

DIRECTIONS

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SAVE OUR WISCONSIN RETIREMENT SYSTEM (WRS)

Under the budget bill, the legislature passed provisions limiting participation in the WRS by changing vesting rules and increasing the full-time equivalency or hours worked to be eligible for a pension. The budget bill also requires a study of the WRS that focuses on two things - changing the system to allow for 401K type plans and to let employees opt out of the system altogether. The implementation of either of these plans will destabilize the WRS.

CAUS-North and CAUS South are co-sponsoring a presentation for you to find out more about this threat and what you can do about it.

WRS WORKSHOP

Presented by Betsy Kippers, WEAC Vice President
Tuesday, February 28, 2012, 6:30 p.m.
Sheraton Hotel, Madison

Come and find out the facts about your retirement system, whether you are a retiree or someone who won't retire for many years.

SENATE BILL 2 SIGNED INTO LAW

Governor Walker signed Senate Bill 2 into law. The bill includes changes to the non-renewal deadlines for teacher's individual contracts under Wis. Stat. 118.22. Current law says that preliminary notice of non-renewal must be given at least fifteen days before the final notice is issued and that notice must be received on or before March 15. The new law extends the date for final notice of non-renewal to May 15. In effect, the deadline for preliminary notice of non-renewal is changed from February 29 to April 30. Senate Bill 2 also changes the date for returning your contract from April 15 to June 15.

However, you must check your collective bargaining agreement. If dates are stated in your contract, those deadlines will remain in place until your contract expires. In addition, the bill also expands the open enrollment period from 3 weeks to 3 months. The new open enrollment application period will run from February 6 to April 30. The consequences of this

change are unknown at this time; however, every time a student leaves a district, that student takes state aide dollars with them. Last year, nearly \$196.2 million was transferred among Wisconsin school districts due to open enrollment.

Proponents of this change tout it as providing parents with more choice. Unfortunately, this expansion, when coupled with the extension of deadlines for contract non-renewals, could lead to significant issues for district budgets. Accurate budget projections for an upcoming school year are difficult enough without the uncertainty created by the influx or outflow of state funding expanded open enrollment could create.

CELEBRATE READ ACROSS AMERICA

Research shows motivating children to read is an important factor in student achievement and creating lifelong successful readers. NEA's Read Across America activities bring reading excitement to children of all ages and grew out of the notion that a small group of educators wanted to help kids become as excited about reading as they are about football. The event that began in 1997 has grown to include more districts and students every year.



This year's day to celebrate reading is March 2. You can find all sorts of ideas and resources to help with a celebration in your district at the NEA website - www.nea.org/readacross.

NEA's Read Across America doesn't stop with the March 2 celebration. In fact, Read Across America keeps the spotlight on reading all year long through such events as Teen Read Week, Drop Everything and Read Day, and International Literacy Day. This year, NEA takes a greener look at reading, launching NEA's Lorax Student Earth Day, April 22, with resources and grants for educators.

FIGHT BACK CONFERENCE A SUCCESS

Over 120 WEAC members, from 5 UniSerts, attended the Fight Back Conference on January 28, including 47 from CAUS-North.

The keynote speaker, Journalist and Media commentator John Nichols, provided the highlight of the event with his keynote address. Nichols, whose roots run deep in Wisconsin, predicted that Scott Walker will be recalled. He told the story of Burlington, a city that recorded just 1,200 votes for Walker's opponent, Tom Barrett, in the last election; 6,000 recall signatures were collected from Burlington's residents.

"We are a good and decent people," Nichols declared. "There's not enough money to take the stench of corruption off Scott Walker." In another prediction, he said, "Each day will bring more revelations" (about the Governor's Walkergate troubles that have brought multiple felony and misdemeanor charges against former aides).

Nichols decried the millions of dollars in campaign donations from Walker's rich benefactors; 61% of whom are from out of state. He noted the recent poll showing that Walker's standing may have improved, saying, "We are not going to walk comfortably to victory."

His final prediction was unexpected by many in the crowd. He said he believed that the federal court would find the anti-collective bargaining law unconstitutional.

He followed this last prediction with a look back: "Let us thank Scott Walker, the greatest union organizer of the 21st century."

VOTER I.D. RULES IN PLACE

Starting with the Spring Primary on February 21, you will be asked for an I.D. to vote. Poll workers will ask you for your name, address and I.D. They will check to see if your last name matches your registration. The address on your I.D. does NOT have to be current. You will then be asked to sign the poll book.

Your photo I.D. must be one of the following:

- A Wisconsin DOT-issued driver license, even if revoked or suspended;
- A Wisconsin DOT-issued I.D. card;
- A Military I.D. card;
- A US Passport.

If your I.D. expired after November 2, 2010, it can still be used. Go to www.dot.wisconsin.gov for more information.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

JUST CAUSE is important for two key reasons:

First – you can be a stronger advocate for your co-workers and students because you know a fair process is in place against unwarranted discipline. **JUST CAUSE** requires that a fair and appropriate process is used. The security of a fair process lets educators and support staff advocate for students and each other without fear of reprisal.



Second – **JUST CAUSE** reflects values of our society that focus on fairness and due process. It guarantees a process that asks "is the person 'guilty' and does the punishment 'fit the crime'?"

JUST CAUSE means that before an employee is disciplined - the following standards are used:

- Employee knew or should have known that the alleged offence could lead to discipline;
- Employee has notice of the allegations made against him or her;
- Employee has been given a chance to present his or her side of the story;
- Employer conducts a fair investigation;
- Employer has reasonable evidence showing that the employee most likely committed the alleged offense;
- Discipline is in line with discipline given for similar offenses;
- Discipline is appropriate for the alleged offense.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Activists from locals around Madison are coordinating efforts to fight for each other in gaining the best possible outcomes in district policies and handbooks. Representatives from Deforest, Verona, Stoughton, Monona Grove and Oregon, pledged their mutual support to keep the just cause standard, seniority and other union security provisions in the handbook.