

# TODAY

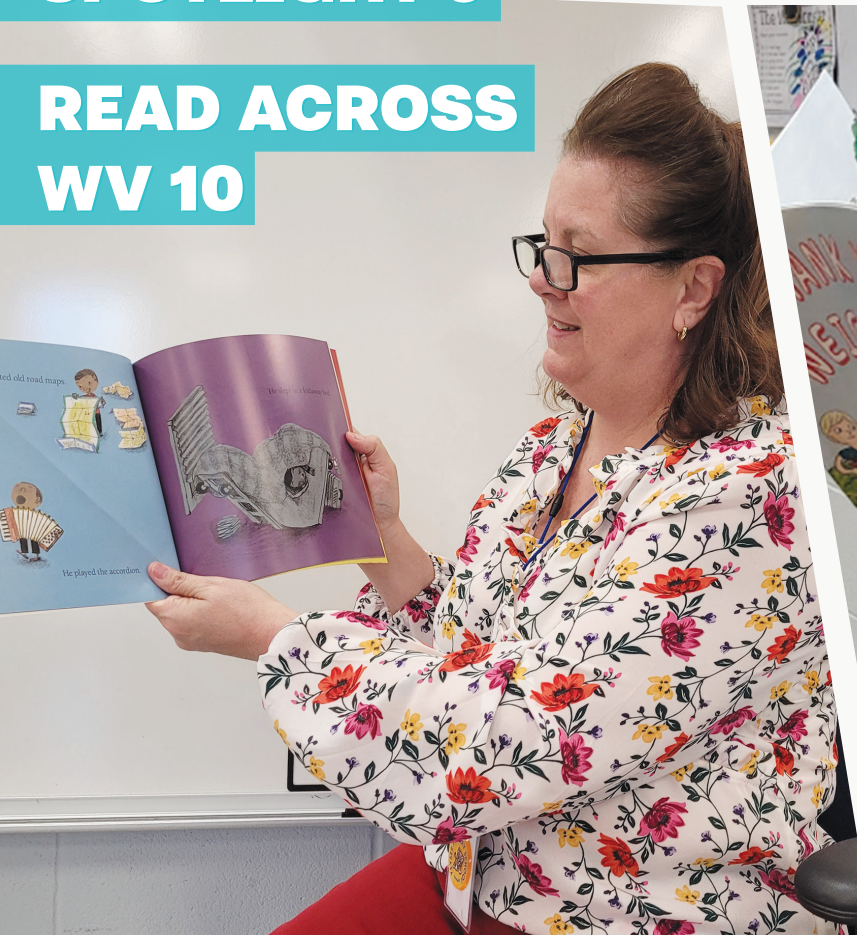


**KUDOS 8**

**MEMBER**

**SPOTLIGHT 9**

**READ ACROSS  
WV 10**





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## UPCOMING EVENTS

May 14

**Primary Election Day**

June 10-12

**WVEA Delegate Assembly**

July 3-7

**NEA RA**

## WVEA TODAY

*WVEA President*

Dale Lee

*WVEA Executive Director*

Kym Randolph

WVEA TODAY STAFF

*Communications Coordinator/Editor*

Julia Veres

*Communications Specialist*

Staci Wallace

*Contributors*

Ben Barkey

Sarah D'Agostino

Mike Hennessey

Denisha Smith

The *WVEA TODAY* and *TODAY EXTRA* are published 6 times a year as an official publication of the West Virginia Education Association, with the headquarters located at 1558 Quarrier Street, Charleston, WV 25311. The Association's membership fee includes a subscription to WVEA publications. Subscription rate for persons who are not eligible to join the Association is \$10 per year.

## On the cover

Read across West Virginia events – see page 10.





# PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Spring is finally here, the grass is growing, the trees are blooming, and the flowers are bursting open. Spring is a time for rebirth and starting fresh. It is also a time for a much-needed break after a long winter. I am sure all of you and all our students are ready for a few days of relaxation.

It is also the end of the legislative session. The 2024 legislative session reminds me of an old Clint Eastwood western (yes, I know I am showing my age with this reference), *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*. A review of our Legislative Wrap-up (page 14) will show there were some good bills passed, some very bad bills passed, and some very ugly bills that made it through. Fortunately, there were just as many good, bad, and ugly bills that did not make it through the legislative process. Let me just say, it was a long 60 days.

With the wrap up of the session, we will take a much needed, but very short break to catch our breath. Our attention now must be on the 2024 Primary Election on May 14. It is said every year, “this is the most important election in a long time,” but I will reiterate the importance of this election. Let me be clear, this is not about the party. The 2024 election will be about finding moderate candidates that want to move West Virginia and public education forward. We cannot keep sending the same people to Charleston, many of whom want to destroy public education, and expect different results.

We are just now starting to see the end results of some of the legislation that passed in previous sessions impacting our education system—less funding, positions being eliminated, schools consolidated, unfilled positions. The damage will continue and the list will get longer if we continue to send the same individuals to Charleston each session.

You will see the list of endorsed candidates in this issue of *WVEA Today*. However, simply giving an endorsement to a candidate is not enough. The WVEA has members in all 17 Senate districts and all 100 House districts. As educators, we are among the most respected and trusted members of our communities. We must go out and work for candidates, make calls, knock on doors, host events, and tell everyone why this candidate is the best choice. We must recruit other people to vote for them and talk to friends and family members about voting. Simply making a post on Facebook or other social media sites is not enough. We must go back to the old method of face-to-face contacts and urging everyone to vote. Most importantly, we must get out and vote ourselves.

I know it has been a long, tough year. As educators, you have given up your planning period to cover classes, doubled up classes, taken extra bus runs, worked short-staffed in our school cafeterias, covered classes and students as aides, and many, many other examples. So take a much deserved and needed break, then do what we as educators do best...take care of our students!

Dale Lee



President Dale Lee gave a presentation to both education committees on the results of WVEA's member poll.

Photo Credit: WV Legislature

# Results from WVEA's member poll

A big “Thank You” to those that were chosen to participate in our Member Poll in November 2023. The results were originally released to our members, the press and public in mid-January. “The data we obtained from the polling was excellent and clearly points out the items that need to be addressed to help with the recruitment and retention of education employees. The data wasn’t new to us, but the format was. It was a large, scientific sampling and was the first scientific sampling that any organization had done at that level,” said WVEA President Dale Lee. “The information was disturbing, but necessary to get out for the public and policymakers to see. We had excellent coverage of the poll throughout the state.”

