Dollars and Non-Sense?

The Level of Education in the Governor’s Budget Proposal

By Scott Farnsworth, GLUE Editor

I am truly hoping that you will find this article unnecessarily redundant, that you will be saying to yourself throughout, “What, this again?” I am hopeful that you are all so aware of the Governor’s proposed freeze of state aid to public education and the suspension of Wisconsin State Statute 115.437(2), which requires “Annually, on the 4th Monday of March, the department shall pay to each school district an amount equal to the average of the number of pupils enrolled in the school district in the current and 2 preceding school years multiplied by $75 in the 2013-14 school year and by $150 in each school year thereafter,” that you can quote that statute – as they say – by number and verse. I want to believe that you are all so incensed at the combination of those cuts with an unfettered expansion of the voucher program and the further dollars that it could cost public school districts (KUSD already losing $2 million in state aids annually to the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program – or 20 full-time teaching positions) – and the Governor’s dual attack on the UW-System, both the $300 million in cuts, as well as the outrageous and hastily retracted recrafting of its 100 year-old mission, that you don’t need to be reminded. I know, however, that you are all incredibly busy – and that Governor Walker’s continuous barrage of missteps and controversial acts creates an almost impenetrable smokescreen of inanity that makes maintaining a focus on any one issue difficult to impossible.

Thus, this gentle reminder – in my inimitably “gentle,” sledgehammer style!

We have communicated with you about the importance of you taking a few minutes to email your legislators through our link on the kea.weac.org homepage. Alternately, you could make plans to attend one of the listening sessions being held by State Senator Van Wanggaard and Assembly Representative Robin Vos next Monday, March 23rd:

Burlington
Burlington Council Chambers, 224 E. Jefferson Street
3 p.m.-4 p.m.

Union Grove
Community State Bank, 925 15th Avenue
5 p.m.-6 p.m.

Mount Pleasant
Mount Pleasant Village Hall, 8811 Campus Drive
7 p.m.-8 p.m.

Hardly adequate time, I know, to tell them everything that is wrong, even once.

Or you might make plans to attend an official Joint Finance Committee Budget Hearing in Milwaukee next Friday, March 20th, at Alverno College between 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Not the most convenient of times, I realize, but you can also email testimony to the Joint Finance Committee directly at BudgetComments@legis.wisconsin.gov. WEAC has provided a great deal of resource material, should you wish to become even better informed, at their website, weac.org, under the “Take Action” tab. There, you will find a number of articles under the “State Budget Resource Page” link. You can, for example, see how the very survival of rural districts is being directly threatened by this budget, even as the voucher expansion targets Kenosha and the other urban districts. If you need further inspiration – from a high-quality and highly-qualified source at that.

Diane Ravitch is going to be in Milwaukee next Wednesday, March 18th, 6:00 p.m., at the Cooley Auditorium of the Milwaukee area Technical College. You can reserve free tickets for this event through a link on the weac.org “Events” tab. She will be discussing both the over-testing of students and the privatization issue. MTEA is also planning a rally in support of public education. You will find a link to more information in the same announcement on the WEAC “Events” page.

Truly, the importance of taking action – any and all – cannot be over-emphasized. This budget is just the next step in the on-going assault to public school financing, the goal of which is nothing less than to make its maintenance untenable and to open the doors to privatization. Simply put, the equitable access to a free, quality public education for all children – nothing less important than the very foundation of a democratic society, according to our Founding Fathers – is being put in jeopardy, as is your career, position and livelihood. It is time to rekindle that same drive and determination that saw 1,000,000 Wisconsinites unite to recall Governor Walker in 2012 and bury the State Legislature under another 1,000,000 messages communicating our disapproval of the direction he is taking our state.

Remember, always, that the battle is not lost until one side gives up the struggle – and this struggle is for a crucial institution, one that built our society, provides opportunity to the students with whom you work each day, and fosters all our hopes for the future. Take action!
Odds and Ends...

or, rather, Improving the Odds on the Ends!

