his taxes, and Yeager’s net benefit hovers a little above \$900.

Toss in the fact that, according to the Consumer Price Index, what cost \$591 in 1981 costs around \$1,380 today, and Yeager’s ability to buy has actually dipped 17 percent since he first retired.

“When they talk about the Golden Goose, they forget about inflation,” said Steve Nickol, Assistant Director of PSEA-Retired who spent 18 years in the state Legislature. “People say we have an overly generous benefit. It may seem generous when you retire, but the impact of inflation is such that it quickly erodes your purchasing power.”

No COLA to drink

Pennsylvania once granted COLAs every four or five years, and even then

the state was generally behind the curve; the majority of states have annual COLAs.

Because Pennsylvania’s Legislature deals with the living-adjustment issue on an ad hoc basis, it is allowed to avoid COLAs indefinitely. It has not granted one since its two-tiered payout eight years ago.

The COLA drought has further deteriorated a fixed pension’s purchasing power, exacerbating inflation’s impact on senior PSEA-Retired members.

Sue Houghton, vice president of



Inflation and limited cost-of-living adjustments have whittled the value of 91-year-old Jack Yeager’s pension.

Southern Region PSEA-Retired, addressed the issue before a legislative panel earlier this year.

“I realize the retirement benefits earned by the most highly paid state and school employees get all the attention in the media,” Houghton told the Senate Finance Committee, “but we need to remember that there are many more retirees in the situation of Jack Yeager.”

“If there were no COLAs,” Nickol said, “Jack would still get \$591 a month. His purchasing power would have fallen 50 percent in value as measured by the Consumer Price Index. He’s kind of the poster child of what would happen if they didn’t have COLAs.”

“I can only imagine his situation

today . . . if he did not get any COLAs along the way,” Houghton testified.

PSEA President James P. Testerman noted that younger educational professionals, while they might not realize it, are key to both current and future retirees.

“Retired members like Jack depend on the next generation to protect his benefit and advocate for a COLA,” Testerman said. “Shutting down the Public School Employees’ Retirement System to new enrollees, as some are now proposing, not only cuts off revenue from the fund, but also eliminates advocates and watchdogs in the future.”

DC, as in Don’t Count on dollars

Something called defined contribution (DC) is the new darling of some state legislators, who are scrambling to soften their looming, self-induced contribution spike to the Public School Employees’ Retirement System.

The DC plan would replace PSERS’ long-standing defined benefit (DB) system, which guarantees a fixed monthly benefit that a retiree cannot outlive—though inflation’s claws and lack of COLAs can obviously cut away its value.

The nutshell version of DC plans is that the contribution burden, amount, and accompanying investment decisions would be at the employee’s discretion. Essentially, it would mirror the private sector’s 401(k)-type plans.

There are far-reaching flaws with DC plans, as illustrated by West Virginia’s recently failed flirtation with it. Where it would hit home with PSEA retirees as they age, however, is in perpetually vulnerable purchasing power.

Consider Yeager. His situation underscores the value of DB vs. DC.

When retiring on a DC plan, a person must essentially base his or her monthly withdrawal upon life expectancy—“guessing” how long he or she will survive, and using that guess to slice up a

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fickle set of market-vulnerable funds.

“But Jack lived past his age expectancy,” Nickol said. “Not everybody conveniently dies at 81.”

There is also the issue of market risk. Had Yeager’s benefit been exposed to the

past decade’s recessions, his modest dollars would likely have dwindled even more dramatically.

“At least he was able to count on his DB benefit during tough economic times,” Nickol said.

Yeager has outlived his wife, Ruth, who passed away in March 2008.

“She was 6½ years younger than I,” he wrote. “Alas, the odds did not favor us.”

But because of COLAs and his DB pension, Jack Yeager has not outlived his benefit.

Even if inflation has eaten away at its edges. ▼

Cut to the pension issue’s crux

Talking about the pension issue can be complicated.

There are so-called combination plans; conflicting statements about the value of defined benefit plans; the potpourri of causes for the pending pension spike; and the various reports concerning the stability of PSERS.

As a PSEA member, you may hear about so-called “solutions” that, in reality, will do nothing to solve the upcoming spike. You may think that changes to the

pension system won’t affect you, but every member will feel some pain should legislators fail to keep the promise to current and future public school employees.

To help you cut to the crux of the sometimes complex issues, or to more clearly understand what you’re hearing on the news and from others, PSEA has created an online hub, “Talking About Pensions.” Find a glossary of frequently used terms in the pension debate. Find talking points about the value of defined

benefit pension plans and the risks of alternative “solutions.” Find information on how we got here and what other states have done; find issue briefs, testimony and updates; and discover many other resources.

Make no mistake. Your pension fund is at risk.

Be prepared to urge legislators to keep the promise of a secure, predictable retirement by visiting www.psea.org/pensions. ▼

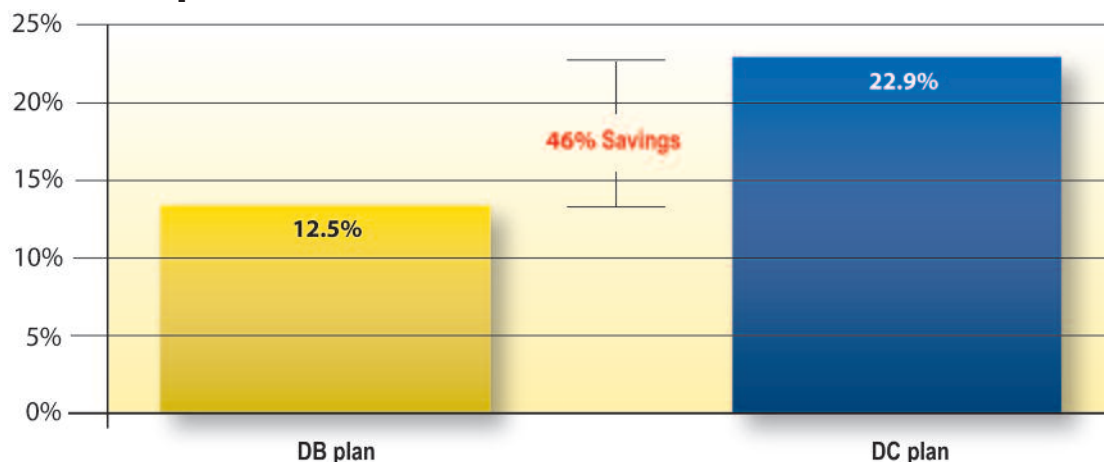


Hands off our pensions!

Changes to the PSERS pension fund will affect you. But don’t take our word for it. PSEA members from across the state tell the story, with extra graphics and animations to help illustrate an important point: This is about you, your pension, and your future. Watch the video at www.psea.org/pensions, and help Keep the Promise.

PENSION SPOTLIGHT

DB plans: same benefit, about half the cost



Costs of DB and DC plans as percentages of payroll

Source: National Institute on Retirement Security's Public Pension Resource Guide.

www.psea.org/pensionspotlights

THE VOICE FOR EDUCATION

PSEA, Young Scholars break new union ground

Verna Etchells belonged to a union when she taught in Florida. She had to surrender that security when she accepted a teaching job four years ago at the Young Scholars of Central Pennsylvania Charter School in State College.

Naturally, she was nervous.

“When I came to this school and found out there was no union, my heart almost stopped,” Etchells said. “I had never taught without union representation, and it just wasn’t comfortable. We needed to be able to go into our classrooms each day and not worry.”

It took time, patience, and plenty of hard work, but Etchells has recaptured that comfort. In March, she and her colleagues finally had enough votes to form the first PSEA union at a brick-and-mortar charter.

“Now we have that security,” she said. “Now we have someone to call to guide us.”

Young Scholars teacher Leah Guizar said she was angry at the way the charter school’s administration had treated her and her colleagues. Employees grew tired of fearing for their jobs and having no voice in what happened in their workplace. Administrators dismissed some teachers arbitrarily, while forcing others into working two part-time jobs to keep their positions.

On March 29, the employees voted to form the Young Scholars of Central Pennsylvania Education Association, which represents teachers, speech and language therapists, guidance counselors, librarians, teacher aides, custodians and secretaries.