In addition to the press event, Lee made additional presentations to the House and Senate education committees during the legislative session. “Like many things that are taken to the legislature to improve public education and the working conditions of education employees, much of the findings fell on deaf ears,” said Lee. “The dysfunction in deal-

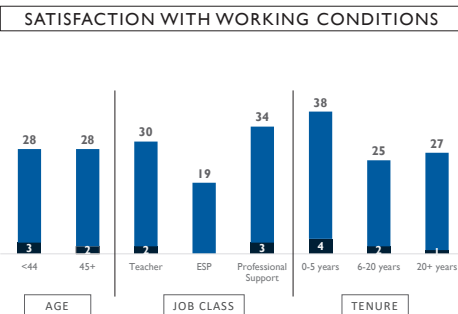
ing with the real issues of our state is alarming. Issues of little concern and maintaining the culture wars get most of the legislative attention.”

“One of the slides that was not released publicly shows that members’ feelings toward the WV state legislature are overwhelmingly negative when it comes to the issues of public education. In the poll, 88% have a negative view of the state legislature, with a 62% intensity level seeing them as very unfavorable,” continued Lee. “The Legislature by far had the highest negative rating of any group or individual that we tested. In many ways, this legislative session confirmed those feelings for our members.”

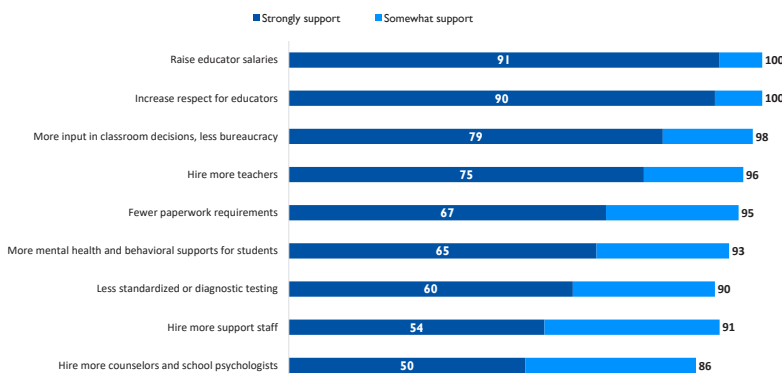
As a recap from our member survey, below are a few of the findings. Additional information on the survey can be found at [wvea.org/membersurvey](http://wvea.org/membersurvey).

Nearly ¼ of members are dissatisfied with working conditions. ESPs are significantly less satisfied with their working conditions. The responses are broken down by age, employment classification and length of service. In all instances, the dissatisfaction is overwhelming. Keep in mind the working conditions of our employees are the learning conditions of our students.

## NEARLY ¼ OF MEMBERS ARE DISSATISFIED WITH WORKING CONDITIONS; ESPs ARE SIGNIFICANTLY LESS SATISFIED WITH WORKING CONDITIONS



## PROPOSALS TO ADDRESS BURNOUT: RAISE SALARIES, INCREASE EDUCATOR RESPECT, ALLOW TEACHERS MORE INPUT IN CLASSROOM DECISIONS



Below is a list of different proposals to address educator burnout. For each one, please indicate whether you support or oppose the proposal.

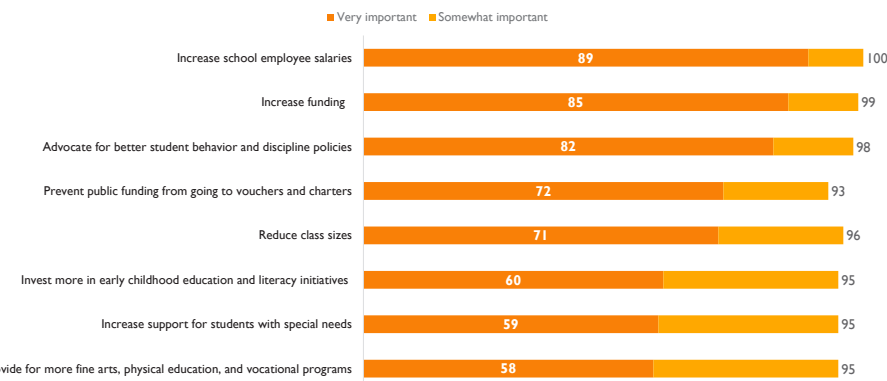
Generally speaking, how satisfied are you with conditions facing educators like you in your school district these days?

Burnout was a significant issue across all categories. When asked about proposals to address burnout the highest responses were to raise salaries, increase educator respect, and allow teachers more input in classroom decisions by eliminating bureaucracy. Note the intensity of the top two responses were 90 and 91%. Also note that those two responses garnered 100% of the participants’ responses. Without changes, that problem of retaining and attracting education employees will only get worse.

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### MEMBERS' TOP PRIORITIES: INCREASE SALARIES, IMPROVE FUNDING, AND ADVOCATE FOR BETTER STUDENT BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE POLICIES

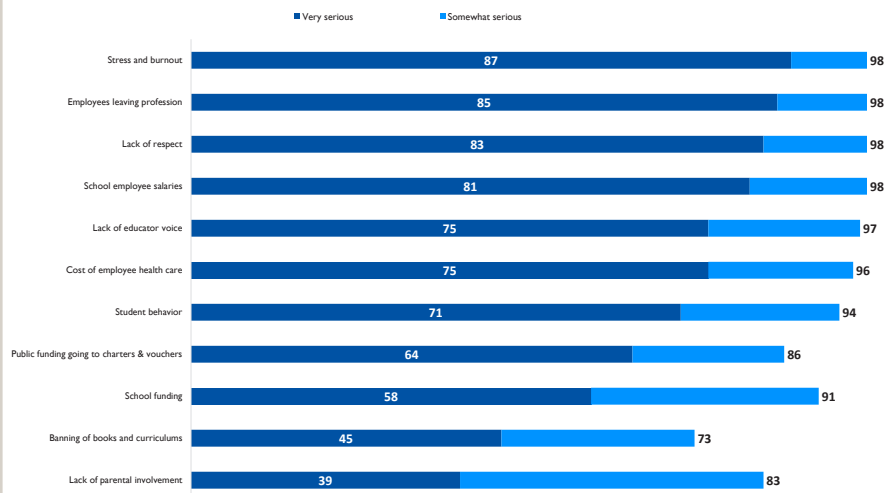


Below is a list of policy issues about which your education association is currently advocating or may advocate in the future. Please indicate how important it is for your education association to advocate on each of these issues.

When given topics and asked to pick priorities the issues of increasing salaries, increasing funding, better student behavior and discipline policies rose to the top. The salary issue once again garnered a score of 100%. Also, note the intensity of the top three items on the list.

