

FEAtures



The Newsletter of the Ferndale Education Association ♦ Vol. 9, No. 2 Oct. 20, 2004

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Are we doing enough?

by Susan Gelhar, FEA Legislative Coordinator

Some people really get involved in politics; some people don't. Take my sister for instance; her idea of world affairs is to watch the World Series.

How could this happen? We grew up in the same house. Our mother once danced with Hubert Humphrey! The neighbor boy was elected Minnesota's youngest state legislator ever! Our uncles spouted fiery rhetoric over the pinochle table!

But my sister was immune; she says she will leave changing the world up to me. And teachers DO change the world.

At times like this, we look for ways to promote good citizenship. We encourage students to watch the democratic process and to become informed about the issues. And many of us know we should be doing more to make sure our voices are heard for pro-education campaigns. Now is the time to make time.

Last year our association stressed the message that everything we do as public educators is affected by political decisions. There are important choices to be made as we send our next round of lawmakers to the Capitols.

Part of the job of a legislative coordinator is to report updates and list resources (website, website, website!); part of my job is to persuade you to join in, do your part, help the cause. Teach your students and your own children the power of working together for change.

Even though the WEA Political Action Committee has very few members in our district, I believe most FEA teachers recognize and appreciate the work that has gone into selecting the recommended positions and candidates,

especially for Governor and Superintendent of Public Instruction. (For the complete list, please check the website: www.washingtonea.org).

You can trust our research and you know the work of our association is based on important core values (see website).

You already know who will get your vote for President, but what about state Supreme Court? Attorney General? Did you know our own Shannon O'Brien (FHS) is running for county Charter Review Commission?

My sister will call and ask my advice; I welcome you to do the same. My home number is 752-0177. If all 77,000 of our members reached out in their neighborhoods to share their views about what's important for good public education, we could certainly elevate the debate.

Now is the time to make time. You can help shape the future.

FEA REP ASSEMBLY SCHEDULE

Oct. 21 6:15 a.m.

Dec. 2 4:30 p.m.

Jan. 20 6:15 a.m.

Feb. 17 4:30 p.m.

Mar. 24 6:15 a.m.

Apr. 21 4:30 p.m.

May 19 4:30 p.m.

**Babe's Place
Downtown Ferndale**

FEA Website Address: www.ferndaleea.org

President's Pen

by Jeremy Nolan

Welcome back to another year! I hope the year began smoothly for everyone. It is amazing the energy it takes to get the ball rolling every September.

I want to take a minute to encourage you to sign up for FEA committees and to give you a report on the NEA Representative Assembly held last July in Washington D.C.

Head Reps in every building received a list to allow members to sign up for various committees. Most committees will not take too much of your time as they will meet only a couple of times a year.

One committee on which we would like to see a large number of members participate is the Contract Maintenance Committee. This committee will meet before the end of the year to discuss the contract language and what that means for all members.

There will also be grievance training involved, so these people will be the experts when it comes to knowing what the contract states and how to deal with problems when they arise. We are hoping to have at least two members from each building, but we are encouraging more to attend. This is an easy way to get involved and create a stronger association.

The week I spent in Washington, D.C., representing Ferndale members at the NEA Representative Assembly was truly the most exciting time I had all summer. Meeting in a room with over 10,000 teachers and support professionals to make decisions on national action was at times overwhelming.

The focus of this year's assembly was certainly politics. As we are electing a new President, among other offices, there was a lot of discussion on how we need to make changes that will help educators and public education. Many business items surrounded the No Child Left Behind legislation, and ways the NEA can change many of the policies within it.

John Kerry was supposed to speak to the assembly, but that was the day he announced John Edwards as his running mate. The assembly was very upset when many went through the metal detectors and all the security just to hear he was not coming. Lucky for the Democratic Party, they had someone else with an open schedule that day, and Hillary Clinton came and calmed the masses.

