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Magnifier

Volume XX, Issue 5

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There is nothing so stable as change.
~ Bob Dylan

Name Selected for Possible Merged UniServs

In the last two editions of the *UNE Magnifier*, information has been given about the possible merger of United Northeast Educators (UNE) and Bayland Educators. For almost a year, the two Boards of Directors have been discussing the pros and cons of merging the two UniServs. The Boards have determined that a vote to merge the two UniServs will come to the membership in their respective Representative Assemblies (RAs) on May 19, 2010.

What Will We Call Ourselves?

If the RAs vote to approve the merger, a new name has to be ready to go! Through a consensus process that both Boards participated in, a name has been chosen:

Bay Lakes United Educators (BLUE).

This name met the three most important criteria as determined by the Boards: it reflects who we are and what we do (Educators); it contains the word "United," and it reflects our location in the state (Bay Lakes). Watch for this name and a new logo on future communications about the proposed merger.

Non-renewal Deadline Is Coming!

For a number of teachers, March 1 may have a special meaning. Wisconsin Statute (118.22) requires that any Board of Education that is considering the non-renewal of any teacher's contract must notify that teacher at least fifteen (15) days prior to March 15. This means the Board has until the last day of February to let a teacher know if he/she is being considered for non-renewal. This is called the Preliminary Notice of Non-Renewal and must be in writing. Please notify your local leader immediately and call the UNE Office if you receive such a notice.

Win a special 2010 Read Across America event at your school!

How would you like to have a member of the WEAC Leadership Team come to your school during the WEAC/NEA Read Across America week, March 1-5, and read to your students? These annual events focus special attention on your school and are an educational and enjoyable way to draw students' attention to the pleasures and benefits of reading.

WEAC President Mary Bell, WEAC Vice President Guy Costello, and WEAC Secretary-Treasurer Betsy Kippers will spend the week reading to children throughout the state. Your classroom or school could be among the three selected for a visit.

You can qualify your school simply by participating in either of these two forums:

1. [The WEAC Read Across America Forum.](#) Tell us in 200 words or less why you would like a memb3r of the WEAC Leadership Team to visit your school and read to your students during Read Across America Week, March 1-5, 2010. Be sure to include your name, school and e-mail address (even though the form says it is optional) so we can contact you.
2. [The WEAC New Year's Resolution Forum.](#) Briefly tell us which of the WEAC Resolutions is one of your favorites and why. Again, be sure to include your name, school and e-mail address so we can contact you.

Want to double your chances of your school winning? Enter a comment in each forum.

A special Read Across America/New Year's Resolution Committee will select three winners on January 29.

Have some fun with this contest, and good luck!

WHAT'S THE BUZZ ON RACE TO THE TOP?

For months, Wisconsin educators have been hearing about the Race to the Top grant process, which brings the potential for one-time federal grant monies to states selected by the U.S. Department of Education. At stake is the potential for states to receive funding; however, this is an “opportunity” Wisconsin is competing for, and there’s no assurance that our state will receive funding.

Generally speaking, states will submit their applications by January 19, 2010. The U.S. Department of Education will evaluate the applications and make grant awards.

There are two opportunities for states to apply for funding. The first deadline is January 19, 2010 and those grants will be announced in April. It’s expected 10 states will receive some funds during the first phase. Wisconsin may or may not be one of them.



There is a second round of funding, and those applications will be accepted until June 1, with winners announced by September 30. States that don’t receive a grant in the first round may apply again in Phase II.

The union’s position While there’s an opportunity for individual local schools and districts to receive a financial reward through this one-time grant – there most likely will also be obligations for all school districts. Some policy reforms at the state level could apply to all

school districts, regardless of whether or not a district receives grant money. An example might be the implementation of revised standards and new assessments.

WEAC will proceed with caution. The union has held steady on its position related to Race to the Top: we’re not opposed to reform and we support policy decisions that will stand the test of time and will really make a difference when it comes to education. The last thing we need as a state is to chase potential one-time federal funding with bad policy.