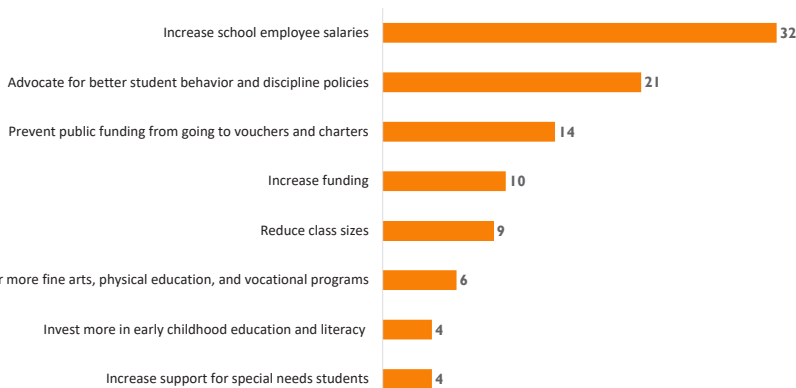
Participants were asked to rank a list of concerns. The responses are listed and ranked in order of intensity (darker blue bars). The top four responses all received a rank of 98. Those include: stress and burnout, employees leaving the profession, lack of respect, and school employee salaries.

### MEMBERS' TOP CONCERNS IN 2023: STRESS & BURNOUT, EDUCATOR SHORTAGES, RESPECT, AND SALARIES



Below is a list of problems that some West Virginia school employees are concerned about. For each issue, please indicate how serious a problem it is.

### ASKED TO CHOOSE JUST TWO, SALARIES AND STUDENT DISCIPLINE POLICIES RISE TO THE TOP



And if you had to choose, which two are the most important priorities for WVEA to address?

When asked to choose from the above topics, which two are the most important priorities for WVEA to address? Again, increasing school employee salaries and better student behavior and discipline policies stood out as the top concerns.

# AFT-WV/WVEA merger talks continue

**F**or well over a year, WVEA and AFT-WV have been engaged in conversations to merge the two organizations into a single entity. Both organizations had kept their leadership and membership informed on the discussions but in late February both organizations released a statement to the media of the intent to merge.

“We are to the point that the executive boards and governing bodies of both organizations have unanimously approved a values statement for the new organization,” states WVEA President Dale Lee. “The adoption of the values allows us to proceed with the next steps of creating the foundational documents and business plan needed for operation.”

“By no means does this mean we are ready to merge. There are many items that still need to be worked out, but we are committed to doing our best to get a merger in place,” said Lee. “There are hundreds of items that have to be worked out and we are in the beginning stages of trying to iron them all out.”

“Until the official merger, our two organizations will be working together on certain issues and projects. Our combined forces will better position us to serve the needs of education employees, students, and public education as we move into the future. I’m excited

about what the future holds,” stated Lee.

Below are a few FAQs based on the feedback we have received so far from members.



## What do merger discussions mean for me at this time?

Nothing changes for any of our members or locals. Both organizations are continuing to operate as we have been. The merger discussions are ongoing, but the impacts of those discussions will not be seen for quite a while.

## How long will it take to merge into a single organization?

We have set a tentative goal to have a new organization in place on September 1, 2025. While that may seem a long way off, there is much that needs to be done before then. It is an ambitious goal and one that can be pushed back if need be.

## Is the merger a done deal?

It is not. There are many issues to work out and some of them could be dealbreakers. Our goal is to merge but it needs to be in the best interest of the members of both organizations.

## Are there other merged NEA/AFT organizations?

Yes. There are currently five states where the AFT and NEA affiliates have merged. They are New York, Florida, North Dakota, Montana, and Minnesota. Minnesota was the first to merge over 25 years ago.

## Does the new organization have a name?

It does not have a name yet. We are currently referring to it as the West Virginia Merged Organization (WVMO). That will not be the organization’s name, it is simply a placeholder to be used in the documents we are developing. We have had a branding workshop with focus groups from both organizations (see page 16), will do additional polling and work with some PR professionals to develop a name and brand for the new organization.

## What is the values statement?

The values statement identifies the core beliefs and tenets of a potential new organization. They include: WVMO will be a powerful, cohesive, unified voice with one vision to protect and defend public education; WVMO will be committed to the highest level of representation and advocacy for member rights at every level—local, state and national; WVMO will dedicate itself to advocating for West Virginia educators, students and families; WVMO will promote democracy within the union

*Continued on page 7*





## Delegates selected to attend 2024 NEA RA

**W**VEA members were recently nominated to represent you as state delegates at the 2024 NEA Representative Assembly (NEA RA) in Philadelphia, PA. WVEA members attending the July 3–7 event are: **Sara Ballengee** (Mercer County); **Adena Barnette-Miller** (Jackson County, alternate); **Kim Bonnett** (Lewis County); **Lucinda Burns** (Kanawha County); **Beth Hardy** (Mineral County); **Gwen Lacy** (McDowell County); **Dale Lee** (Mercer County); **Danielle Lee** (Mercer County); **Lauren Manning** (Wyoming County); **Blake Mangold** (Mineral County); **Amber McCoy** (Wayne County); **Vera Miller** (Cabell County); **John Quesenberry** (Raleigh County); **Wayne Spangler** (Monroe County); and **Angela Wyatt** (Jefferson County). **Doris Tuckwiller-Wood** (Berkeley County) and **Leonard Walker** (Fayette County) will represent WVEA-Retired. **Jason Crouch** (Fayette County) will be the Category II representative.

Each summer, approximately 6,000 educators meet to debate the vital issues that impact American public education and activities for the year ahead. These delegates represent the three million members of the NEA. The Representative Assembly is the primary legislative and policymaking body of the NEA, the strategic plan and budget, resolutions, the Legislative Program, and other policies. Delegates vote by secret ballot on proposed amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws. Those delegates with full voting rights elect the executive officers, Executive Committee members, and at-large members of the NEA Board of Directors, as appropriate.



*Continued from page 6*

and workplace; WVMO will be committed to the professionalization of education employees, from entry through retirement; WVMO will be committed to minority representation in governance and affirmative action; WVMO will create a culture of belonging; WVMO will organize the unorganized; WVMO will be governed by its membership, with a clear separation of responsibilities between gover-

nance and staff.

### **What are the next steps?**

We continue to work and discuss issues in our state merger group and in facilitated settings. As significant items are resolved they will be back to the executive boards and governing bodies of the two organizations.

WVEA will continue to keep you updated on the potential

merger and inform you of any significant movement. Keep in mind the discussions are in the early stages and specific details have not been ironed out. Currently, discussions are more at a conceptual level vs. concrete level. As the details are worked out, we will pass them along to you.