The main message that I want to share with our membership from the NEA Assembly is to take some time to get involved in politics. Our job is strictly run by our political system, and lack of involvement will create situations that we do not want.

Take time to talk to people about how important passing I-884 is (1% increase in sales tax that gives us our COLA, class-size dollars to districts, among other programs), rejecting R-55 to stop charter schools in Washington, and electing public education "friendly" candidates.

To get involved or to donate money to the I-884 or R-55 campaigns, please contact me at home in the evenings at 384-1892.

There will also be doorbelling and phone banks for selected candidates. Our involvement in this process is necessary to create a public education atmosphere that we can live with.

FEAtures is published 11 times a year, August through June, to inform Association members of FEA activities, negotiated policies and district-wide points of interest. Letters, guest columns, announcements, and story ideas are welcome.

Submission Instructions: Send items to Donna Sargent, *FEAtures* Editor, Ferndale High School, x9359, dsargent@ferndale.wednet.edu or David Fayram, *FEA Website* Editor, Ferndale High School, x9267,

dfayram@ferndale.wednet.edu. *FEAtures* is published on an iMac using PageMaker Plus 6.5. Please submit copy electronically on Microsoft Word. Deadline is the second Friday of every month.

Building reps:

Please collect home email addresses of any members who want an occasional reminder when critical legislative issues need attention. FEA legislative coordinator, Susan Gelhar, monitors Olympia, Congress, and UniServ, and alerts educators when action is called for. Forward lists to Jeremy Nolan. (All home email is sent blind and addresses are never shared.)

Stay informed!

www.washingtonea.org

www.ferndaleea.org

Local Union goes online - again!

by David Fayram

FEA has re-entered the 21st Century with a new website, continuing the efforts started last year. The new site, located with a new host, has the following address:

<http://ferndaleea.org>

The name for the web site was selected because it echoes the state web site URL:

www.washingtonea.org

The web site will carry PDF versions of *FEAtures*, as well as

up-to-date news from the FEA executive board.

If you have suggestions for coverage, specific information to publicize, or questions, email David Fayram.

dfayram@comcast.net

dfayram@ferndale.wednet.edu

See WEA-PAC's Picks



Go to
www.washingtonea.org
to "See Wea-Pac's
Picks."
Stay informed!!!!

Combine your \$20 contribution with that of like-minded members who put WEA-PAC to work for better public schools. The mission of the WEA Political Action Committee is to help elect friends of education.

Please see your Building Rep for an application form and join today.

Politics, politics, politics!

by Jeremy Nolan

As I was sitting down to write this article, I was thinking of how politically involved I have become in the last few years. I have never considered myself a political animal, but have realized more and more the importance of political involvement in education. If we don't stand up for ourselves, we will never make any headway in a political structure that seems quite unsupportive of education and educators. It is interesting to see many of my choices for political candidates circling solely around the issue of education.

Last year, we all worked very hard to get the required signatures to get **Referendum 55** on the ballot. I'm sure we all know by now that this referendum deals with the creation of Charter Schools in Washington. Charter Schools will draw funds from current public education programs, even though they have never proven to have a better track record.

We want our Legislature to realize the importance of properly funding the programs we already have in place, rather than take students out of our classrooms. Don't let all of the work we did last year go to waste; tell everyone you know to vote NO on R-55 to reject Charter Schools for the third time in this state, or contact our

Fourth Corner UniServ office (733-3344), where they can sign you up to call pro-education voters to remind them to vote NO.

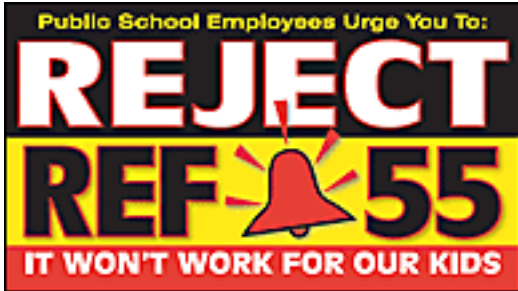
Another important ballot issue is **Initiative 884**, which increases the sales tax by 1%, with all of those dollars going to education. Washington voters have increasingly been supportive of funding education, and we hope they will come through for us once again. With all of the other Initiatives out there (with similar numbers), be sure to encourage every voter you know to vote YES on I-884. This will bring approximately \$2.5 million dollars over a few years to our district alone.