By Steve Urso, Interim Executive Director

This past week, the Wisconsin Legislature passed and Governor Walker signed the Right to Work law, as many expected he would. It is now law, although there is already a constitutional challenge. One prominent Milwaukee expert believes the challenge will fail once it reaches the Supreme Court, assuming it gets through the lower courts. Basically, we are being told that this law is an “employee freedom act” that will prevent the bully union bosses from forcing people to pay dues. We are also being told it will be good for business and likely to spur business expansion, or the relocation of out-of-state businesses to Wisconsin.

Assuming the advocates for passage are right, the RTW law apparently frees up money for business. I assume you all realize the money freed up is coming out of employee wages and benefits for private sector employees. You will recall that your wages and benefits had to be slashed in order to give employers the freedom to balance their budgets, which suddenly were all out of whack, since the state had unilaterally decided to cut aid to school districts. I need your help to understand how private sector wages and benefits are costing public tax dollars to be spent. I also would like an answer to a question I heard asked last week: Does this mean that the Green Bay Packers players, the Milwaukee Brewers and Bucks players can no longer be forced to pay union dues? Remember, we all paid for stadiums and facilities for the Packers and Brewers and are now being asked for money to help the Bucks. Does that mean, if public money is being used to underwrite private companies, they have to follow the same laws we do?

One labor activist suggests our mission must be to stop the legislature in its tracks and make them act responsibly. How to do that is really not that hard to figure out. We need to a reality check and understand there is more at stake here than just our current mess. Future generations are going to be saddled with debt and shortages of capital as long as we allow income disparity to continue. Wages paid to workers has stagnated while the richest have enjoyed unparalleled economic booms. I want my children to enjoy a better life than I and, as long as they are being economically disadvantaged, that will not happen.

There are far worse professions in which to be than education, for yours is an essential and noble profession. You chose it because you believe in what you are doing and because you understand the difference you are making in students’ and parents’ lives. You need to decide whether or not you are prepared to do whatever it will take to continue making a difference. It is up to us to turn the Ship of State around, and the only way the legislature will understand that they can no longer conduct business as usual is when it becomes impossible due to direct action opposing them to do business. I want to urge you to send emails, voice mails, make calls directly to legislators and write letters. I want to encourage you to also contact all your family and friends throughout the state and tell them to do likewise. It is necessary to have 1,000,000 contacts for them to see and experience. Sounds crazy right? No, it is called taking back our state and making certain those we elect understand they work for us not vice versa.

It is outrageous to hear a legislative body representing the people of this state that thinks they can choose to cut-off debate whenever they it wants. Our State Capitol is not their house, it is ours, permanently, and they are allowed in only temporarily. If you have something to say, now is your chance and say what you feel and say it from your hearts. One of the things I admire most about educators is their passion for learning, student achievement and developing better citizens. You know how to talk about what you like or don’t like. Do it, and do it until you have said everything you want and as often as you want.

Much like a chain letter, the word must be put out that we need everyone to express their thoughts and ask for a response back. Right now, the money interests are calling the shots and telling legislators what they want and, as we all know, money talks – and you know what walks. Well, let’s change the equation so that people talk and legislators listen or face recall, or a very strong opposition candidate in their next election.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is not rocket science; this is a call for common sense, straightforward, concerted action. How can anyone withstand an onslaught of emails asking them to explain their rationale for their vote, and then making certain their explanation is distributed to, if not reviewed by, local media? There is no way many of the proposals that adversely affect public education already passed can withstand scrutiny. We cannot, however, sleepwalk anymore, nor wait for the media to run the story we need. WE have to create the story, and forcing legislators out of their comfort zone and bringing their decisions into the light of day will make the difference.

Take a minute and think, if you will, about what would happen if our local district had $275 more per pupil with which to work in 2015-16 than they do in 2014-15. Think again, if on top of the $275 for 2015-16, there was another $275 for 2016-17. That would mean books and copy paper would be available, supplies would be on hand, more computers in use and, maybe, a few more dollars in your biweekly paychecks.

Is it worth it? Then send an email to Madison and tell them your story and how you intend to bring about a change in our state.

I just sent out 20 emails. I challenge you all to do the same.
LAST CHANCE TO FILE NOMINATION PAPERS FOR THE WEAC AND NEA REP ASSEMBLIES

Yes, Monday, March 16, is the last day to file your nomination papers for these two RAs. We have positions for 10 KEA members and 2 KEA-ESP members for the WEAC-RA in Milwaukee on April 17-19, 2015.