## Wetzel County Education Association wins an additional \$2,000 stipend and increased substitute pay!

For years, WCEA has been pushing efforts to increase pay for non-administrative employees, increase substitute pay to attract quality substitutes, and increase respect to keep quality employees. WCEA President Elliott Kendle believes these are key steps to improving Wetzel County education for both the employees and the students.



Elliott Kendle

It's been a year in the works, but WCEA has been successful by increasing the pay of educators in Wetzel County, which includes an additional \$2,000 annual stipend for employees to be given in May. This is in addition to a current stipend of \$2,000 that is given in December. WCEA started working on this last year when Kendle spoke at the BOE meeting on February 28, 2023. He credits the key to the successful passing by continuing conversations with BOE members and administration. While being president, he and WCEA has worked hard to develop relationships with the board and central office. "Those relationships are so important to make a difference," he said.

Although others are trying to claim credit for the increase too, Kendle laughs it off and humbly says, "I don't need an ego boost. I get all the thanks I need when people come up to me and say 'thank you. This will help.'"

WCEA has also been responsible for increasing the substitute pay recently in the county. Before, subs were paid 80% of the state pay minimum and the full state minimum after 30 consecutive days of teaching. Now, it is 80% of Wetzel's pay (with the county supplement included). Additionally, after 20 consecutive days, they get a full day pay of a Wetzel County employee. Since the pay rate change, the substitute shortage has decreased by 5% in Wetzel County. The central office reported they've hired 8 more substitute teachers since the policy change and expect more.

Kendle believes the pay raise will also help attract quality substitutes. "It will be a huge relief to teachers to know when they need to take a day off, they are leaving their students with a quality substitute."

WCEA is still fighting to increase respect for educators but paying them well, Kendle believes, is the first step and says he will continue working hard for the members in Wetzel County. "My promise to you is that we aren't done yet," Kendle says.

## NEA's Minority and Women's Leadership Training Seminar

NEA's Minority and Women's Leadership Training Seminar to Advance Racial & Social Justice took place in January and WVEA was represented by Anna Osborne from Greenbrier CEA and Jennifer Sanner from Hancock CEA. Here's what they had to share about the seminar:

"I wanted to let you know how inspiring, uplifting and informative it was. I came away having made some great connections and with a deeper understanding of and appreciation for our organization. Thank you so much for the opportunity." —Anna Osborne, Greenbrier CEA

"Great conference with lots of information, thoughts on key issues, and great connecting opportunities!" —Jennifer Sanner, Hancock CEA



Anna Osborne and Jennifer Sanner





Ethan Bartlett

#### MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

## Ethan Bartlett

**E**than Bartlett was nominated by a coworker to be part of our WVEA member spotlight. Ethan is the choir and music teacher at Point Pleasant Jr/Sr High School. He began working with Point's marching band in 2017 while he was still in college. In his third year at Point, the choir director left, and Ethan seized the opportunity and applied for the position. "I knew that I wanted to give these students a good choral experience," he said. Ethan thought of other careers besides teaching. "A forensic osteologist or a Baptist minister, but in the in-betweens, I always had being a teacher in my heart," he told us.

Since taking over the choir program at Point, Ethan has changed the program by breaking the students up by grade level into different classes and starting an auditioning ensemble. "This allowed for more scaffolding and a progression from singing in unison and two-part their first year (seventh grade) to possibly singing



Ethan by his desk.

an eight-part mixed number in the auditioned group in high school," allowing them to grow in the program.

We asked Ethan why he became a teacher. "I became a teacher because school was always my safe space, specifically my choir and band classes. For me, teaching is about giving back to something that gave me so much. It was also important to me to be there for historically marginalized students, especially LGBTQIA+ students, having gone through those issues myself." Ethan loves singing with his students, "Getting to sing every day and helping students find their voices, there is not a better feeling."

If there were something Ethan could improve in education, it would be to change attitudes toward the arts. "The arts are just as rigorously academically as any other subject in school, and I wish more people would see that." Ethan tells us that this year, for the first time, he has had a college student observe his class. "Talking to him and seeing how excited he was about getting into music education and his future as a choir director reminded me of why I am doing what I'm doing."

Ethan loves to sing and play music in his spare time. He is also a professional photographer. He does weddings, family portraits, senior photos, and more.





(Left to Right) Lynn Greter, Beth Hardy, Teresa Richardson, and Cammie McCourt were part of the readers for Read Across West Virginia.

# Read across West Virginia events

This year WVEA visited several schools throughout the state during Read Across America week. The participating schools were in Cabell, Kanawha, Mineral, and Monongalia Counties. In celebration of Read Across America Day, WVEA members read a story aloud to one lucky grade level.

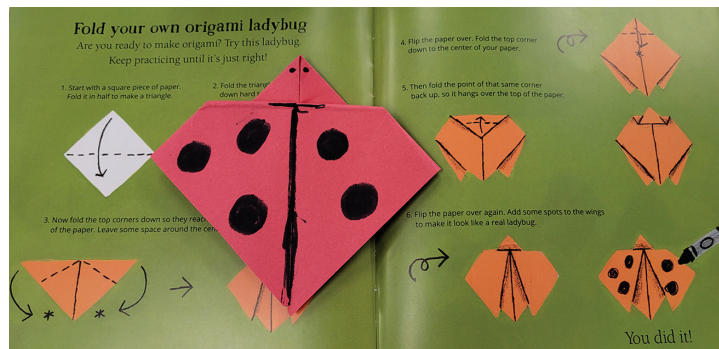
Assistant Principal Cammie McCourt read to first graders at Central City Elementary School. “I was so excited to participate in the celebration that encourages children to read. Our students loved the story *Thank You, Neighbor* by Ruth Chinn. Read Across America Day is a great opportunity to promote a love for reading to our students,” said McCourt. At Mary C. Snow Elementary School, KCEA Co-President Lynn Greter also read *Thank You, Neighbor* to kindergartners.

MCEA Treasurer/Kindergarten Teacher Beth Hardy read *More-igami* by Dori Kleber to kindergartners at Keyser Primary School. Ms. Hardy’s class enjoyed the book provided to them through a grant from NEA. “It was wonderful to see my students engaged in this spectacular story. All of them enjoyed the activity at the end of the book,” said MCEA President/School Counselor Blake Mangold. School Librarian Teresa Richardson read *Thank You, Neighbor* to kindergartners at Mountainview Elementary.

336 books were handed out to students during the Read Across America event. Students also received a pencil, a bookmark, and stickers in their goody bags. WVEA Organizational Development Specialists were onsite at the participating schools and held a gift card drawing for new members that joined WVEA at the event.



MCEA President/School Counselor Blake Mangold with member Barbara Coffman, Kindergarten Teacher, showing her students the book that they will receive.



