

Fall 2026



RETIRED



Action Newsletter

From Your President – Wes Tessman

At the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting last month, Education Minnesota Retired was honored to receive first place in the website category for national communication awards. That's two years in a row that our website was the best in the nation! It's a great resource for you to learn about what we're doing and upcoming events, www.educationminnesotaretired.org.

There should be a special place in your heart for the upcoming Labor Day. It is a good opportunity to reflect on who came before us in the labor movement. It's because of them that you received a decent salary, benefits and safer working conditions during your career. Labor continues to fight for making our world a better place; let's remember to celebrate on September 7.

Did you know that 90 million Americans did not vote in 2024? Retirees are the largest demographic in Minnesota and we VOTE. Our turnout was 94% in the last national election. As Paul Mueller used to say, "This is the most important election ever!" So, please offer rides and encourage your family, friends, and neighbors to vote!

Please contact any educators you know that have recently retired or are approaching retirement and share the many benefits of no-cost continuous membership. They'll need to sign-up to be members of Education Minnesota Retired.

27% of all seniors are estranged from family members. Make a point to support others, whether they say they need you or not. As Winston Churchill once said, "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." We are retired and we are still making a difference.

The very best of wishes, my friends.

Yours in solidarity,
Wes

Internal Elections By Jayne Schwalbach

The following positions will be included in the 2027 Education Minnesota Retired Governing Board elections: Secretary, Treasurer, Directors for districts 1,3,5,7 and an At-Large Director. For additional information, please contact Election Committee Chairperson Jayne Schwalbach at jschwalbach26@gmail.com.

Governing Board Vacancy!

The Education Minnesota Retired Governing Board is looking for an ESP member to complete the term of an At-Large-ESP director position.

Please contact Jayne Schwalbach at jschwalbach26@gmail.com or Wes Tessman at wtessman1@gmail.com if you are interested!

2026 American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Convention

By Bobbie Margo

This year's 89th AFT Convention was called to order by President Randi Weingarten at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, D.C. at 9:30 AM on July 15, 2026. This year's themes were USING POWER: 2026 and What Comes Next: Fighting for A Better Life for All!



The Convention, which demonstrated union democracy at work, was held from July 15-19, 2026. Agenda items included Convention Committee, Constitutional Amendments Committee, and Elections Committee meetings.

The nominating sessions on July 18 included candidates for AFT president, secretary-treasurer, executive vice president, and 43 vice presidents. Randi Weingarten was re-elected as AFT president, Evelyn Dejesus was re-elected as executive vice president, and Fedrick C. Ingram was re-elected as secretary-treasurer.

The Convention adjourned on Sunday, July 19. The 90th AFT Convention is scheduled to be held at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland, OR in 2028.

By the Numbers:

- AFT to date has the highest membership ever at 1.875 million members.
- 3,000+ delegates attended this year's convention.
- Delegates signed more than 1,000 postcards addressed to State Governors demanding that the Governors recall their States' National Guard from their deployment to Washington, D.C.

2026 NEA-RETIRED ANNUAL MEETING (RAM) AND NEA REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY (RA)

By Bobbie Margo

This year's 43rd NEA RAM was held from June 30-July 1, 2026, at the Hilton Denver City Center in Denver Colorado. President Anita Gibson called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. on June 30. The Star-Spangled Banner, dedication to veterans, and credentials report were all presented. As of June 30, 323 delegates had registered with 311 delegates in actual attendance. Greetings were extended to the delegates from Phyllis Robinette, the Colorado Retired state president. She informed the delegates that throughout history, 48 different native American tribes have called Colorado home.

Business over the next two days included new business items, bylaws, Political Action Committee (PAC) fund overview, and the Jack Kinnaman Scholarship Program. Education Minnesota Retired received **FIRST PLACE** for our "State Retired Website." Our own Judy Rohde was honored as an outgoing member on the NEA Board of Directors representing Retired members. Judy was also honored at the regular meeting of the NEA Board of Directors. **Congratulations are in order!**

By the numbers: The Jack Kinnaman Fund presented six scholarships of \$3,500 each; the retiree quilt raised \$10,000; live and silent auctions garnered \$17,646.10 total; The PAC has raised \$48,094.00 to date.