“As a former PSEA member in an-

other school district, I understood the benefits of being a union member,” Guizar said. “In terms of job security, the turnover rate was high. There was an incredible fear about whether you would have a job next school year. Membership is priceless because it protects you.”

Kelby Waltman, PSEA’s Director of External Organizing, says that charter schools often use their autonomy to take advantage of teachers and staff.

“The whole charter school movement is new and evolving,” Waltman said. “It is important for charter school employees to realize that they deserve to have the same rights as other public school workers.

“We are thrilled by the outcome of the vote, because it represents a great step for all charter school employees in the Commonwealth.” 🟩

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Collective bargaining conference Oct. 22-23

If you're a local president, negotiator, or treasurer, mark your calendar for Friday and Saturday, Oct. 22 and 23. That's when PSEA conducts its annual Collective Bargaining/Local Area Leaders Conference at the Valley Forge Convention Center.

You'll hear about issues important to you, such as developments in Pennsylvania's Legislature, recent arbitrations, and federal and state court decisions.

Saturday features breakout sessions that provide tools and ideas to take back to your locals. This year's sessions are yet to be determined, but in the past have featured topics such as bargaining scope, timed mediation, and negotiating specific contract provisions such as salary and health care. Other sessions have focused on general topics to make leadership more effective, such as arbitrating grievances and making members more active.

You can also look for sessions on specific legal issues.

ESP members will find sessions of special interest, such as those focusing on compensation and improved job security, and local treasurers have a special track devoted to their issues.

Watch your mail and e-mail for more information, and check www.psea.org for the latest updates. 

A message from Sen. Robert P. Casey, Jr.

Each year, I have the honor to nominate qualified Pennsylvania students to the four United States Service Academies. These distinguished academies offer qualified Pennsylvania students a unique opportunity to obtain a first-rate college education, and train our young men and women to serve as our country's future leaders.

Interested students can download an application from my website. The deadline for applications for the incoming class of 2011 is Oct. 1 at 5 p.m. If you have any questions, please contact my Harrisburg office at 717-231-7540.



<http://casey.senate.gov/constituents/nominations/academy>

UNION SPOTLIGHT

www.psea.org/unionspotlight

Their time has passed? Not so fast . . .

We've all heard the tired reasoning from friends and neighbors . . . even from family: "I think unions had their usefulness back in the day. But we just don't need them anymore."

We don't? Then why does the data continue to scream that union employees receive vastly superior treatment, and that many non-union employers still exploit their workers?

NON-UNION



Non-union employees are **FIVE TIMES LESS LIKELY** to have job-provided health care.

Non-union employees **EARN ONLY 78 PERCENT** as much as their union counterparts.

Non-union women **EARN JUST THREE-FOURTHS** as much as their union counterparts.

Unionized African-American employees **OUTEARN NON-UNION AFRICAN-AMERICANS BY 28 PERCENT.**

Union wages for Latinos **ARE 43 PERCENT HIGHER** than for non-union Latinos.



UNION

Source: U.S. Department of Labor statistics, 2005-2009.

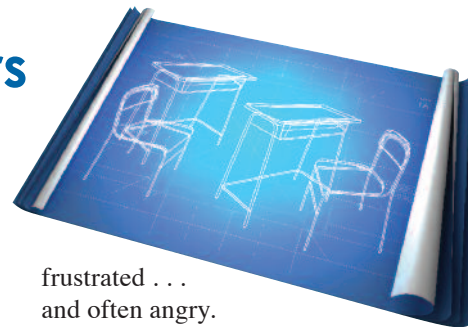
ESEA blueprint frustrates members

In March the Obama Administration proposed its “blueprint” for revising the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), more commonly called No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in its current life cycle. But this blueprint is closer to a retread than a rewrite.

It fails to shrink NCLB’s heavy testing schedule; fails to offer budget

fixes for the long term; continues to base evaluations at least partly on standardized test scores; continues its competition-based doling-out of dollars, perpetuating the “win-lose” scenario among schools; and continues with punitive, rather than positive, plans for the lowest-scoring schools.

All of which has left PSEA members confused, discouraged,



frustrated . . . and often angry.

Here’s a sample of what you and your fellow members have told us:



“All children are not alike, nor should they be. . . . We are leaving all our children behind by reducing the value of an education to a standardized test score.”

– Mary Catherine Knafelc, *Ambridge Area EA*

“We cannot continue to penalize poor school districts for being poor. They need help, not punishment.”

– Nancy Ranieri, *Cheltenham Township EA*

“This mandate is a speeding train that will soon run out of track. And then what? Do we just close up all of our schools because they can no longer reach AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress)? Do we fire all the staff at every school?”

– Matthew Deller, *Donegal EA*



“I am tired of reading about teacher competency. . . . The most gifted teacher cannot reverse 100 percent of the other factors that impede a child’s learning. . . . If this continues, the best teachers, when given the most needy students, will, on paper, be considered poor teachers!”

– Margaret Helms, *PSEA-Retired*

“I wish we could get rid of the win-lose aspect of NCLB and work together for the good of all. Teachers are an easy target for legislators.”

– Gail P. Jones, *Gettysburg Area EA*

Care to share *your* voice?

For the coming autumn *Voices*, we’d love to hear your stories and/or comments about November’s election, and why it matters to you.

Why is it so vital to get out the

public education vote? Do newer generations of PSEA members understand how important it is? Why or why not?

How has your involvement in past elections, or the involvement of an-

other member, made a difference for public education? Post your stories/comments online at

www.psea.org/myvotecounts. 

Disturbing threads weave through three policies

Three major federal and state policy initiatives currently taking center stage parallel the theme of Bill Murray’s hit movie “Groundhog Day.” The same bad things occur over and over.

Unlike the hilarity in Murray’s film, however, there is nothing funny about the recurring themes threading through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the Race to the Top (RTTT) program, and—moving to the state level—the proposed reauthorization of Pennsylvania’s Education Empowerment Act.

“There is remarkable alignment between the three pieces of legislation,” said Stinson Stroup, PSEA’s Manager of Education Services. “Their singularity of purpose and method is anti-professional—and I think anti-student.”

The three initiatives may be playing out in individual pieces, but it is important for PSEA members to view them collectively.

“Proposals under each reflect an unfair assault on the teaching profession,” PSEA President James P. Testerman said. “They each imply that teachers aren’t working long enough or hard enough, that merit pay is needed to properly motivate them, and that student test scores are an effective evaluation measurement.”

Testerman said this “silver bullet”

thinking ignores such crucial factors as school and home environment, class sizes, and funding and resources that differ from school to school.

“These issues,” Testerman said, “cannot be addressed in a one-size-fits-all approach to public education.”

The polices also ignore research showing the ineffectiveness of merit pay in the private sector, something detailed in PSEA’s official response to RTTT regulations: *Getting on the Right Track* (www.psea.org/rttt).

As PSEA has noted, there are positive aspects to the Race to the Top program, and we have left the decision to participate with our locals. For those EAs that have signed the required RTTT Memorandums of Understanding with their school districts, PSEA is providing guidance on key issues.

PSEA also has been working with the Pennsylvania Department of Education to propose innovative, research-based strategies in the RTTT application, many of which are outlined in *PSEA’s 20/20 Vision for the Future* (www.psea.org/vision).

Similarly, while PSEA and NEA see some positives in the Obama Administration’s “blueprint” for ESEA reauthorization, there are still common threads with RTTT that are alarming.

For example, ESEA features the same four school turnaround models

that RTTT advocates—measures that may include widespread staff adjustments, school closings, greater use of charter schools, and private education management firms. Teacher compensation is partially evaluation-based in these models, and a greater share of school district funding is subject to competitive grants than with the current ESEA, which funds schools primarily through formulas that reflect need levels.

The disturbing federal thread runs further, into state legislation.

Many RTTT and ESEA concepts emerge again in the state Education Empowerment Act reauthorization bill that has cleared the Senate Education Committee (see separate story, page 12).

PSEA and NEA will continue to fight for improvements to all three pieces of legislation. We will continue to fight for modifications that would focus far less on punishing and more on supporting public schools and public school teachers through targeted intervention, strategic curricula and proven, research-based measures.