Beth Hardy's origami ladybug that she made as she helped her classroom complete the origami activity at the end of the story. Source: *More-igami* by Dori Kleber



Want to plan a Read Across America event, but don't know where to start? Visit [qrc0.de/betRu4](https://qrc0.de/betRu4) or scan the QR code!



# WVEA-PAC recommends pro-education candidates

The West Virginia Primary Election is May 14, 2024. The West Virginia Education Association-Political Action Committee (WVEA-PAC) recommends the candidates listed below for the May 14 Primary Election. WVEA-PAC is the independent, political arm of the WVEA, the state's largest organization representing teachers and service personnel. WVEA-PAC's recommended pro-education candidates are:



## WEST VIRGINIA STATEWIDE OFFICES

Attorney General – Teresa Toriseva

Auditor – Eric L. Householder

8th Circuit – Jennifer F. Bailey  
Richard Lindsay  
Stephanie L. Abraham

## WEST VIRGINIA SENATE

District 4 – Dwayne Russell

District 5 – Ric Griffith

District 6 – Randy Fowler

District 11 – Mandy Smith Weirich

District 13 – Joey Garcia

District 16 – John Doyle

## WEST VIRGINIA HOUSE

District 3 – David Cantrell

District 4 – Jonathan “Johnny” Haught

District 5 – Shawn Fluharty

District 7 – Devon Tennant

District 20 – Steve Patrick

District 21 – Michael Mosteller II

District 25 – Sean Hornbuckle

District 26 – Matthew Rohrbach

District 27 – Gina Milum

District 29 – Wayne Williamson

District 30 – Britney Brogan

District 32 – April D. Estep

District 36 – Tiffany Clemins

District 37 – Polla McClellan Rumberg

District 40 – Roy G. Cooper

District 43 – Christopher Toney

District 44 – Carl Bill Roop

District 46 – Jeff Campbell

District 47 – Roger Vannoy

District 48 – Devin C. Spinks

District 50 – David “Elliott” Pritt

District 52 – Gregory Ingram

District 54 – Mike Pushkin

District 56 – Kayla Young

District 57 – Hollis T. Lewis

District 60 – Dana Ferrell

District 65 – Matthew Kerner

District 70 – Morgan A. Earp

District 74 – Frankie Delapas

District 75 – Stephanie Spears Tomana

District 76 – Tom Mainella

District 78 – Diane Market Gaston

District 79 – Evan Hansen

District 80 – John Williams

District 81 – Anitra L. Hamilton

District 84 – Justin Hough

District 89 – Alyson Reeves

District 90 – George Miller

District 94 – Larry D. Kump

District 97 – Lucia Valentine

District 98 – Troy N. Miller

District 99 – Osmund Antonio Anderson  
Wayne Clark

District 100 – Maria Russo

# Early enrollment time is here!



Early Enrollment is designed to support the growth of local membership and maximize local organizing efforts. In addition to gaining access to the professional learning resources and everyday benefits offered by NEA and WVEA, potential members will add to the unified power and voice of the local.

**T**he best time to join WVEA is now! The Early Enrollment campaign invites potential members to experience the transformative impact of being a part of the union for no immediate cost. From now to August 31st, teachers and ESPs can join the WVEA without paying dues until Sept. 1, 2024!

This is a great opportunity to engage new hires and welcome them to WVEA. It also provides a window for previous members to re-join. Be sure to reach out to your colleagues and let them know of this great opportunity to join WVEA through Early Enrollment in your county. Simply go to [wvea.org/joinnow](https://wvea.org/joinnow) and be sure to select the “Early Enrollment” button when joining.

## 2024-25 Bullwinkle Project is underway

**O**n March 9th, project teams from around the state traveled to Flatwoods Convention Center for the Bullwinkle Kickoff Conference & Workshop. Like last year, teams were asked to develop plans unique to their locals for recruitment, retention, and engagement. Locals were invited to participate who have shown great potential for taking their organizing efforts to the next level via membership, infrastructure, community involvement, and member engagement.

We recapped last year’s Bullwinkle Project and highlighted the strengths and successes for current project locals to begin brainstorming. Teams collaborated with each other to share the needs and challenges in their locals. Project locals will develop plans that set out a road map for the next 12 months that includes year-long engagement opportunities for members and other educators. Members in these counties will be afforded opportunities to engage in community activities, provided tools and resources for “outside the box” ideas, and invited to attend NEA conferences and events.

The ODS staff and WVEA office staff will be working closely with each project local to assist in carrying out their plans over the next year. If your local would like to know more about the project or would like to participate in the future, contact your ODS or Mike Hennessey at [mhennessey@wvea.org](mailto:mhennessey@wvea.org).





# 2024 WVEA-Retired meeting

**W**VVEA-Retired will hold their annual meeting on Friday, April 19, 2024, at WVEA Headquarters in Charleston. During their business session, the group plans to discuss ways to bring awareness to WVEA-Retired and expand communication with current members, recruiting new members and legislation that affects retirees.

## Retirement on the horizon?

Stay connected and join WVEA-Retired! Retired members offer invaluable perspectives, institutional knowledge, and a strong voice for education retirees in West Virginia and the nation. WVEA-Retired promotes the interests of retirees working to set a policy that will affect current educators into the future.

The WVEA-Retired annual membership can be purchased for \$60 (includes a \$10 local dues assessment) per year or a Lifetime membership is a one-time fee of \$400 (plus a \$10 annual local dues assessment). To learn more about WVEA-Retired, visit [wvea.org/wvea-r](http://wvea.org/wvea-r) or contact WVEA-Retired President, Doris Tuckwiller-Wood at [wvea-retired@wvea.org](mailto:wvea-retired@wvea.org).



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## A tribute to longtime staffer Kathy Moses

**K**athy Moses started working for the WVEA in 1973, soon after graduating from high school. She served many roles for the association including secretary, membership coordinator, RA facilitator, combined Staff Union secretary and later vice president and president of the Associate Staff Union. Kathy worked Delegate Assembly almost every year she was employed. She and her sidekick LaDonna Campbell were often the first WVEA staff people members would see when attending the Delegate Assembly or one of the many other conferences held by the association.



LaDonna Campbell and Kathy Moses

Kathy's knowledge and skill at managing the WVEA database was incredible as it went through several upgrades and various programs as the years progressed. Kathy definitely had her own system and it was understandable only by her. She was the kind of staff person you could always rely upon to do her best and get a job accomplished.