The Education Minnesota Retired delegates packed up their stuff and moved to a different hotel for the NEA RA. The 164th Annual Meeting and the 105th Representative Assembly were called to order on July 4 at the Colorado Convention Center by NEA President Becky Pringle. The Credentials Committee reported that as of July 4, there were 5,763 delegates registered of which 2,207 were registered as ethnic minorities.





NEA RAM and RA continued....

RA speakers included: National Teacher of the Year, Leon Smith from Pennsylvania; National ESP of the Year, Ric Calhoun from Washington; Higher Educator of the Year Clinton Smith from Tennessee; and NEA Friend of Education, Al Llorens (posthumously)

Delegates elected NEA officers:

- President - Princess Moss from Virginia
- Vice President - Noel Candelaria from Texas
- Secretary-Treasurer - Robert Rodriguez from California.

There was a lot of business to get through: 87 new business items, six policy statements, 17 legislative amendments, 11 constitutional amendments; two bylaw amendments, 13 resolutions amendments; three standing rule amendments.

By the Numbers: 106 Education Minnesota delegates; every delegate contributed to PAC (total \$20,000+) and the delegation received a 100% participation banner; the cost of adopted new business items is \$1,064,889; the cost of new business items referred to committees is \$6,953,479; the total NEA budget is \$405 million.

The 105th RA adjourned at 7:23 p.m. on July 7, 2026. The 2027 RA is scheduled to be held July 1-5 in Indianapolis, Indiana.

On behalf of Paula Braun, Jeanne Brown-Kruesel, Sharon Kjellberg, Dan Larson, Diane Larson, Jeanne Ness, Jill Nysse, Judy Rohde, Jayne Schwalbach, Wes Tessman and myself, we sincerely THANK YOU, the members of Education Minnesota Retired, for giving us the opportunity to represent you at the national level. We represented you with pride and professionalism.



Upcoming Election Season

By Jody Anderson

PLEASE MAKE A PLAN TO VOTE!

There are several ways to vote this fall. Minnesota offers early in-person voting with regular ballots, mail-in voting, in addition to voting on Election Day. While Minnesota has had in-person *absentee* voting for many years and 2026 is the first year where “early voting with regular ballot” is available. This is like voting at a polling location where you insert your ballot into a vote counting machine. Each county will have at least one location available for early voting.

If you have questions about when and where to vote or who and what is on your ballot, please visit the secretary of state website: <https://sos.mn.gov> under elections and voting.

For the general election, September 18 is the first day for in-person absentee, October 16 is the start of early voting, and November 3 is the general election. You can check your voter registration or register to vote on the Secretary of State's website or in-person at your county courthouse.

The League of Women Voters will have candidate forums available to watch at vote411.org and local leagues will have information on local candidates. Check out edmnvotes.org for Education Minnesota-endorsed candidates. This is your opportunity to learn about all candidates. Remember local elections have candidates who are often overlooked!

Pension Improvements for Public Employees

By Sharon Kjellberg

Education Minnesota Retired is a member of the Public Employees Retirement Coalition (PERC). PERC, a coalition of 14 public employee retiree labor unions, whose primary purpose is to work together to find common ground and support for a unified position to present to the legislature for pension COLA (cost of living adjustment) improvement. The Coalition has been meeting since November 2025 to establish points for discussion with legislators to advocate for retirees' pension stability.

Our proposed legislation would change the calculation of increases to COLAs from a percentage basis to being based on CPI (consumer price index) with minimums and maximums. The proposed legislation reads:

"Change MN public employee pension COLAs to 100% of CPI with a minimum of 0% and a maximum of .25% above what is in current statute for each plan."

Our pension proposal has been approved by the members of PERC and has passed all levels of the AFL-CIO to be part of their legislative platform. Last legislative session there were meetings with several members of the Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement (LCPR), including Representative Ethan Cha, Representative Leon Lillie, and Senator Nick Frentz. This fall we expect to connect with the LCPR Executive Director about formally writing the proposal up and preparing a cost-out for the LCPR.

Our next PERC meeting will be October 21 from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. We will be seeking retirees to testify about how inflation has affected their lives.