As always, it’s critical for PSEA members to enhance these efforts by contacting elected officials, and by voting for candidates who realize that the critical issues facing today’s public education professionals are far too nuanced for one-size-fits-all solutions. ■

Watch the problem; find the power; take action

The state budget is pending, and funding for your schools and classrooms is in jeopardy, this year and beyond. If legislators turn back the clock on public education, it will affect every PSEA member. Jobs and programs could be cut, public education professionals would face challenges on several fronts, and our students would have fewer resources to help them succeed. PSEA has produced a new animated video to tell the whole story. Visit www.psea.org/schoolfunding to watch, and discover what power you have to protect yourself, your job, and your students’ futures.



'Empowering' oversight, not education

The state budget deadline always makes June 30 a red-letter date on the PSEA calendar, but it's getting a double scarlet ring this year, since it also corresponds with the expiration of the state's Education Empowerment Act.

A bill approved by the Senate Education Committee would go much further than its predecessor, originally enacted in 2000, in subjecting school districts to state oversight should students fail to meet state-defined proficiencies tied to standardized tests.

Implications for PSEA members are enormous, since the reauthorization bill before the Senate gives the state

options to require school boards to, among other things, adopt school improvement plans that can include contracting with education management firms, converting to charter schools, closing schools, or implementing performance-based compensation systems.

The original act affected 13 school districts; at least 32 districts are prone to state oversight as the bill now stands.

"Improvement Teams" would get broad latitude to initiate so-called "reforms" in two initial stages. A state-appointed panel with even greater powers would take over a district once it

reaches the third, or oversight, stage—entered when the district fails to meet requisite academic performance targets for nine consecutive years. Those targets are still undefined, but would be linked to federal standards.

As of press time, PSEA was still working to change the bill, which we feel threatens local control of school districts and is far too punitive in its overall concept.

PSEA advocates proven concepts for turning around struggling schools, and details those concepts in *PSEA's 20/20 Vision for the Future* (www.psea.org/vision). ▀

Another marathon budget battle?

Although state legislative leaders have said they want to avoid a repeat of last summer's state budget battle before this fall's elections, a prolonged school funding fight could still take place.

Gov. Ed Rendell warned PSEA members at the May House of Delegates that a similarly lengthy debate could occur, citing messages by legislative leaders to the superintendents of Pennsylvania's public schools. He vowed to stand by his original budget proposal for a \$354 million increase for basic education, and to implement the third year of the funding formula based on the 2007 "costing out" study.

"It looks like it could be a long, hot summer in Harrisburg," Rendell told the delegates, "but I'm not giving up."

Many of the same partisan and ideological divides that marked last year's budget fight still exist. Due to the state's uncertain revenue projections, some members of the General Assembly could dig in their heels to press for flat education funding.

In an April memorandum to all 500 school district superintendents,

the state Senate's majority leadership (Senate President Pro Tempore Joseph B. Scarnati, Senate Majority Leader Dominic Pileggi, Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Jake Corman, and Senate Education Committee Chairman Jeffrey E. Piccola) warned not to expect a "guaranteed level of funding for school districts or any other entity in the Commonwealth in the 2010-11 state budget."

Facing diminishing revenues, school districts statewide are cutting staff and programs, and are increasingly dependent on state funding to balance their budgets and alleviate concerns triggered by the entangled economy.

PSEA continues to advocate for increased state investment in education based on the costing out study, and to continue the funding formula passed into law in 2008.

PSEA Treasurer Jerry Oleksiak participated in a May CLEAR Coalition (Coalition for Labor Engagement and Accountable Revenues) news conference in Harrisburg. The coalition backs a balanced approach to budget-

ing that promotes sound public investments, provides essential services to Pennsylvanians, and includes sustainable and accountable revenue for critical government infrastructure.

The coalition also backs Gov. Rendell's four proposals to increase state revenues to help balance the budget: closing corporate tax loopholes – including the "Delaware loophole," which allows corporations to avoid paying millions of dollars in Pennsylvania taxes; eliminating the antiquated sales tax vendor discount, which is a windfall to major companies that file their sales taxes electronically; enacting the Natural Gas Severance Tax; and closing Pennsylvania's "Big Tobacco loophole."

Pennsylvania is the only mineral-rich state without a tax on natural resources extraction, is the only state in the nation that does not tax smokeless tobacco, and is one of only two states that does not tax cigars.

Together these four things would do much to help balance the budget and provide funds for schools, the governor said. ▀

Onorato, Critz lead PSEA-PACE primary charge

Dan Onorato, PSEA's recommended candidate for governor, won the Democratic Party nomination in the May 18 primary election, leading the way among the Association's recommended candidates.

Onorato, Allegheny County's chief executive, will face Attorney General Tom Corbett, who won the Republican Party nomination. Onorato earned the recommendation of PSEA's Political Action Committee for Education early in the campaign, when he highlighted his proposals to support public education and ensure equitable state funding for research-backed school improvement programs.

"Dan believes that education is essential to the economic security of Pennsylvania families, and that a quality education system begins with state government living up to its responsibility to fund public schools," PSEA President James P. Testerman said. "He shares our belief that investment in public education is critical to the economic recovery of the Commonwealth."

U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter lost his bid to

secure the Democratic nomination for reelection, falling to Rep. Joe Sestak.

"Arlen Specter was a friend of PSEA, NEA, and public education, often taking



Dan Onorato headlines the list of PSEA-recommended candidates who won their May primary races.

difficult stands on many positions," Testerman said. "While PSEA has twice recommended Joe Sestak in his bids for Congress, we stood by Sen. Specter, our long-time friend.

"We are grateful to Sen. Specter for his five decades of service to Pennsylva-

nia, and his support for public education. Joe Sestak also has a strong record of support for public schools, and we look forward to hearing more from him as his campaign continues."

PSEA-recommended Congressional candidates won their parties' nominations in 11 primary races. Winning the Democratic Party's nominations were incumbents Chaka Fattah, Kathy Dahlkemper, Jason Altmire, Patrick J. Murphy, Christopher P. Carney, Paul E. Kanjorski, Allyson Y. Schwartz, and Tim Holden. Winning the GOP nomination was incumbent Todd Platts.

PSEA's recommended candidate, state Rep. Bryan Lentz, won the race for the Seventh Congressional District, Sestak's current seat.

Mark Critz, PSEA's recommended candidate, claimed victory in a special election for the 12th Congressional District seat. The death of longtime Rep. Jack Murtha created the opening; Critz, a long-time Murtha aid, will serve the remainder of Murtha's unexpired term. Critz also won the Democratic primary. ▀

School nurses say improved ratio could save lives

Each school day, Pennsylvania's school nurses face the stressful potential of pinballing back and forth between schools in order to safeguard students' health. The Pennsylvania School Code requires just one certified school nurse for every 1,500 students, making travel between several buildings a daily possibility for PSEA school nurse members.

Hope, however, is on the horizon. PSEA school nurses and their colleagues nationwide are lobbying hard to push Congress to pass the Student-to-School Nurse Ratio Improvement Act of 2009. The legislation would provide grant money to states to improve the ratio of students to school nurses, and to study the impact of such an effort.

The NEA and National Association of School Nurses (NASN) support the legislation. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, schools should have one nurse for every 750 students.

School nurses say that, particularly for states struggling to fund education and health services, the legislation could help save children's lives.

National research shows that hiring more school nurses increases attendance and achievement, and decreases dropout rates. Other national research shows most parents would approve a tax increase to fund a full-time school nurse.

"Lowering our unsafe ratio can only result in improved health, attendance, and school success for our students," PSEA

Department of Pupil Services President Maggie Beall said. "It can only lead to better instruction from our teachers who do not have to worry about sick students; more protection for ESPs being asked to perform medically unauthorized procedures; and a stronger, healthier community.

"Our school population has changed dramatically, and school nurses are seeing more behaviorally complex and medically fragile students. The days of the school nurse simply being there to give out Band-Aids are gone. Today, school nurses are dealing with a host of complex health concerns, from drug and alcohol abuse, to eating disorders, to teen pregnancies and obesity." ▀



MEMBERSHIP'S MIGHT WINS THE FIGHT

PSEA HAD HIS BACK. NOW ROB WHYNE HAS HIS JOB.