As good as her work qualities were, they were not her best qualities. Her best quality was the type of person she was. Kathy cared deeply for the people she knew, worked with and WVEA members. Kathy loved her animals and all animals. She cared for her community, Lake Chaweva, where she enjoyed the wildlife and all the lake offered. Kathy particularly loved WVU basketball. She and Donnie Spradling would travel far and wide to watch them play. Kathy would do anything she could to help a fellow employee and was a well loved and respected union president.

Kathy will be greatly missed by the entire WVEA family, and we send her loved ones sincere condolences for this great loss to us all.

## 2024 legislative wrap-up

The 2024 West Virginia Legislative Session ended at midnight on Saturday, March 9. We appreciate all those who reached out to their legislators during the session to stand up for public education. We must remember to elect legislators who are pro-public education and committed to improving our public schools.

Many education-related bills passed this session, and some have already been signed by Governor Jim Justice as this goes to press. The following bills will go into effect on the date listed below.

### Completed legislation:

- **SB 159** prohibits persons convicted of certain crimes against minors from holding positions on boards of education. *—awaiting governor’s signature*
- **SB 172** revises the requirements of local school improvement councils (LSIC). The bill changes the makeup of the LSIC by removing the requirement of a bus driver as one of the ESP members and gives the principal the ability to appoint the three parent/guardian/custodian members instead of a PTO election. The bill requires minutes to be taken at every meeting and then made available to the public on the school’s website. The bill would also require the state board to ensure training in the role and governance of LSICs that would be provided to principals, county boards, and others the state board determines appropriate, upon employment and every three years thereafter. This bill was signed by the governor on March 7 and goes into effect on May 26, 2024.
- **SB 280** allows teachers to discuss scientific theories in public schools. This bill was signed by the governor on March 22 and goes into effect on June 7, 2024.
- **SB 370** changes where decisions of an administrative law judge are enforceable, removing Kanawha Circuit Court and replacing it with “the circuit court situated in the judicial district in which the grievant is employed.” Any appeals on decisions from the administrative law judge will now be to the Intermediate Court of Appeals instead of Kanawha Circuit Court. This bill was signed by the governor on March 22 and is effective from the date of passage.
- **SB 466** requires the State Board of Education to develop the Safety While Accessing Technology education program. The bill states, “The state board shall, in collaboration with law-enforcement agencies, criminal justice agencies, and other nongovernmental organizations with experience in child online safety issues and human trafficking prevention, develop a Safety While Accessing Technology (SWAT) education program for elementary and secondary school students in the State of West Virginia.” This bill was signed by the governor on March 20 and is effective on June 6, 2024.
- **SB 487** requires periodic review of professional development for teachers and education staff. The review would happen every five years instead of every 10. *—awaiting governor’s signature*
- **SB 504** relates to a felony offense of sexual intercourse, intrusion or contact with a student. This bill was signed by the governor on March 22 and goes into effect on June 4, 2024.
- **SB 568** creates a comprehensive system of support to address chronic student absenteeism statewide by requiring counties to take certain actions regarding truant students. *—awaiting governor’s signature*
- **HB 4709** relates to vocational and technical education programs. The bill establishes a pilot program for middle school students and states, “A four-year pilot program is hereby established to provide participating middle schools with an elective course to better prepare fifth through eighth grade students to take advantage of West Virginia’s career and technical education programs and to improve students’ college and career readiness prior to high school.” Participation in this middle school pilot program is contingent to the availability of existing funding. *—awaiting governor’s signature*
- **HB 4829** relates to the employment of service personnel and removes the requirement for a high school diploma or general education development (GED) certificate for school bus drivers who are 21 years of age or older. *—awaiting governor’s signature*
- **HB 4830** addresses the professional development of teachers. The bill changes annual training on warning signs and resources to assist in suicide prevention upon hiring and every three years thereafter. The bill does the same schedule change for training related to preventing child sexual abuse and recognizing and responding to suspected abuse and neglect. The same applies for training on harassment, intimidation or bullying policy and for the program on multicultural education. The bill also adds blood-borne pathogens to the annual first aid training and removes students from the training requirement. Under the section for Special Protections for Disabled Children Act, the bill adds training on the mandatory reporting process, and changes the schedule from annual to upon hiring and every three years thereafter. *—awaiting governor’s signature*
- **HB 4838** requires the county board of education to provide long-term substitutes with copies of the IEP and 504 plans for the students they serve. *—awaiting governor’s signature*
- **HB 4860** provides that a general education teacher shall not be responsible for daily accommodation logs. The general education teacher shall only be responsible for acknowledging, at the end of each grading period, that each accommodation, as required by the



IEP, has been met. The bill states it is the responsibility of the special education instructor to monitor progress. The bill also states parents and guardians may request daily accommodation logs. *—awaiting governor’s signature*

- **HB 4863** allows representatives of a patriotic society, defined as any youth group listed in Title 36 of US code, the opportunity to speak with and recruit students to participate in their organizations during school hours. Boys Scouts, Girl Scouts, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Future Farmers of America all fall under Title 36. Groups must obtain permission from the Board of Education before visiting a school. *—awaiting governor’s signature*
- **HB 4880** phases out the state tax on Social Security benefits. The phase-out would mean a 35% cut retroactive to January 1, 2024, a 65% cut in 2025, and a full 100% cut in 2026. *—awaiting governor’s signature*
- **HB 4883** is the pay raise bill. The bill contains the governor’s pay raise of \$2,460 for teachers and \$140 per month for service professionals. *—awaiting governor’s signature*
- **HB 4945** allows the Hope Scholarship Board to estimate the number eligible for the scholarship instead of the exact number of participants from the previous year. That allows for more students to participate in the program. The bill also adds “All records accepted or maintained by the Board containing personally identifying information of a Hope Scholarship student, applicant, or parent are confidential and not a public record subject to release pursuant to the West Virginia Freedom of Information Act.” *—awaiting governor’s signature*
- **HB 5056** allows qualified service professionals to substitute on a day-to-day basis outside of their regular full-time position if a qualified substitute is not available. *—awaiting governor’s signature*
- **HB 5105** allows for private schools to make a vaccination policy that could allow a religious exemption unless they participate in WVSSAC sports or competitive school clubs. It does not change the vaccine mandates for public schools. *—awaiting governor’s signature*
- **HB 5262** provides a list of duties school counselors may not perform without written agreement, defines “supplemental duty,” and states that any supplemental duty exceeding the contracted day must be agreed upon, with pay, unless the duty is a result of an unanticipated emergency. *—awaiting governor’s signature*
- **HB 5514** enhances the training requirements for county boards of education members. The bill increases training hours from seven to 12 and adds training on fiscal responsibility. *—awaiting governor’s signature*
- **HB 5540** relates to fentanyl prevention and awareness education (Laken’s Law). Laken’s Law would be used to prevent overdose deaths in teens and young adults

in grades 6-12. Beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, students would receive instruction on fentanyl, heroin, and opioid awareness, prevention, and abuse. Students would be instructed in the life-saving use of FDA-approved opioid reversal agents such as NAR-CAN and the available state and community resources that work to prevent and reduce youth substance use. *—awaiting governor’s signature*

