

OEA Speaks

OLYMPIA EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
1619 STATE AVENUE NE, OLYMPIA, WA 98506
PHONE: 360-742-0828 WEBSITE: WWW.OLYEA.ORG
EMAIL: JODI.BOE@WASHINGTONEA.ORG

President's Corner – October 2022

Pride in October!

I started teaching in 1989. Being out and being a teacher in 1989 was not an easy endeavor, especially working in a small rural district. Though I always felt supported by my colleagues, I never knew when a parent would bring up my "morals" with administration or the school board.



By the time I started teaching in the Olympia School District I had a wife and a baby. Again, I always felt supported by staff but dealt with homophobic parents writing nasty letters to editor of The Daily Olympian and constant homophobic slurs from middle school students.

Very quickly it all flipped. States, including ours, started adopting domestic partner registries (2007), then same sex marriage (2012), then the U.S. Supreme Court case legalizing marriage (2015). Overnight, coming out to my class was a simple picture of my family behind my desk and talking about them openly.

For the past three years I have run the LGBTQ+ Network for OEA and have had sporadic attendance. People are busy, teachers are tired, but really what I hope it came down to, is queer teachers feel supported and don't need a regular support group. As I start my second and last term, I would like to turn the LGBTQ+ Network into a celebration. We will start on October 28th with a Halloween Party. From 4:30-6:30 drop by the OEA Office, 1619 State Ave NE, Olympia, WA 98506. Have a drink, snack, and a laugh. Wear a costume or come as you are.

Jodi Boe, President

VEBA

Every year we need to vote on our VEBA Benefit Plan. VEBA stands for Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association. By IRS ruling, we need to vote on these plans annually. This is a collective decision. If we vote yes, everyone's VEBA account follows our vote. If we vote no, everyone is eligible to cash in extra days at retirement or over 1080 hours.

- **The first plan allows members who retire this year to cash in all remaining sick leave (at a 4:1 ratio, 4 days is paid out as 1 day, by state law) at retirement and place it in a tax-free, interest-bearing account. Retired members can draw from this account at any time to pay for medical related expenses during retirement.**
- **The second plan allows that all non-retired members who accumulate more than 180 sick days (1080 hours) and more than 6 personal days (36 hours) would have those extra days placed into the same account described above. Again, this account is tax-free. Members can access this account at any time prior to and after retirement.**



This year OEA will be voting on VEBA through Survey Monkey. The link will come on your school email. Thank you in advance for a quick response.

The executive Board recommends a Yes/Yes vote for the following reasons:

- Putting your hours in VEBA helps you avoid paying income tax and they can be spent on current or future medical expenses including medical insurance post retirement.

- Your VEBA account is also an investment account. In your VEBA account you can opt to have your funds invested in a variety of stock or bond options just like our TRS retirement funds.
- Moving your sick leave days to VEBA as late as possible is beneficial to you financially. Each year your per diem goes up and your days are worth more.

Saving hours to donate to colleagues who find themselves in desperate need is also a nice thing.



Emails/ Investigation/ Public Records Requests

Want to dive deeper into OSD emails and public record requests? As I mentioned in an email, any communication on OSD accounts belongs to OSD; chats, emails and calendars. I have seen these accounts used in investigations specifically around Civility in the Workplace.

Public Records Requests (PRR) continue to grow. Anything sent to or from your OSD accounts are subject to PRRs. Olympia gets more than its fair share of PRR. Please keep that in mind. Anything you put in writing could be shared.

I do not have any words or phrases that you should stay away from to avoid a PRR. They can search for any words. All I can advise is to be professional whenever using district email, chat, or calendar. Don't use swear words. Don't write disparaging comments about a person. Communicate with dignity and respect.

I like to use OSD email, because you all check it daily. I only send announcements about the contract, meeting days/times, and other public knowledge information. If you need to talk to me about something you do not want as part of PRR, you should email me from a non-school account to my union email Jodi.boe@washingtonea.org. Telephone calls from your cell phone to my cell phone (360-742-0828) are not recorded or logged. Texting is only saved on one's phone. However, you never know if the other party clears their texts or screen shots. Number one safest way to communicate is face to face.

Finally, I want to clear up when you should contact me and when you should contact your building rep. I like when members start with their building reps, because reps understand the ins and outs of individual schools better than I do. However, some issues are personal in nature and you may not be comfortable discussing with your rep. So I encourage you to start with your building rep, but do not discourage you from reaching out directly to me.

Empowering you to use and learn your contract

Here is a link to our [Collective Bargaining Agreement](#). Please download it onto your desktop. Though it is often easier to ask your building rep or Jodi about your CBA questions, it is important for members to be familiar with the document for two reasons. One, you can find the information you need in order to receive your full compensation and benefits. Two, you know what is in there and what is not. As you talk to people from other districts you may get ideas for our next bargain. A well-informed membership makes our union strong.

Articles everyone should be familiar with:

- ARTICLE V - Other Terms and Conditions of Employment
- ARTICLE VII - Staff Development
- ARTICLE IX - Class Size/Overloads/Conferences
- ARTICLE XII - Leaves

With the digital copy of the CBA, you can jump to the Article or Section you are looking for, from the Table of Contents. Please take a little time to explore your CBA.

OEA Web Page Update

We have a new feature on the Web Page called "[Community](#)". We all can post free educational materials/furniture. Currently it has a podium and a tall chair that swivels. If you want to get rid of something, email Miranda at miranda.rob-inson@washingtonea.org and she will post it. You may use OEA to meet people for an exchange but please don't drop off anything that does not have a scheduled pick up.