All Rob Whyne wanted to do, with all his heart, was help a student.

That cost him his job.

All PSEA wanted to do, with all its resourceful might and all its substantial fight, was help Rob Whyne.

That saved Whyne's job.

"I obviously knew about the union and PSEA before all of this," said Whyne, who has actually served two stints as Selinsgrove Area EA president. "Before this happened,

though, I wasn't a diehard union member. But if it weren't for the support of PSEA and SAEA, I'd be on the unemployment line looking for a job. If you're not a union member, you're crazy."

Luckily for Whyne, he is a PSEA member. Luckily for him and 191,000 more education professionals across Pennsylvania, that membership is powerful.

In Whyne's recent case, all his membership meant was everything. It meant the muscle of PSEA's legal representa-

Major reasons

... membership matters to you

tion. It meant the procedural and organizational expertise of PSEA's UniServ representative. It meant the media and public relations savvy of PSEA's local communications specialist. It meant the unifying support of his local.

"Stories such as Rob Whyne's really underscore the scope and the strength of membership," PSEA President James P. Testerman said. "Longtime members know these benefits well. They know them from a history of contract battles and victories, and from a professional lifetime of support.

"What we need them to do now is share stories such as Rob's with the newer generations of education professionals. We want these young people to understand just how important PSEA membership is to them."

One man's plight—and membership's might

Whyne taught social studies at Selinsgrove High for 10 years, and as 2010 dawned had spent five-plus happy years as the school's guidance counselor.

He loved being in the trenches, helping kids clear what obstacles they could.

"Just the overall idea that you were there to help students, and that you did whatever you could if the kid was struggling," Whyne said. "You were there to solve problems."

But on Jan. 4, Whyne's hard work solving one recent problem sent his world spinning. Selinsgrove's school board fired him for what it claimed was a policy violation: In July 2009, Whyne had arranged additional coursework for a June 2009 Selinsgrove graduate.

The student, a college-bound football player, needed more credits before the National Collegiate Athletic Association could rule him eligible to play. Both the college and the student's mother pushed for the additional coursework, which the board later agreed violated no specific policy.

"What scares me," Whyne said, "is that if it happened to me, it can happen to any teacher."

Or to any ESP. Or, on a broader scale, to any given group of education professionals tossed, fairly or unfairly, into any tangle with its administration.

PSEA membership doesn't just help smooth such tangles; it throws the full weight and width of its formidable resources behind the fight for members' rights. That powerful punch allowed Selinsgrove's Whyne to prevail in the recent bout with his school board.

"Rob's situation really exemplified why public school employees need a union," said PSEA attorney Joseph Sabadish, who represented Whyne—compliments of Whyne's membership. "From the beginning of this situation, we made sure his rights were being protected."

- **Improving your standard of living:** PSEA provides your local with the necessary resources for your collective bargaining, boosting your salaries and benefits for a brighter future.
- **Protecting your rights:** PSEA, through your local association and PSEA UniServ representative, provides the legal and professional staff to safeguard your contractual, professional and personal rights.
- **Advocacy:** Be it the ongoing pension plan fight, the scurrying to understand and better shape the new federal Race To The Top legislation, or the original and groundbreaking research found in PSEA's broad new *20/20 Vision* document (www.psea.org/vision), PSEA battles for what matters to you each and every day.
- **PSEA spreads the word:** Internally or externally, PSEA is your personal information, public relations, and media professional rolled into one.

Be it the statewide association news you need in *Voice*; the one-stop-shopping convenience of www.psea.org; or the skills of our team of communications field specialists, who help the public understand your positions as educators, PSEA has you covered.
- **There's more:** But too much more to list here—although the many member discounts and top-notch professional development programs are a good place to start. See this issue's cover story, or go to www.psea.org, to get a better feel for all PSEA membership provides you.

PSEA had his back

Whyne might have been the man knocked to the canvas three months ago. But he wasn't in the ring alone—far from it. PSEA and his local EA, the two primary powers accompanying any education professional's membership, had Whyne's back.

Within days of his dismissal, PSEA UniServ Representative Gary Moore and the SAEA filed a grievance.

Local members then met to plan a community campaign. Prior to the next school board meeting on Jan. 19, they staged a rally, gathering with signs before presenting petitions—150 signatures strong—opposed to Whyne's re-

moval. Still, the board unanimously denied Whyne's initial grievance that night.

“ . . . if it weren't for the support of PSEA and SAEA, I'd be on the unemployment line looking for a job. If you're not a union member, you're crazy.”

Rob Whyne, Selinsgrove

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Pooling its legal, organizational, and communications prowess into one forceful strategy, PSEA focused its ample resources on reclaiming Whyne's job.

"When I was fired it was devastating," Whyne said. "It was the first time in my life I had ever been fired. It was like it was the end of the world.

"But then I had Gary (Moore). I had Joe (Sabadish). I had (PSEA Communications/organizing program specialist) Lucy Harlow. I had my local members. My local really jumped in as well. And I realized I wasn't alone.

"From then on, it was like I was on the sidelines watching. Joe was on top of it. Gary was on top of it. Lucy was on top of it. My local was on top of it."

Winning the fight

It didn't take long for PSEA's multi-pronged attack to turn the tide toward Whyne.

As Selinsgrove students, both current and former, waged Internet and hallway offensives, PSEA helped coordinate television and newspaper coverage of the dismissal and rally. Sabadish and Moore, meanwhile, got down to the nitty-gritty of representing Whyne.

It worked. All of it.

On Feb. 1, the school board again voted unanimously—this time to grant Whyne a transfer from guidance counselor to the social studies position he'd contentedly held his first 10 years.

Moore said that if the school board had not rehired Whyne, PSEA was prepared to further argue the case via arbitration.

"We would have done whatever we had to do to ensure that Rob was given the right to plead his case, and to be reinstated," Moore said. "Without a union, employees really are at the mercy of those in charge, and often times they have very little recourse to defend themselves.

"This case was a perfect example of how PSEA protects and defends our members in unjust situations."

Whyne now spends his days teaching, and smiling, in the same classroom in which he started his career 16 years ago.

"At the end of the day," he said, "I can still go home and be satisfied with what I'm doing.

"I never, in my wildest imagination, thought I would need PSEA as much as I did. Anybody who would not be under the umbrella of PSEA is nuts. I feel strongly about that. I'm so glad I had that support, because if not, I don't know where I'd be."

A 'broader perspective'

Whyne admitted that he previously failed to grasp all that PSEA membership meant. He never fully realized how PSEA's ability to protect its members, collectively and individually, is inexorably tied to individual activism and contributions to PSEA-PACE, PSEA's Political Action Committee for Education, which supports public officials who support public schools—and PSEA member rights.

Whyne never really "got it" before. He gets it now.

"I took a lot for granted prior to this entire event," he said. "I have a broader perspective now. All the pieces fit together—the whole package we have for the state of Pennsylvania."

Whyne is doing more than talking the talk. He has recently returned, with newfound vigor, to his SAEA president's post.

"You can be sure that I'm a diehard association member now," he said. "I could be the poster child for why union membership is so important." ▼

Proven protection, strong attraction

Contrary to what many contemporary union-bashers may tell you at your child's soccer game or your neighbor's picnic, union membership still matters. Truth is, in this hostile economic and social environment, your membership in PSEA matters more than ever.

Because PSEA doesn't just preach its principles. It uses them to light its ceaseless fight for members' rights.

Examples abound.

PSEA's unwavering advocacy is why Coatesville EA, Southeastern Region, recently won its long-running battle to prevent the district from cutting extra-duty positions.

PSEA's steely will is why Northwest Area ESP, Northeastern Region, recently succeeded in gaining \$24,000 in back pay for 11 teacher's aides and special needs aides, whom the district unsuccessfully argued were not "highly qualified."

PSEA's protective umbrella is why both the Hempfield Area EA and Maintenance ESP locals, Southwestern Region, were recently able to beat back the district's attempt to impose a Health Reimbursement Plan to cover significantly increased medical deductibles. The locals and PSEA argued that requiring employees to pay high deductibles up front constituted a "major change" in coverage—a violation of the collective bargaining agreement. An arbitrator agreed.