Finally, if you want to learn more regarding WEA's endorsement of candidates, be sure and look at the website,

www.washingtonea.org.

We all know the importance of having politicians in office that support public education. Two of the important offices that WEA has targeted are Chris Gregoire for Governor, and Judith Billings for Superintendent of Public Instruction.

If you would like more details about how you can help in this area, please contact me or our UniServ office for more details.



TV stations pull misleading ads

Charter advocates forced to air the facts

(www.washingtonea.org)

Campaign watchdogs have blocked a coalition of rich charter school supporters from airing misleading ads.

Prompted by a letter from the league of Women Voters noting that Referendum 55 charter school proponents were spreading lies about student dropout rates in their TV ads, two Seattle stations yanked the ads and requested the lies be corrected.

KCPQ 13 forced the Approve R-55 to right the wrongs on the student dropout rates and correct its reference to a non-existent Washington agency.

KING TV followed suit, requiring revisions be made to the ad.

"It's time to start telling the truth and providing voters accurate information. We don't want to see any of our students drop out, but to use

inflated dropout rates just to promote charter schools is reprehensible," said Catherine Ahl, the education chair for the Washington League of Women Voters.

The pro-R-55 ad exaggerated the state's overall dropout rate and significantly inflated the dropout rate for students of color. The ad also cited the "WA State Education Agency" as the source of the dropout information. No such agency exists in Washington.

The League has asked other TV and radio stations airing the ads to pull them. The Approve R-55 ad campaign will expend nearly \$3 million dollars before it's through. It's being funded primarily by a bevy of billionaires, including John Walton of the Wal-Mart empire, Don Fisher, Gap Inc., Bill Gates, Microsoft and 15 other out-of-state business tycoons

who've each contributed at least \$100,000. A number of the contributors have ties to the voucher movement and for-profit charter school companies operating in other states.



All FEA members are encouraged not only to vote NO on Referendum 55, but to convince your friends and neighbors that it will take much needed money from the public schools and give it to private-interest groups.

According to Professor Helen Ladd, co-author of a recent study at Duke University, "Our study finds that charter school students perform less well on average in charter schools than they would have in traditional public schools, and the negative effects of attending a charter school are large."



Funny things kids say . . .

Kids views on relationships - (continued)

HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHOM TO MARRY?

You flip a nickel, and heads means you stay with him, and tails means you try the next one. - Kelly, 9

My mother says to look for a man who is kind. That's what I'll do. I'll find somebody who's kinda tall and handsome. Carolyn, 8

WHAT IS THE RIGHT AGE TO GET MARRIED?

Eighty-four. Because at that age, you don't have to work anymore, and you can spend all your time loving

each other in your bedroom. - Susan, 8

Once I'm done with kindergarten, I'm going to find me a wife. - Bert, 5

WHAT DO MOST PEOPLE DO ON A DATE?

Many daters just eat pork chops and french fries and talk about love. - Craig, 9

IS IT BETTER TO BE SINGLE OR MARRIED?

It's better for girls to be single but not for boys. Boys need someone to clean up after them. - Anita, 9

HOW WOULD THE WORLD BE DIFFERENT IF PEOPLE DIDN'T GET MARRIED?

There sure would be a lot of kids to explain, wouldn't there? - Kelvin, 8

HOW WOULD YOU MAKE A MARRIAGE WORK?

Tell your wife that she looks pretty even if she looks like a truck. - Ricky, 10

You should ask the people who read Cosmopolitan. - Kirsten, 10

It gives me a headache to think about that stuff. I'm just a kid. I don't need that kind of trouble.- Will, 7