A local decision The application process led by the Governor’s Office brings with it many questions, and new developments are evolving quickly. This topic is expected to move from a state and federal discussion – to one that impacts every school district across the state as Districts may engage in efforts to have local presidents sign a “Memo of Understanding” acknowledging that the local will embrace a significant portion of the menu of reforms. **These are reforms we have yet to see.** Therefore, locals are being asked not to sign “Memos of Understanding” without protective language included that ensures any changes made to contracts are ratified by the members.

In the coming days and weeks, WEAC will keep close tabs on what the proposed reforms are and share them with you. In addition, with the help of locals and UniServs, the impact that these reform plans would have on collective bargaining agreements will be assessed to make sure members’ rights are protected.

Questions As the discussions unfold, you may have questions. More information is available online at weac.org. You are encouraged to stay on top of the latest developments and should reach out to your Local union leader, UniServ President or UniServ Director with questions.

How does Race to the Top affect ESP?

You might be thinking, “What is it Race to the Top and how does it impact me, an Education Support Professional?” Well, the ESP Blog has information on this important topic. Go to <http://www.weac.org>, click on the Daily News Blog link and then on the ESP Blog link.

At this point, the Race to the Top grant process does not focus on support staff. Instead, the primary focus is on teachers and school administrators.

We anticipate the impact on support staff bargaining will be minimal, if at all. It is possible that support staff units will be indirectly affected in some way, but we won’t be able to determine the likelihood of this until Wisconsin submits its Race to the Top application.

If districts do raise Race to the Top issues at the bargaining table or in other ways, ESP local leaders should contact their UniServ Director for assistance. But again, remember, we don’t expect this to happen. We just want you to be aware and prepared.

WEAC has provided teachers with guidance on how to handle Race to the Top issues specific to teacher units.

If you have questions or have dealt with Race to the Top at your school, please post a comment on the blog or e-mail WEAC ESP Coordinator, [Kim Wiemer Noyce](#).

Fight the Excise Tax NOW!

Educators are expressing strong opposition to the use of any "excise tax" on high-cost health care plans as a revenue source for funding health insurance reform. The excise tax is currently still part of the proposal before the US Senate and House and would tax insurance benefits to pay for insurance reform.

We support health care reform that will ensure quality, affordable health care for all, but believe the proposed excise tax is bad policy. In fact, the tax would have a devastating impact on exactly the type of good, comprehensive health care plans reform should be promoting.

Although supporters of the excise tax say that it will only impact wealthier Americans who can afford so-called "Cadillac" healthcare plans, the truth is that an excise tax will essentially end up as a tax on middle class families.

The excise tax would be so high that insurance companies and employers would do everything in their power to avoid paying it, and would likely have to reduce benefits. Plans will probably eliminate dental and vision care, and increase substantially co-pays and deductibles and may also encourage employers to cut back on family coverage.

The bottom line is that the excise tax would affect workers who, for decades, have sacrificed salaries for health care benefits (What did you give up under the QEO for health care?). The excise tax would mostly have a discriminatory impact on plans that cover older workers and retirees, or workers in high cost regions (especially true in Wisconsin!) or high risk occupations, or plans primarily serving women.

The excise tax punishes workers, and does nothing to address the excesses of insurance companies. Health insurance reform can be paid for through cost-savings both inside and outside of the health care system without a new excise tax on insurance plans. As the debate moves forward, we urge Congress and President Obama to continue to look for ways to eliminate the excise tax as a revenue source.

You can take action today by calling your US Senator or Representative or by logging on to NEA's Legislative Action Center at this address: <http://capwiz.com/nea/home/>.

Herb Kohl (202) 224-5653 www.kohl.senate.gov Russ Feingold (202) 224-5323 www.feingold.senate.gov
Steve Kagen (202) 225-5665 www.kagen.house.gov *From WCEA Reporting 1/12/10*

Wisconsin Health Insurance Cost Rankings 2010

by Robert Kraig, Ph.D., Citizen Action of Wisconsin.