Such successes, achieved amid a national swell of anti-union hostilities, naturally attract newcomers. Just ask anyone from the two Belle Vernon ESPs, Southwestern Region, who recently opted to join PSEA.

"Our former labor union often took weeks to get back to us, if they even called us back at all," said Jodie Olszewski, president of Belle Vernon ESP 2. "(With PSEA) our grievances are now being addressed and resolved.

"Previously we were offered no training to help us and no support for meetings. Since we have joined PSEA, we have 100 percent membership. Now we are anticipating a positive future with active members who are willing to work toward improving wages, benefits, and working conditions for all members."

Twelve finalists for Teacher of the Year

The Pennsylvania Department of Education in April announced its 2011 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year finalists, and PSEA joins PDE in congratulating these 12 superlative educators.

“There are so many people who contribute so many things to Pennsylvania’s public schools,” PSEA President James P. Testerman said, “but teaching is still where the rubber meets the road.

“It’s the central point of all the important periphery work. It’s the reason we advocate. It’s the reason we pay such careful attention to policy. It’s the reason we’re so adamant about voting for pro-

public education candidates, and so forceful in raising funds through PACE to help us elect those candidates.


“We do it all so that, in the middle of each classroom in the middle of each day, great teachers can best tend to their craft. And these finalists are among our very best. Congratulations to them all.”

The 12 finalists are:

Timothy Chelednik, *Brockway Area EA*; **Jeffrey Chou**, *Abington EA*; **Adrienne Floro**, *Quaker Valley EA*; **Michele Pavlov Fowkes**, *Upper Perkiomen EA*; **Angela D. Homan**, *Penns Valley EA*; **Thomas Joyce**, *Pine*

Richland EA; **Diane W. Lupia**, *Mechanicsburg EA*; **Kimberly McWherter**, *Derry Area EA*; **Cyndi Page**, *Abington Heights EA*; **Jaclyn Sheaffer**, *Mid-West EA*; **Gretchen Stoddard**, *Northern Lebanon EA*; and **Paul Wright**, *Radnor Township EA*.

PDE will announce the winner in October at the annual Teacher of the Year celebration in Harrisburg.

Michelle Switala of the Pine Richland EA, a mathematics teacher at Pine Richland High, is the 2010 Teacher of the Year. 

Important IRS notice on union dues deduction

The Revenue Reconciliation Act of 1993 requires PSEA to notify its members regarding a reasonable estimate of the portion of their dues that are allocable to lobbying and political expenses and will be nondeductible for the coming year. PSEA estimates that 10 percent of your membership dues for the 2010-2011 membership year (September 2010 through August 2011) will be used for lobbying and political expenses.

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‘Softening’ the Keystones’ edges

PSEA has worked hard to prevent the upcoming Keystone Exams from being high-stakes tests for high school graduation. Still, many questions remain regarding the exams’ implementation and use.

Since some details are not yet final, not all questions can be fully addressed now. However, PSEA can eliminate some confusion, and has representatives on key committees working to implement the system.

The Keystone Exams were first put forth as a battery of tests—covering various subjects—that students would have to pass in order to graduate from high school. PSEA strongly opposed what it viewed as a high-stakes assessment system controlled by the state that would replace local control of education, assessment and graduation.

As noted in *PSEA’s 20/20 Vision for the Future* (www.psea.org/vision), PSEA believes tests should be used as

“stethoscopes” to assess student progress and determine where remedial work is needed; tests should not be punitive “hammers.”

Fortunately, PSEA’s determined advocacy paid off with significant compromises:

- The Keystones will be field-tested this fall in three subjects—biology, algebra I and literature/composition—and become official in 2014-15.
- When a district uses the exams, they will count as one-third of the subject grade, with the other two-thirds being the teacher’s course measurements.
- A school district may decide to use its own assessments rather than use the state tests as long as the local assessments receive state-approved validation. The validation process is still being developed.
- The Pennsylvania Department of Education will submit exams in the three subject areas to the U.S. Department

of Education to see if it will approve them as meeting the state’s Annual Yearly Progress requirements. If approved, the 11th-grade PSSAs will be eliminated.

These changes should maintain local control of the education evaluation and assessment process, and safeguard the significant role of classroom teachers.

To further assure members that their professional interests are being protected, PSEA has representation on statewide committees refining the process. Those committees are considering cut scores, developing a system for validating the Keystone Exams, and deciding whether to recommend that the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) be an alternate graduation route for vocational and technical education students. ■



Hit the links, help future teachers

The 15th Annual Friends of Public Education Golf tournament will be July 30 at Dillsburg’s Range End Golf Course. Proceeds benefit the Lucy A. Valero Memorial Scholarship Fund, which provides scholarships to students pursuing public education careers.

For more information, or to register for the tournament, contact Patti Hughes at 717-255-7127, or phughes@psea.org.

Weathersby: PSEA’s Teaching Excellence nominee

PSEA has nominated Harrisburg EA member Darnell Weathersby, a math teacher at Harrisburg High School, for the NEA Foundation’s Award for Teaching Excellence. Every spring, state NEA affiliates submit nominees for the award, which recognizes, rewards, and promotes excellence in teaching and advocacy for the profession.

The NEA will award five finalists

the prestigious Horace Mann-NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence, and one national winner will also receive an additional \$25,000 grand prize. Nominees are evaluated on five criteria:

- Professional practice—creativity and innovation;
- Advocacy for the profession and dedication to lifelong learning;
- Ability to engage parents and the

community;

- Leadership in professional development;
- Attention to diversity and individual student needs, learning styles, and experiences.

PSEA congratulates Weathersby, and wishes him luck as he represents PSEA in the national competition. ■

PSEA's 2010 Innovative Teaching Grants

Every year, PSEA awards up to four individual Innovative Teaching Grants that recognize members for contributions to innovative instruction and the art of teaching. PSEA awarded each of four members \$1,000 grants at May's House of Delegates.

The awardees, with a description of their grant-winning projects:

James Burke

Bangor Area School District

Broadcasting from the Revolution

Students will utilize contemporary technologies to detail the American Revolution. Through interdepartmental collaborations, students will research major events and daily life in the revolutionary period, role play through blog writing, and report news through podcasts that capture the period's zeitgeist. Student artifacts will be published online as educational resources.

Ryan Devlin

Brockway Area School District

British Writers Go Hollywood

The research project will empower students to research the lives and literary accomplishments of authors whose work has been transformed into famous



ITG Subcommittee Chair Dolores Zawistowski, left, and Council on Instruction and Professional Development chair Judy Metzler, right, flank 2010 ITG winners, from left, Alexander Dorsch, Donald Pearce, and Ryan Devlin.

motion pictures. Using a multitude of print and electronic sources while conducting research using the "big six" research steps, students will produce an online multimedia presentation.

Alexander Dorsch

Shenango Area School District

From the Garden to the Oven

Students will learn sustainable agricultural practices by planting and maintaining an organic garden, and processing and/or cooking the produce. A wood-fire, earthen oven will be designed and constructed by the students using available natural and recycled/re-

cyclable materials. The project will also involve community outreach and educational/culinary events.

Donald Pearce

Wattsburg Area School District

Encounter

This is an "Authentic Learning" lesson. Students travel back in time to a Seneca Indian village around the time of European contact. The objective is to expose students to a different culture through total sensory immersion so that they may learn tolerance while studying history. ▀

Seven win Valero Scholarships

Lucy Valero spent 18 years building PSEA's student program into one of the nation's best. Valero believed that today's top students become tomorrow's top teachers, and it is in that spirit that PSEA honors both Valero and Pennsylvania's most promising future educators with the annual Lucy A. Valero Scholarships.

Seven students won this year's scholarships, announced at April's 2010 Student PSEA Conference and

Convention in Reading.

"PSEA is a big part of my life, and I plan to stay a member when I graduate and begin my teaching career," writes Student PSEA member Megan Lenge, an East Stroudsburg University student and one of this year's Valero Scholarship winners. "Thanks to you I am one step closer to achieving my goal of becoming a teacher and making a difference in the world of education."