Local Chapter Highlight - North Metro Retired Educators (NMRE)

By Jody Anderson, Chair of NMRE

North Metro Retired Educators, formerly Anoka Area Retired Educators, includes members from Osseo, Mounds View, North St. Paul and Spring Lake Park. All retired teachers in the area are welcome to join. Meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month at the Anoka Hennepin Education Minnesota offices located at 3200 Main St. #360, Coon Rapids, MN 55448.

Our main goal is to keep actively informed including:

- Promoting pension improvements and advocating for increased COLAs.
- Assisting active unions.
- Supporting public education.
- Studying social justice issues.
- Developing community relations.



Tasks have included, stuffing envelopes, putting up yard signs, attending school board meetings and attending active teacher union meetings to support both active and retired educators. Please join us!

If you are not receiving Education Minnesota Retired emails, please send us your up-to-date information by emailing retired@edmn.org with your name, address, phone number and email. If you have any questions, please contact Stephanie Berg at stephanie.berg@edmn.org

Membership Update

by Judy Rohde, Chairperson

Effective September 1, 2015, active Education Minnesota members who are at least 55 years old, have at least 10 years of membership in the union (does not have to be continuous), and qualify for a public pension are eligible for continuous membership after retirement for **no additional cost**

However, membership is not automatic. Retirees must sign-up for retired membership during their final year of work or after they retire. There are many retirees who meet the qualifications for continuous membership but have not registered. Reach out to your retired educator friends and encourage them to register online at educationminnesota.org or educationminnesotaretired.org.

By staying connected to the union, retirees have access to professional development and member benefits, including NEA life insurance they may have purchased. In addition, retirees who do day-to-day subbing will continue to have liability insurance under their retired membership. Retirees are also a vital part of the union as we continue to fight for full funding of public education and improvements to our pension.

If retirees do not meet the continuous membership qualifications, they can join through a paid membership. Currently a paid retired membership is one-time fee of \$350 for teachers and \$205 for ESPs. If you have any questions, please contact Stephanie Berg at stephanie.berg@edmn.org.

By The Numbers

Education Minnesota Retired membership as of July 20, 2026: 10,524 members. This allows us to have 12 delegates to the NEA RA and 11 to the EdMN RC. NEA Retired membership as of July, 2026: ~325,000.

Education Minnesota Screening and Endorsing Process

By Susan Witt



Education Minnesota has a multi-step screening process for all candidates they endorse beginning with a lengthy questionnaire specific to the office for which they are running. Active members had input into generating these questions.

The first question is “Have you visited a public school in the past year?” and a yes answer is required for endorsement. Then all candidates are interviewed by the appropriate local union(s). The local recommendations are passed on to the Education Minnesota PAC Board. The PAC Board looks at the recommendation and any concerns about specific answers to the questionnaire.

Candidates for statewide office are interviewed by the entire PAC Board. After endorsement, there is usually a vote for a financial contribution of \$500 if the candidate is an Education Minnesota member and \$250 if they are not. After the PAC Board process, the final step is approval from the Education Minnesota Executive Committee.

All endorsements are posted on EDMNvotes.org, which can be accessed by anyone; no log in is necessary. On the website go to the 2026 voter guide, where all currently endorsed candidates for state and federal offices are listed and you can view their questionnaire answers online. The website also has voting specific voting information; all you need to do is type your address.

The PAC Board is meeting on July 21 to approve a new group of candidates and interview the state auditor candidate. The Minnesota AFL-CIO also endorses candidates, and you can see their endorsements on mnaflcio.org. Just scroll down to 2026 Minnesota AFL-CIO Endorsed candidates. This site is also updated frequently. Education Minnesota Retired does not screen or endorse candidates.

Upcoming Events

Education Minnesota Retired Fall Conference **Arrowwood Resort and Conference Center, Alexandria, MN** **September 14-16**

We're hoping you can join us for the Fall Conference. Registration includes dinner on Monday, all three meals on Tuesday, and Wednesday breakfast. Resort check-in begins at 4 p.m. followed by conference check-in at 5p.m. and dinner at 5:30 p.m.

Our agenda offers a variety of sessions including Artificial Intelligence (AI), fraud prevention, retiree travel, upcoming elections, TRA updates, and the changing landscape of Medicare supplements. Our Social Justice Committee is hosting a book share, where folks will have an opportunity to share books and authors that have impacted them.

