

NEA/CTA/HDTA ELECTION CYCLE

The yearly election cycle for NEA, CTA, and HDTA elections will be commencing shortly. First always is the NEA Delegate Election for State Delegates to attend the annual NEA Representative Assembly (Convention). If a member desires to run for a State Delegate position, it is necessary to use the Declaration of Candidacy form that will be found in the December California Educator (inside back cover). Local chapters have no role to play in submitting these Declaration of Candidacy forms for State Delegates to the RA. They must be completed by the member and the forms must be returned to our Bay Valley Service Center (address provided in the magazine). The 2011 NEA Representative Assembly occurs in July in Chicago, Illinois.

Delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly are expected to attend the entire convention, including all caucuses and business meetings. Generally, the caucuses begin at 7 am. and are then followed by the business meeting of the

national organization. Business meetings usually end at 6 pm or later.

HDTA chapter elections customarily occur along with either NEA State Delegate elections or CTA State Council elections in an effort to increase voter turnout.

Any HDTA member who wants to run for chapter president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, member at large, building rep or local delegate to the NEA RA may contact Cassandra Perez, Election Coordinator (West Ranch High School) to request a Declaration of Candidacy form. Each office has a one-year term. This Declaration must be returned to the HDTA Office (26111 Bouquet Canyon Rd., Suite H-5, Santa Clarita, CA 91350) no later than 5:00 p.m., February 11, 2011. Declared candidates will have an opportunity to place a limited biography and campaign statement on the HDTA website.

RETIREMENT WORKSHOP

The Santa Clarita Valley Association is hosting the annual STRS Retirement and Benefits Workshop on Monday, February 28, 2011 from 4 - 6:00 PM at the local Uniserv office. An STRS Benefits Consultant will give a comprehensive overview of the STRS retirement process. It is designed for educators approaching retirement.

This STRS workshop is one that is cus-

tomarily well attended. Those interested in attending need to RSVP in advance by calling Bobbi at 661-255-0311. You must RSVP before Friday, February 18, 2011. It is free to all educators and their spouses or partners. Attendees can come with questions and get the chance to have them answered right there.

Cal~STRS RETIREMENT

Most public school teachers and certificated personnel receive their retirement benefits from the California State Teachers Retirement System (STRS). It pays a defined benefit upon retirement. Given that the statutory law which governs Cal-STRS has changed over the years, it is crucial that every certificated professional know his or her rights and how to avoid the most common problems.

While this article is not a definitive guide, it is designed to provide some general information on some common retirement issues. Those wanting more information should attend the workshop discussed in the previous article.

First, retirees must understand that resigning from the district for retirement purposes does not automatically cause STRS to initiate payment of retirement benefits. As they are two separate entities, retirees want to make sure that they have notified STRS that he or she has retired.

Second, a retiree's defined benefit is calculated by multiplying three variables: 1. service credit, 2. age factor, and 3. final compensation.

If any of these three variables increase, the total benefits increase. However, not all earnings can be credited toward that amount. It is important that employees review their variable figures, including final compensation, and ensure that STRS calculates their retirement benefits correctly.

Third, retirees should be aware of certain restrictions on their ability to work and earn income after they retire. As it relates to STRS, the only restrictions on working after service retirement is working within the public school system. A teacher may work full-time and earn full salary without penalty so long as the work is outside the California public school system. Those that work within the CA public school system can only work up to the post retirement earnings cap imposed by law. For this year, for example, that cap is \$31,020. When a retiree exceeds the cap, STRS will work to recover any amount of money paid in excess over the cap. There are some additional exemptions restrictions to this policy so individuals should check with STRS for more information.

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Cal-STRS RETIREMENT cont...

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Finally, because each teacher's situation is different each STRS matter must be looked at individually. However, here are some practical things that all teachers can do to avoid any possible problems.

1. Get it in writing: If you talk with an STRS person over the phone, get the person's name and ID number, if applicable. Be sure to get something in writing that confirms what was said over the phone.

2. Review and understand your paperwork: retir-

ees should review all STRS correspondence they receive and make sure they understand it.

3. Attend a retirement workshop: if you are thinking about retirement, consider attending the workshop.

4. Be timely: If you notice something unusual in a benefits statement, you should contact STRS immediately.

2010 TAX INFORMATION

Don't forget that dues can be deducted from your taxes. The calendar year covers the part of two different membership years.

For members who worked full time from January 2010 - December 2010, dues total \$951.80.

For new members who worked full time from September 2010 - December 2010 dues total \$ 386.00

AREA MEETINGS

In an effort to increase the number of people on the Executive Board, HDTA created three area rep positions. Each rep must work in one of the sites that falls within its boundaries. Area 1 includes Bowman, Canyon, Golden Valley, La Mesa, Sierra Vista, and Sequoia. Area 2 includes AOC, Arroyo Seco, Learning Post, Rio Norte, Saugus, and Valencia. Area 3 includes Admin Center, Hart, PAR, Placerita, Rancho Pico, TLC, and West Ranch.

Beginning in February, the HDTA Executive Board will be hosting area meetings that will be open to all HDTA members. The purpose of these meetings is to

allow members an opportunity to get to know members from other sites, visit with the officers elected to represent them as well as to give members an opportunity to ask questions about HDTA.

These meetings will also be the perfect chance for any member who might be interested in getting more involved in HDTA to explore the types of opportunities available.

The meetings will start at 4 p.m. and food and drinks will be provided. Watch for an invitation with date and location to come to your school mailbox shortly.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

School is well underway again and I hope your lives are settling down after the holidays and semester changes. I want to use this message to give an update on various things the Association is watching or working on.

On the state level, the Governor has proposed his state budget. While K-12 is largely spared from additional cuts, that protection could disappear if the proposed extension of some tax revenues do not make it through the legislature and then do not get approved by the public in a June special election. If they don't get approved, we could see significantly more cuts. Exploratory efforts to declare bankruptcy by some states could impact state funding and retirement plans. CTA and HDTA leadership is keeping a close watch on this process as it could have an impact on local negotiations.

Another event that could possibly impact us locally down the road is the recent court decision for the ACLU lawsuit filed in response to LAUSD's RIF procedures. While the impact seems to be only to LAUSD schools and teachers, legislators might jump on the anti-teacher bandwagon and propose something at the state level that could effect everyone. At this moment, it does not apply to us in

Santa Clarita.

At the local level, negotiations are continuing. Calendars for the next three academic school years have been developed and should soon appear on the district's website shortly. Furlough days are not reflected on these calendars so some dates could change but the basics remain the same: August start, fall break, three week winter break, early April spring break, and end early June. Teams are scheduled to meet again for all day bargaining sessions beginning the first week of February. We will keep you informed as they progress.

In closing, a general reminder in regards to some issues for the start of the new year and the new semester. January paychecks will reflect the new benefit premium amounts so make sure you review your check and that the correct amount was deducted. Also, we have hit day 10 of the new semester and so next week if you classes are over the contractual maximum, don't forget to submit the form for comp time. Each semester requires a new form. I look forward to seeing everyone at the area meetings in February.

-Leslie Littman