Lenge was among five Student

PSEA collegians who each claimed \$1,650 scholarships. The others were **Tiffani Guiser**, Lock Haven University; **Brianna Pritchard**, Kutztown University; **Danielle Radic**, Lebanon Valley College; and **Morgan Smith**, Millersville University.

Two high school seniors each won \$500 scholarships: **Sara McCarthy**, Plum Senior High School; and **Brittany Carr**, Montour High School. ▀

Delegates rock the House

PENNSYLVANIA STATE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Celebrating Excellence

2 0 1 0

Surrounded by a glimmering, star-filled backdrop, celebration took center stage on May 13, when more than 200 PSEA members traveled to Philadelphia for the 2010 Celebrating Excellence Awards, an annual event honoring the Adler Friend of Education and Human and Civil Rights Award recipients.

Adler Friend of Education

This year's Adler Friend of Education recipient, Judge Marjorie O. Rendell, Pennsylvania's First Lady, was unable to attend, but sent a video thanking PSEA and describing the Pennsylvania Coalition for Representative Democracy (PennCord). Judge Rendell is a leading partner in PennCord, demonstrating her commitment to civics education in Pennsylvania.



Judge Marjorie O. Rendell

The evening exemplified the transformative power of community service, and duly recognized those individuals and organizations striving the most to make a difference. Find more information and photos at www.psea.org/celebratingexcellence.

Human and Civil Rights



Harrisburg teachers, from left, Andrae Martin, Andrew Erby, and Jamien Harvey run the Big Boys in Training program, which uses team sports to help forge quality character in youths.



Waynesboro Area High School student Brandon Baker, second from right, demonstrated uncommon leadership in forming a Gay-Straight Alliance at his high school.



Maura Solonoski, center, Hazleton Area paraprofessional, manages the Luzerne County Special Olympics, and has worked with the program for more than 15 years.



Sue Daugherty, second from right, is COO of the Metropolitan Area Neighborhood Nutrition Alliance. She accepted the award for her greater-Philadelphia organization, which delivers free meals, counsel, and hope to people with life-threatening illnesses.

PSEA delegates at May's House spent the weekend doing a lot of important listening, learning and engaging, but were far from passive. Delegates gave a record-breaking \$17,437 to PACE, establishing a new standard for contributions at a House of Delegates.

Hundreds of members visited the Advocacy in Action Center, where they

e-mailed their legislators, urging them to support education jobs; signed an online petition for pensions; made phone calls for PSEA-recommended candidates; and reviewed talking points and information on the pension crisis.

Critical issues sessions focused on Pennsylvania's Standard-Aligned System to drive student achievement, and on the dangers of cyberbullying; they

provided valuable tools to help members help students.

Caucuses and committees afforded opportunities to discuss a wide variety of topics important to our Association.

House of Delegates business sessions focused on leadership, political engagement, and action.

Leaders urge activism

Dan Onorato, PSEA-recommended candidate for governor and champion

for public education, spoke frankly to delegates about his commitment to Pennsylvania's future. He expressed his commitment to funding Pennsylvania schools, and to keeping the promise of a defined benefit pension plan for school employees.

Gov. Ed Rendell also visited, urging members to get involved in the funding fight. He noted that PSEA members' past action has been critical in increasing education funding throughout his term.

NEA Treasurer and Pennsylvania's



*Gubernatorial candidate
Dan Onorato*



Gov. Ed Rendell

own Becky Pringle addressed delegates Friday evening. Pringle thanked PSEA members for their unwavering activism, and brought with her from Washington the words of NEA leaders, including this message from NEA President Dennis Van Roekel: "You, the members and leaders of PSEA, have stepped up every time we've called. You rock, PSEA! And your national president thanks you."

PSEA President James P. Testerman's report addressed the many "dark clouds" gathering in the skies of public education, but its core message was a sunny one: Through collective action, particularly at the polls, members can



*NEA Treasurer
Becky Pringle*



James P. Testerman

make the difference in surviving the storm.

"Much is made of single-issue voters," Testerman said. "I'm proud to say that I'm a single-issue voter. My single issue? You – PSEA members. And I need you to be single-issue voters for your jobs. Because if we can't teach our children well and keep them safe and healthy, if we can't provide for our families, if we can't retire with security, if we don't have jobs, how important are those other issues?"


PSEA Executive Director John Springer also focused on collective action's power. His report included the premiere of a new video, "Hands Off Our Pensions!" which features PSEA members from across the state explaining why the pension issue affects every member, and why we must stand together and tell legislators to keep the promise.

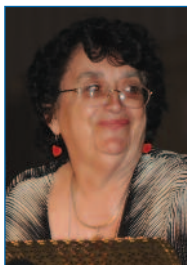
Watch the video at www.psea.org/pensions.



John Springer

Election results

Delegates elected (pictured left to right) Mel Vogler to continue her service as PSEA Pension Plan Director, and elected three state NEA Directors: Marsha L. Fabian and Timothy T. Graham were reelected, and Melvin S. Riddick won a seat. 



School psychologist: any other name not the same

School psychologists are still school psychologists.

That might strike the eye as painfully obvious, but the simple declaration represents an arduously gained triumph for these essential education professionals.

After intense advocacy pressure from various organizations nationwide, the PSEA and NEA prominent among them, the American Psychological Association (APA) recently abandoned its intention to require school psychologists to hold doctoral degrees in order to hold their titles.

PSEA School Psychology Section President Rene Fetchkan spearheaded Pennsylvania's multi-pronged efforts to defeat the APA proposal, which was a thinly veiled slap in the profession's face.

"It was, absolutely," Fetchkan said. "This spoke to the heart of our function, and to our identity as a whole. It was a really huge issue for us."

For decades, the APA's Model Licensure Act provided an exemption that allowed a school psychologist to be called a psychologist without possessing a

Ph.D. In 2008, however, the APA began accepting commentary from stakeholders regarding its proposal to remove the exemption. Then, last fall, the APA formally proposed eliminating the exemption, setting into motion the more spirited and forceful national push to preserve school psychologists' titles.

In Pennsylvania, the PSEA jumped into the fray to protect its members, galvanizing its resources with the state's other psychological and school psychologists associations. In late February the APA formally reneged, recognizing that state institutions such as the PDE were the appropriate authorities to credential school psychologists.


"This was a great victory for our members, to be sure," said PSEA

President Jim Testerman, who played a leading role in the collective fight. "But it was

also great for all the students in our state and across the country who each day depend on school psychologists' patience, knowledge, and compassion."


Some may wonder: Why all the fuss? In this case, there's much in a name.

"They would have had to come up with a different title to describe the services that we provide," Fetchkan said. "For us, as school psychologists, that's demeaning."

"Just because one person has no doctorate and now is called a 'psychometrist,' or something like that, doesn't mean that she's now providing a different service. There would have been no differentiation in services provided, but there would have been a differentiation of title." 

Tax fairness the CLEAR mission

PSEA has teamed with labor organizations across Pennsylvania to fight for working families through the newly formed CLEAR Coalition. The Coalition for Labor Engagement and Accountable Revenues believes it is the legal and moral duty of Pennsylvania government, state and local, to efficiently deliver essential, quality services to Pennsylvanians.

Together with the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO, AFSCME, and other partners, the Coalition is urging Harrisburg to use a balanced approach in the state budget, creating new revenues to keep Pennsylvania moving forward. This would treat Pennsylvania taxpayers fairly; ensure that corporations and others who can afford higher taxes are paying their "fair share" so the working and middle class are not overburdened; and provide sustainable, accountable revenue for critical government infrastructure. Learn more about the coalition and how you can get involved at www.clearforpa.org. 



Clair W. Hoffman
35 years of service

PSEA Employees Service Recognition



David L. Weibley
35 years of service



Linda P. Morrow
25 years of service



Karen Stranz
20 years of service



Cindy J. Hake
20 years of service



Randy A. Gardner
20 years of service



Richard E. BurrIDGE
20 years of service

MLT/WLT conferences move leadership forward



The 2010 Minority and Women's Leadership Training conferences were in Valley Forge, and offered a variety of instructional tracks. Discussing the topics, and enjoying one another's company, at the conferences were: (top left photo) George P. Parks, left, and Levi E. Smalls, both of the Abington Transportation ESP; (top right photo) Frances D. Benjamin, Lower Merion ESP, left, and Carol Troop, Erie City EA; and (bottom right photo) A. Brahin Tabb, Council Rock EA, left, Christine L. Cave, Downingtown EA, and Teresa Hoover, Dauphin County Tech EA.