There'll be time to relax and mingle in our social room and at the evening bonfire. You can enjoy the resort spa, waterpark or golf course, do some shopping or just enjoy some beautiful Minnesota fall days in Alexandria!

Fall Brunch **Jimmy's Conference Center, Vadnais Heights** **October 13, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.**

Enjoy a breakfast buffet, learn more about our organization, get a TRA and PERA updates, hear from Jodi Anderson from the League of Women Voters. We had many positive responses from those who attended this event last year! Join us for a great morning of food and fellowship. The event will still be \$20/person and there's FREE parking.

If you have any questions about either of these events, please contact **Stephanie Berg** at stephanie.berg@edmn.org

Minnesota/Wisconsin Border Conference **Lismore Hotel, Eau Claire, WI** **November 10, 2026**

This conference is open to **ALL** Education Minnesota Retired members. It is an excellent opportunity to spend a day with retired educators from Wisconsin! Each state hosts this conference in alternating years and Wisconsin will be hosting this year.

You won't want to miss this day! Along with a keynote speaker, the day also includes a choice of six breakout sessions that will cover a variety of interests. You'll enjoy a morning coffee with your colleagues, lunch, an afternoon break and an opportunity to participate in a silent auction benefiting the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education.

Additional information and registration for these events can be found online at educationminnesotaretired.org under the "Happenings" tab at the top of the page.

2026 Election Work Opportunity

The 2026 elections are a critical moment for democracy, unions and public education. Thousands of union member voters in Minnesota have the potential to swing the outcome of this election.

That is why Education Minnesota is again running a voter contact program to get out the pro-public education vote amongst educators and union members.

You can make a difference in this election by volunteering for a paid part-time position with other Education Minnesota retirees! During the program you'll work from home to have phone conversations with union member voters. This position begins September 9 and ends on November 3. The pay is \$24.51 per hour, with a minimum requirement of eight hours per week. You may obtain the full job description and application by contacting Anna Brelje at anna.brelje@edmn.org.

Thanks for the Memories

By Bobbie Margo

Most know her as Judy; her passport reads as Judith Rohde. I know her as a friend and a colleague, and all of us know her as a union activist.

In the 1970s, when many of us had just graduated from college and were now faced with the reality that we had to work for a living, Judy was busy as campaign manager for Willard McGuire when he ran for NEA President. Willard was elected President from 1979-1983, and Judy successfully ran his campaign at the NATIONAL LEVEL. WOW!

I first crossed paths with Judy in the mid-80s when she was Chair of the Instructional Professional Development Council within Minnesota Education Association (MEA). She continued her involvement by serving on the MEA Board of Directors, the NEA Board of Directors and the NEA Resolutions Committee, as well as holding local positions in her school district (North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale) and positions in her subject area of math with her role on the National Council of Teachers of Math. In 1987, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards was created in response to the 1983 landmark report, *A Nation at Risk*, detailing the mediocrity of education in America. Judy was a member of the founding board that established this National Board. Again-WOW!

In 1998 when Education Minnesota was formed, Judy was elected to the Education Minnesota Governing Board and was elected for several years as a delegate to the Representative Assembly. In 2005, she was chosen to receive the Peterson-Schaubach Leadership Award - Education Minnesota's highest leadership honor.

In 2007, Judy retired from teaching middle school math. She successfully navigated through the NEA-R and was elected to the NEA Resolutions Committee representing the retired. As of this writing, she has completed her second term on the NEA Board of Directors representing retired members and has recently been elected to a position of NEA Board of Directors Alternate.

In addition to her union activism, Judy has visited all seven continents, is a stepmother to three successful adult children as well as being a modern medical miracle with a successful kidney transplant.

CONGRATULATIONS Judy, on your many years of successful union activism. As a friend and a colleague, I, along with a host of friends and colleagues-look forward to continuing to work with you in the quest to put union values, beliefs, activism and strength in future colleagues' hearts and minds.



Each time a man stands up for an
ideal or acts to improve the lot of
others or strikes out against
injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple
of hope.

— Robert Kennedy —



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Education Minnesota Retired Members in Action