- **HB 5650** allows suspended school personnel to enter school property functions open to the public if deemed appropriate. *—awaiting governor’s signature*

#### Failed to pass:

- **SB 152** states schools must display a durable poster or framed copy of the US motto “In God We Trust.”
- **SB 468** requires a course in public schools on human development that shows the *Meet Baby Olivia* video created by pro-life group Live Action.
- **SB 727** revises the process for county boards to hire classroom aides and ECCATs by agreement of the principal and faculty senate hiring committee instead of the current seniority-based hiring system.
- **SB 614** relates to elementary behavior intervention and safety. The bill specifies requirements applicable to determine when the behavior of an elementary student is violent, threatening, or creates an unsafe learning environment.
- **SB 741** prohibits the creation, production, distribution, or possession of artificially generated child pornography. The obscene matter bill which targeted schools, libraries, and museums for prosecution regarding obscene material was amended into this bill late in the session.
- **SB 859** allows a prospective teaching candidate to gain certification if they have a bachelor’s degree in a field other than teaching and passing the praxis. It also allows for a teaching candidate who passed all the teacher preparation coursework with a 3.0 to be licensed without having to take the praxis.
- **HB 4299** permits teachers in K-12 schools to be authorized to carry concealed firearms as designated school protection officers.
- **HB 4654** removes bona fide schools, public libraries, and museums from the list of exemptions from criminal liability relating to distribution and display to minor of obscene matter.
- **HB 4851** allows public and private schools in West Virginia to employ former police as school security personnel. The WV Guardian Program, which also included former military was amended into the bill late in the session.
- **HB 5553** adds a half credit in computer science to graduation requirements beginning with the freshman class of 2026–2027. Students could choose either a half credit in computer science or personal finance.

# Branding workshop held in Charleston



A team of outside presenters with expertise in branding guided the group.

What is a ‘brand’? What expectations do certain brands carry? What does it take to make someone loyal to a brand? Why do people choose Apple products over Samsung? A brand name product over the generic?

Branding is the process where a business makes itself known to the public and differentiates itself from competitors. The goals of branding are to influence people’s associations and feelings about the brand, to create a distinct identity and to build loyalty over time.



WVEA President Dale Lee welcomed participants.

All organizations, businesses, and non-profits work on developing brand identities to both internal and external audiences.

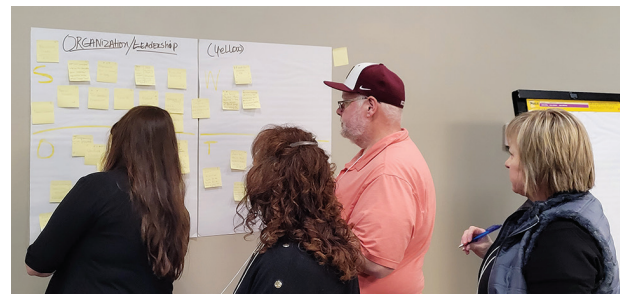
On Saturday, March 9, leaders, and members from AFT-WV and WVEA met

in Charleston to discuss brands and begin charting the brand for a new organization. A team of outside presenters with expertise in branding and public relations guided the group of approximately 40 participants through the day-long exercise. WVEA President Dale Lee and AFT-WV President Fred Albert were in attendance to welcome participants and listen to the discussion.

“As we work to build a merged organization, we want to take a look at both of our existing organizations and begin working toward developing

an identity,” said WVEA Executive Director Kym Randolph. “This workshop served as a day-long focus group to gather information to use as we move forward. Eventually, we will get to the point of developing a logo and name, but building a brand is much more than that. This workshop was an important first step in gathering information.”

Participants broke into mixed groups and discussed the various touchpoints involved in the current organizations’ brand. Each group discussed the strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities presented to a merged organization.



Participants carefully examined the yellow sticky notes.



Amber McCoy discussing strengths with her colleagues.

“Both the presenters and the participants thought the workshop was very beneficial, and the conversation was robust,” continued Randolph. “Our next steps will involve member and non-member polling, additional focus groups and outside consultants. The process will take some time, but we are moving in the right direction.”



# Know your rights in a RIF and transfer

Be aware that Reduction In Force (RIF) and transfer notices will be sent by the dates below. If you receive a RIF or transfer notice, contact your Organizational Development Specialist (ODS) immediately!

- **April 1** – Deadline to notify employees of potential transfers.
- **May 1** – Deadline for completion of RIF process.
- **May 1** – Deadline for completion of transfer process.
- **May 1** – Deadline for rehiring/non-rehiring of probationary personnel. Employees must be notified within 10 days after the board meeting occurring on or before May 1.

WVEA has resources to help you! Questions? Call the WVEA Help Center at (866) 568-9832.



## WVEA delegates will vote on proposed constitutional amendments

The following amendments to the WVEA Constitution were proposed during the 2023 WVEA Delegate Assembly and will be voted on at the 2024 WVEA Delegate Assembly. In accordance with the WVEA Constitution, proposed amendments must be printed in two all-member publications of the WVEA. All amendments to the Constitution become effective at the close of the Delegate Assembly, during which they are passed. The new language is underlined and a strike-through is shown to omit a sentence in the proposed amendments below.

### *Proposed Constitutional Amendment #1*

#### ARTICLE V--DELEGATE ASSEMBLY

**Section 3.** Each local affiliate as described in Article IV, Section 1, shall be entitled to at least one (1) delegate and one additional delegate for each fifty (50) paid memberships or major fraction thereof. Education support professional active members who are not members of local affiliates as described in Article IV, Section I, shall be entitled to one (1) delegate for each fifty (50) paid members or major fraction thereof. Higher education active members who are not members of local affiliates as

described in Article IV, Section I, shall be entitled to one (1) delegate for each fifty (50) paid members or major fraction thereof. Retired members (WVEA-R) shall be entitled to one (1) delegate for each one hundred and fifty (150) paid members or major fraction thereof. ~~Local affiliates with fewer than twenty-six (26) members may cluster for the purpose of representation with other affiliates of like numbers.~~ Each local delegation shall be entitled to a minimum of one (1) delegate. All the aforesaid memberships are to be certified by the executive director of this Association to the affiliated Associations, based upon membership enrollment in the West Virginia Education Association as of January 15 preceding the annual Delegate Assembly. The Student Education Association shall have two (2) delegates with voting rights.