PSEA-Retired throws House party for its 25th

One of the youngest members of the PSEA family turns 25 later this year. Ironically, it is PSEA-Retired.

As a sign of its maturity, PSEA-Retired held its inaugural House of Delegates May 3-4 at State College, where 142 elected delegates from across the state gathered at the Ramada Inn.

In the past, PSEA-Retired conducted elections via mail. In the face of ever-increasing postage costs, however, PSEA-Retired recognized the need for alternatives, and the notion of a Retired House of Delegates was born. Funding previously directed toward the mail elections instead offset the PSEA-Retired House cost.

Candidates were able to personally make their case to potential voters, and delegates had an opportunity to meet the candidates and ask questions face-to-face—and ask they did during the Q&A forum.

The group focused on more than just statewide elections. During the business

meeting, delegates moved, discussed and voted on eight new business items ranging from health insurance benefits to other membership concerns.

This inaugural House underscored the fact that retirement does not equate to lack of interest or involvement.

"Many of those who were most vocal at the Retired House of Delegates, I remember as having been equally vocal in their active associations," said former PSEA president and current PSEA-Retired member Annette Palutis.


PSEA-Retired is renowned within PSEA for its generous PACE contributions, and the Retired House reinforced the reputation. The group contributed an impressive \$3,165 to PACE, with a nearly 100 percent participation rate.

Elected to serve PSEA-Retired for



PSEA-Retired's inaugural House of Delegates focused on statewide elections and eight new business items.

the 2010-2012 term were: Susan L. Jones, President; Mary Moran, Vice President; Patsy J. Tallarico, Second Vice President; Steve Harmanos, Legislative Committee; Linda Morrison, Council on Instruction and Professional Development (IPD); Phil Russo, Resolutions Committee; and Mary Flaherty Artuso, PACE Board. The next PSEA-Retired House of Delegates is in spring 2012.

For more information on PSEA-Retired, please contact PSEA at 1-800-944-7732, ext. 7065. 

PSEA: lightning nurses' load

Mandatory overtime. Growing patient-nurse ratios. Strict, new continuing education requirements.

Such increasing burdens upon nurses' shoulders are naturally leading to burnout, and forcing many of society's most vital professionals from their chosen field.

HealthCare-PSEA is now helping to lift at least some of this excess weight by providing presentations that will aid health care workers in meeting Act 58 mandates, which require registered nurses to take 30 continuing education hours every two years to maintain their licenses.

"Many health care professionals are

already stretched to their limit just trying to do their jobs," said Janine Fiesta, PSEA's Health Care Director. "Many nurses are already being required to work overtime. When are they going to find time to take classes? PSEA is a source of information for our members so they can focus on their jobs, and not be overwhelmed by these new demands."

Fiesta said PSEA Continuing Education programs are designed to provide practical support for nurses and health care workers. Programs are accessible to where these busy professionals work.

"And the time spent," Fiesta said, "is relevant to the important work they do in the hospital."


Fiesta said that nurses and health care professionals are looking for union representation to help them deal with the growing number of complex and serious

work-related issues. Nurses are beginning to recognize, as teachers have in the past, the value of a collective voice in addressing these issues.

One of the most popular programs deals with legalities that can impact nurses.


"The No. 1 reason a nurse appears in a courtroom is because of involvement in a malpractice case," Fiesta said. "In this workshop we define malpractice and help nurses recognize how to avoid these situations."

Other workshops deal with staffing issues, such as the critical issues of mandatory overtime; medication errors; and various ethical dilemmas nurses encounter.

For more information on the workshops call 717-255-7073, or go to www.psea.org/healthcare. 




Check out our new living wage map

PSEA believes that every worker deserves a living wage. A living wage provides the minimal annual income needed to meet an individual's or family's basic needs, including health care costs. PSEA continues to fight and win living wage campaigns for our ESP members, and now provides an interactive, county-by-county map showing locals who have achieved a living wage, answering the critical question: "How much is NOT enough?" Please visit www.psea.org/livingwagemap. 

Intertwining PSEA, American labor histories now online

The histories of our Association and of organized labor in the United States are filled with compelling, important stories. These stories show where we've been and how far we've come. They also illustrate the tremendous power of unions, solidarity, and collective action. PSEA now tells the tales through words, images, and video at www.psea.org/history.

Visit this new web section to find information, lesson plans, multimedia tools, and other resources regarding America's labor history. And while you're there, look at PSEA's singular history and timeline to learn about our past – and how you can contribute to our future. 

PSEA Nights at PNC Park.



- **Friday, June 18, vs. Cleveland:** Bill Mazerowski Canvas Photo Wrap
- **Saturday, July 17, vs. Houston:** Zambelli Fireworks
- **Saturday, Aug. 21 vs. New York Mets:** Pittsburgh Crawford Cap

For more information, and to order tickets, call 412-325-4493 or visit www.psea.org/pncpark2010. Orders due two weeks prior to game. Tickets limited.

We've been sharing our Vision

Studies can be a dust mite's best friend. All those little critters have to do is sit on the shelf and dinner is served.

Well, those who were laying in wait at PSEA headquarters for *PSEA's 20/20 Vision for the Future* have moved out.

Since being unveiled in January, this comprehensive research report spanning the entire spectrum of public education has been incorporated into all aspects of PSEA advocacy.


It was considered mandatory reading for candidates seeking the recommendation of PSEA-PACE, PSEA's political ac-

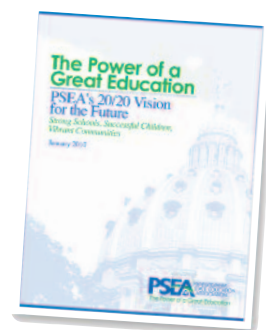
tion committee, and is constantly referenced by PSEA officers, managers and staff.

PSEA President James P. Testerman referenced *Vision* in op-eds he wrote for Allentown's *The Morning Call* and Harrisburg's *The Patriot-News* on public education funding and health care reform, respectively, to give just two examples.

We also are continuing our series of podcasts, on various *Vision* sections, at www.psea.org/vision/podcasts. We've followed January's podcast, which provided an overview of the report, with podcasts on school funding, student

achievement, teaching and learning conditions, and professional support. We will return to school funding for a podcast timed to the state budget in June.

The full *Vision* report, which encompasses all aspects of members' professional lives, is also available at www.psea.org/vision. 



Membership/Treasurers Workshops

Register at www.psea.org/mtw.

Statewide (register by July 16): Workshops run from Aug. 3-13 at designated region locations and via a webinar on August 7.

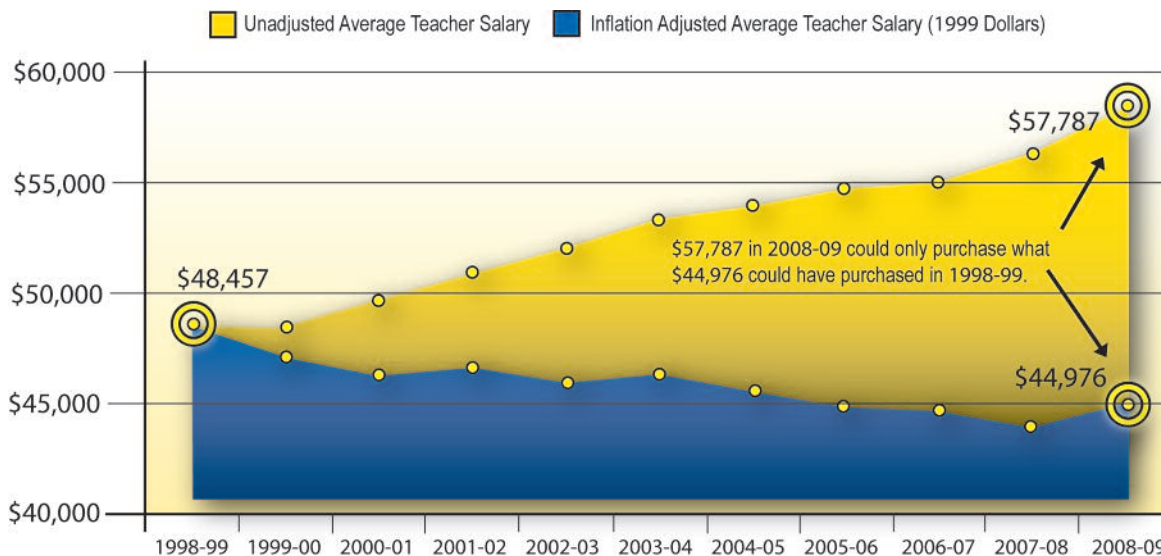


Gettysburg updates (register by July 16): Workshops are 7 p.m.-8 p.m., July 26 (Membership) and July 27 (Treasurers), at McCreary Hall, Bowen Auditorium, Gettysburg.