The full report can be found on the Bayland Educators website: www.weac.org/une.

Key Findings in 2010 Report:

1. There continue to be wide cost variations between higher and lower cost areas of the state. There is a 19% variation between the highest cost major metro areas and the lowest cost metro area (Madison), which amounts to a \$1,608 difference for a single policy each year.
2. The regions with the highest costs have remained relatively constant over the past four years. Northwestern, West Central and Southeastern Wisconsin continue to be high cost regions. **This year, for the first time in this report, North Central Wisconsin is the highest cost region**, albeit by a small margin. The highest cost metro areas are Wausau, Stevens Point, Wisconsin Rapids, Kenosha, La Crosse, and Eau Claire. South Central Wisconsin remains the lowest cost region.
3. Wisconsin health insurance costs continued their rapid rise in 2009, rising 9% overall despite a very slow rate of general inflation for other consumer products. There was also a large gap in the rate of health care inflation between different parts of the state, with some areas increasing by 11% over the past year while others increased only 3%.
4. The geographic distribution of health insurance costs in Wisconsin has shifted substantially since the current health care cost run up began a decade ago. **In 2000, Northeast Wisconsin was the lowest cost area, but has suffered from higher than average health insurance inflation this decade.** Over the past decade **Green Bay** has had the highest rate of health care inflation of any major metro area in the state, followed by Appleton and Oshkosh. In 2000, Madison was in the middle of the pack but is now by far the lowest cost metro area.
5. Wisconsin health insurance rates have increased faster than the national average. While national employer-based single health insurance premiums have increased 120% this decade, they have increased 179% in Wisconsin. All Wisconsin regions and metro areas have suffered health insurance inflation above the national average.

United Northeast Educators—Mission Statement

UNE is an organization of public education employees who provide training and services to protect, improve, and enhance members rights and the professional and economic capabilities of its members, hence improving the quality of life of all its members.

UNE Activity Calendar

January 13

UNE Board meeting
5:30 p.m. UniServ Office

January 18

Bayland/UNE IPD Committee
5:30 p.m. UniServ Office

January 20

Bayland/UNE ESP Negotiators
5:30 p.m. UniServ Office

M&O EA Negotiators

5:30 p.m. Snazz & Jane's, Gillett

January 22

Bayland/UNE PR Committee
2:00 p.m. UniServ Office

January 25

UNE PAC meeting
5:00 p.m. UniServ Office

Bayland/UNE Legislative Committee

5:30 p.m. UniServ Office

February 2-3

WEAC Professional Staff Meeting
Wisconsin Dells

February 3-5

WEAC Associate Staff Meeting
Wisconsin Dells

February 9

Bay Negotiators
5:30 p.m. UniServ Office

February 10

UNE Board Meeting
6:00 p.m. UniServ Office

2010 NEA ESP National Conference

March 12-14, 2010

Flamingo Las Vegas Hotel, Nevada

Members may register until Feb 12, 2010,
at <http://www.nea.org/home31430.htm>

The conference registration fee of \$150 includes a continental breakfast and lunch on Saturday and brunch on Sunday. Also included are a reception, dinner, and entertainment on Friday.

If you do not have your own e-mail account, or cannot use the online registration for some other reason, you may obtain a paper registration form by e-mailing or calling [Dina Simon](mailto:Dina.Simon@nea.org) (202) 822-7130.

WEAC Winter Conference

This year's Winter Conference will be held in two locations at two different times - - sign up for the one that works best for you! The NORTH conference will be held in Wausau Friday and Saturday, March 5-6. The SOUTH conference will be held in Middleton Friday and Saturday, February 26-27. For details, including online registration, visit www.weac.org.

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A HAPPY
NEW YEAR



- Income Tax Prep.
- Financial Planning
- Life & Health Insurance
- Small Business Accounting

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