### *Proposed Constitutional Amendment #2*

#### ARTICLE VI--ELECTED LEADERSHIP

**Section 11.** No person shall be elected to each of the executive offices of President, Vice President or Treasurer more than three times.



# Run for office

WVEA members have an opportunity to serve on the WVEA Executive Committee. Members who wish to run for a position on the WVEA Executive Committee at the 2024 Delegate Assembly may have their candidate statements and a photo published in the next *WVEA Today* publication. Association offices become vacant at the 2024 Delegate Assembly.

Eligible WVEA Executive Committee positions include: NEA Director (2024–2027) and three Members-At-Large for three full year terms (2024–2027).

Photos and narrative statements of 100 words or less must be received by **April 22, 2024**, to be published. Publication of photos and statements is consistent with WVEA Minority Involvement Plan. Submissions should be sent no later than April 22<sup>nd</sup> to Julia Veres by email at [jveres@wvea.org](mailto:jveres@wvea.org) or by mail to the following address:

WVEA Communications  
1558 Quarrier Street  
Charleston WV 25311

## Nomination Form for Retiree Delegate to the 2024 WVEA DELEGATE ASSEMBLY June 10–12, 2024

Retirees who are WVEA members, either annual or lifetime, are eligible to run as delegates to WVEA's Delegate Assembly to be held June 10 through June 12 at the Four Points by Sheraton in Charleston, West Virginia.

If you wish to nominate yourself or another retiree, please complete the form below and **return to the address below by April 22, 2024**. WVEA does not pay the expenses of delegates. Eight (8) delegates will be elected.

Candidates who wish to include a 100-word statement and photo with their nomination must submit them by the **April 22<sup>nd</sup>** deadline along with the nomination form.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please Print)

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Personal Email: \_\_\_\_\_

County: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Nominator: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please Print)

Signature of Nominator: \_\_\_\_\_

County in which nominator resides: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return to:**

Kym Randolph, Executive Director  
West Virginia Education Association  
1558 Quarrier Street, Charleston, WV 25311

# TIME TO CELEBRATE

If you are one of the nearly 4 million borrowers who received forgiveness of your student loans since 2020, it's time to CELEBRATE!

NEA Member Benefits, in cooperation with WVEA, is inviting you to a virtual reception to share your success story which may inspire others to not give up on loan forgiveness and more.

Please join us on Wednesday, **May 1, 2024** from 5:00–7:00 PM for whatever time you can to celebrate your success with others.



Join Zoom Meeting at [qrco.de/betdpz](https://qrco.de/betdpz) or scan QR code!






If prompted, the Meeting ID is: 886 7390 0431  
and the Pass Code is: 807118



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-  COFFEE SHOPS
-  DESSERTS
-  + MORE



# WVEA seeks award nominations



Each year, members of WVEA recognize their colleagues who go above and beyond through a series of awards. Do you know someone who has done outstanding service, shown professional courage or fosters community outreach? If so, nominate them for one of the WVEA's annual awards. Award categories are listed below, and a nomination form can be found online at [wvea.org/awardsform](http://wvea.org/awardsform). The deadline for nomination is Friday, **May 3, 2024**.

The **WVEA Mary Titus/Janet Zevnik Award** for Professional Courage is WVEA's oldest award, first presented in 1968. The award will be presented in either or both of the following situations: (1) a member who, over a long period of time, has constantly shown professional courage under fire and has uncompromisingly worked for the welfare of other teachers without catering to others for personal advancements, and/or (2) a member who, under severe and critical circumstances, has shown leadership beyond the call of duty and has taken considerable personal risk in standing up for the goals and purposes of the Association.

The **WVEA Margaret Baldwin Friend of Education Award** recognizes a person who has proven to be a true friend of education and has demonstrated this through leadership, actions, and support at the state level. Nominees may not be educators by profession and are selected regardless of age, sex, race, color, or creed.

The **WVEA Corma A. Mowrey Memorial Award** originated in 1983 in honor of the late Corma Mowrey, a past president of the National Education Association. This award recognizes demonstrated leadership ability in activities, which are unique and contribute to the advancement of women. It may be awarded to members or non-educators.

The **WVEA Lucile Meadows Award for Outstanding Program Development in Human Relations** is given to a county association with an active human relations program, which develops programs that have a significant impact on education and have furthered the achievement of equal education.

The **WVEA Pearl S. Buck Memorial Award** honors a person outside the field of education who has made outstanding strides for education in the field of human relations. The nominee must have impacted an entire school or a significant portion of the local community.

The **WVEA Mary L. Williams Memorial Award** goes to an educator who has made outstanding strides in the field of human relations. The individual must

have worked beyond the call of duty, attempting to eliminate racial inequities in the education profession. The person also must have worked to bring about improved intergroup relations and understanding, and must have been identified and recognized by his or her community.

The **WVEA Phares E. Reeder Award** (formerly the WVEA Caring Award) is given to a member of the Association, for his/her outstanding support of a student, causing the student to improve school work and helping that student become a more worthwhile citizen in the school and community. This support should be beyond regular classroom duties.

The **WVEA Legislative Achievement Award** recognizes a legislator who, because of his/her special efforts, goes beyond the normal legislative process in support of education. The nominee should be a veteran legislator of at least five years of service in the House of Delegates and/or the Senate and his/her legislative achievements must be far-reaching and have a long-term positive impact on the ability of this state to offer a quality education program for its youngsters or positively affect the general welfare of public school teachers and education support professionals.

The **WVEA Educational Support Professionals Award** recognizes individuals who have been an ESP member for three years as of January 15 of the award year. Local presidents are encouraged to nominate ESP members who show outstanding accomplishments in one or more of the following areas: (1) innovations to support the day-to-day education process, (2) professional achievements in his/her job classification, (3) involvement in promoting public education in the community, and (4) enhancement of education support professionals' image in the Association, work site, or community.

The **WVEA Ermalee Boice Community Outreach Award** goes to an individual or a local who initiates or fosters improvements in relationships between public schools and the broader community.

The **WVEA Effie Mayhan Brown Award** recognizes an individual who exemplifies the values of Equal Opportunity as stated in WVEA's Mission Statement, resulting in positive community growth and contributions.

Scan QR code to nominate someone for one of the WVEA awards listed above! Please complete the nomination form online by the **May 3<sup>rd</sup>** deadline.



# **STOP** Human Trafficking One Victim at a Time



National Human Trafficking Hotline

Call **1-888-373-7888** or

Text "HELP" to **233733** (BeFree)



**Report tips to:**

**[go.wv.gov/TipsHT](https://go.wv.gov/TipsHT)**