IFACT ZONE

Pennsylvania's declining average teacher salary

After adjusting for the increase in the prices of goods and services, the 2008-09 average salary equated to a smaller "basket of goods and services" than did the 1998-99 average salary. In "real" dollars, the average salary of Pennsylvania's teachers declined 7.2 percent during that span.



Sources: Pennsylvania Department of Education and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

www.psea.org/ifactzone

THE VOICE FOR EDUCATION

Lehighton's 'Swap' another one for the books

For the Lehighton Area Education Association, it's another one for the books.

This marks the sixth consecutive year that the Lehighton EA has conducted one of the most successful book collection efforts in the Eastern Region. Held during Read Across America in March, the Lehighton Area Book Swap collected an estimated 10,000 books, and donated them to children either directly or through agencies.

"This is always a great event," said Ron Rabenold, a key coordinator for the annual community engagement event. "It's so gratifying, because we know that every book that is swapped or given out means another child will have a better chance at success in school and in life. We all know reading is the key."

A visit from then-NEA President Reg Weaver helped launch the Book Swap five years ago.

"Having the NEA president there for the kickoff made our beginning even more special," Rabenold said. "I believe that explains, in part, why the Book Swap remains so popular and attracts so much involvement from our members."

That involvement entails more than members' time; it requires their money. Member donations totaled around \$800, according to Rabenold, and PSEA provided a grant for \$1,400.

Rabenold also emphasized the importance of collaboration and contributions from several other parties, including Lehighton's National Honor Society, local businesses, PTOs and parents.

Books not claimed at the Book Swap



PSEA provided \$1,400 for this year's swap, which collected about 10,000 books.

went to the Carbon County Head Start Program, Right from the Start, the Lehigh Valley Cops & Kids Program (run by PSEA-Retired member Bev Bradley), and the Northampton County Prison Library. 🟢

Casting light on shining artists

What Lynne Pribis loves most about the Annual Touch the Future Art Show is that it casts sunshine on students who spend too much time in the shadows.

"Typically, at most schools, it's all about sports," said Pribis, a high school art teacher and member of the Upper Dublin EA, Mideastern Region. "In sports, they go to counties. They go to districts. They go to states. But the art students never get highlighted. This show gives them that chance to get highlighted, which is great."

The PSEA Mideastern Region's Council for the Advancement of Public

Schools provides the show's funds, including its nearly \$2,000 in awards to student winners, and a donation to the host gallery of the judged contest. This year's 23rd running of the show was at The Lansdale Center for Performing Arts, and featured about 1,200 entries from 28 school districts.

"This show recognizes that there is much more to education than can be found on a standardized test," said Jim Sando, Mideastern Region president. "The arts are a big part of a well-rounded education, and PSEA recognizes the artistic talents of students not only in our public high schools, but also in our career

and technical schools."

Pribis has co-chaired the show for six years. Joining her as co-chairs this year were Joanne Harris, North Penn EA; Ian Williams, Wissahickon EA; and Connie Berger, Cheltenham Township EA.

The 1986 Challenger space shuttle disaster, in which teacher Christa McAuliffe perished, inspired the inaugural Touch the Future show the following year.

Pribis, who scours the region each year to find host sites, said we can "count on a 24th annual show next year." 🟢

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Contributions to PSEA-PACE are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal or state income tax purposes. Only U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents may contribute to PACE. No dues dollars can be given to political candidates.

At Penn Hills, a human contact to Holocaust

It is arguably humankind's darkest chapter, its starkest instance of inhumanity.

So who better to bring home the Holocaust's horror than, well, an actual human? Not some cyber story neatly accessed via Google links. Not some faceless name on some expressionless pages.

A real person. Flesh and bone. Smiles and frowns. Laughter and tears.

"That's the thing: the human bond," said Angela Keeley, a 9th grade English teacher at Linton Middle School and member of the Penn Hills EA, Western Region.

That "human bond" is the practical, proven method Keeley had in mind in April, when for the second time in three years her class hosted Anne Frank stepsister and Holocaust survivor Eva Schloss, author of "Eva's Story."

"It's not the Internet, or even reading about it in a book, or having the teacher tell them what she knows," Keeley said. "They get to see her, and her emotions. Hear her voice crack when she talks about her family. Hear that she still has hope, that she still laughs."

Schloss was, in the truest sense, a Frank contemporary. They were the same age – each was 4 when Hitler came to power – and grew up as friends in the

same Amsterdam apartment building. Their tragic paths paralleled further from there: each went into hiding for two years before being discovered by the Nazis; each went to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp; and after World War II, Anne's father, Otto, married Schloss' mother, Fritzi.

The critical divergence in the pair's stories was that Schloss survived and Frank did not.

When B'nai B'rith offered Keeley the chance to host Schloss in 2008, and Keeley's principal approved, Keeley "jumped at the opportunity."

"At the time I was teaching 8th grade,

if we'd be interested in hosting Eva again? I just felt really blessed, and was really flattered."

Schloss' return was a testament to Keeley's 2008

class; Keeley invited those students, two years older now, back for Round 2. Keeley also added a modern wrinkle: She shared Schloss' visit via video conference with six other Allegheny County schools, including Penn Hills Senior High.

"Participation was amazing," Keeley said. "No questions were repeated, and some of the schools thought of questions we hadn't thought

of. So it was really neat."

But the neatest part, again, was Schloss herself, and the human contact point she provided the students.

"Unless it hits them personally, it's fiction to them; I don't think it really hits home," Keeley said. "But to have that person, it really has impact. I think they get the idea of what the Holocaust really was because they met her. I can have all the books in the world, but I can't teach them that." ■



Eva Schloss

“Unless it hits them personally, it’s fiction to them . . . But to have that person, it really has impact.”

and we read 'The Diary of Anne Frank,'" Keeley said. "The fact that they could kind of see that story in real life was really an awesome opportunity for them."

Schloss was so impressed by Keeley's class – its attentiveness, its preparation, its questions and its interest – that Keeley received a rare second shot at hosting Schloss this spring. Keeley jumped again.

"Having it once I thought was just phenomenal," Keeley said. "Then to ask

Abington Heights members flash their 'brilliance'

In an effort to recognize brilliance among teachers in the Abington Heights EA, Northeastern Region, the Abington Heights School District created a teacher recognition program called the Kuiper Prize. Recipients of this year's Kuiper awards are AHEA members Denise Searfoss, a middle school music teacher, and Jake Gilboy, a high school social studies teacher.

The Kuiper prizes derive their name

from the Kuiper Belt, a region in the solar system beyond the orbit of Neptune that comprises countless objects, many yet to be named. Over time, some of these objects leave their orbits and head toward the sun. As they approach the sun, frozen gases from their surfaces sublime to create an atmosphere that grows both larger – and more brilliantly. Some grow so brilliant that we can see them from Earth.

These are comets.

The Abington Heights Comets offer a Kuiper Prize each year to one elementary and one secondary teacher who demonstrate brilliance. PSEA is proud of Searfoss and Gilboy for showing that brilliance this year. Each winner receives a plaque, cash prize, and membership in a professional organization. Winners are also nominated for a national prize related to their specialization area. ■



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