We will fund a full delegation of three KEA members and one KEA-ESP member to attend the NEA-RA in Orlando, FL, on July 1-6, 2015.

Nominations close Monday, March 16, 2015, at 5:00 p.m. File your nomination paper(s) at the KEA office before 5:00 p.m. The election will be held Friday, March 20, 2015.
Second Educator Effectiveness Training for Middle School Teachers

The KEA is sponsoring a second training on the Educator Effectiveness evaluation model - this time for middle school teachers! We are focusing on grade level groups in order to allow those with similar goals and SLO targets to share questions and ideas.

**When:** Monday, March 23
4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

**Where:** KEA Office Building
5610-55th Street, Kenosha

**Learn:**
- What your evaluator is looking for in a formal observation
- How to recognize evaluator “evidence” that is bias or interpretation
- The key indicators of performance
- What records to keep and why
- How to provide artifacts to document your teaching
- How to write good reflections

Seating will be limited to 30 for the session, so register early. You can RSVP at [http://whoozin.com/M9V-6RW-FP4A](http://whoozin.com/M9V-6RW-FP4A)

Questions About Retirement?

By popular demand, the KEA and Marty Richards will be hosting one more WRS Seminar before the end of the school year! If you are considering retiring within the next year or two, this is a perfect opportunity for you to get all of your ducks in a row.

The Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS), the state pension plan, will be a source of retirement income for most Wisconsin public school employees like you. How much do you know about this important benefit? Whether you’ve just started your career or are close to retirement, you will:

- Learn how to read/interpret your pension statement.
- Calculate your WRS pension benefit.
- Learn how to choose an appropriate annuity option.
- Learn how to purchase forfeited service.
- Determine whether you will have a retirement income gap.

**When:** Wednesday, April 1
5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

**Where:** KEA Office Building
5610-55th Street, Kenosha

Seating will be limited to 36 for each session, including spouses (who are also welcome to attend), so register early. You can RSVP at [http://whoozin.com/WR6-NGU-YQYQ](http://whoozin.com/WR6-NGU-YQYQ)

Retirement Notice Deadline

The deadline for first semester early retirement notification to the district is approaching. Teachers applying for either Early (age 62 or older) or Early-Early Retirement (ages 55-62) should notify the District in writing on or before Monday, March 16. Once notice of intent to retire is given by a teacher and accepted by the District, the notice of intent to retire shall be irrevocable. If you have any questions, please give the KEA a call at 262.654.2127.
Membership Dues for 2014 Tax Deductions

If you started last school year (2013-14) on EFT, you had 20 payments. If you started the 2013-14 year on payroll deduction, which the district failed to initiate, and the KEA had a backup EFT form to use starting with the next payment, you had 19 payments. For those of you who can deduct your membership dues for the year 2014, and who did not miss any payments, your totals are as follows for those who have paid by EFT:

**Full-Time Teachers:**
(19 Payments) $785.11
(20 Payments) $755.53

**Full-Time ESPs:**
(19 Payments) $313.94
(20 Payments) $301.91

**Noon Hour Supervisors:**
(19 Payments) $129.22
(20 Payments) $124.07

**Substitute Teachers:**
(19 Payments) $152.73
(20 Payments) $148.05

**Carpenters & Painters:**
(Total) $329.92

Again, if the following apply:
•You missed payments, or did not need to make dues payments while out on unpaid leave.
•You joined at a later date and paid the full 2013-14 dues amount within the 2014 calendar year.

You should:
•Look at your monthly bank statements for the 2014 calendar year if you had dues taken either through EFT or if you paid by personal check to get the total dues paid within the calendar year.

From these totals, you would need to subtract your KEAPAC and WEAC PAC contributions:

**KEAPAC:** Teachers: $10/ESPs: $5/Noon Hours: $2.50/Subs & Carpenters & Painters: $0

**WEAC PAC:** Teachers: $19.99/ESPs: $10/Noon Hours: $5/Subs & Carpenters & Painters: $0

If you are having difficulty or have questions, please give the KEA a call and we will do our best to help calculate an accurate deduction amount. Please clip this information and keep it with your other important information needed to prepare your 2014 returns. This information will also be available on the KEA website: kea.weac.org.