



NEA is working to provide great public schools

Directors' Newsletter

September 2020

Leading Through Challenge



NEA's newly elected leaders, President Becky Pringle, Vice President Princess Moss, and Secretary-Treasurer Noel Candelaria take the lead during a global pandemic and recession, creating challenges for American schools.

President's Vision

NEA President Becky Pringle gave an impassioned report to the Board that outlined her vision and goals, which are steeped in NEA's mission of uniting our members to fulfill the promise of public education.

This vision will guide the policies, practices, and systems at every level of government and every level of the NEA—local, state, and national. The NEA will reflect our commitment to racial, social, and educational justice.

President Pringle's vision includes:

- Uniting our members and the nation to fulfill the promise of public education. Our vision of shared responsibility will ensure all students, educators, and schools are excelling. Our vision will guide the policies, practices, and systems at every level of the government and the Association. All of our actions will reflect our commitment to racial, social, and education justice. Every student will be supported in, and prepared for their next journey – grade; level; career; college; civic responsibility; leadership, so they can, as Pringle stated, "fulfill their full potential as empowered individuals, constructive members of their communities, productive participants in the economy, and engaged citizens of the US and the world."

- Every educator will be supported in and continuously prepared for professional excellence throughout their career continuum.
- Every workplace will include collective autonomy, collaborative practice. Educators will be active in advancing and leading their profession with professional authority, rights, and professional compensation.
- Every school will be supported by their parents/families, community, and local/state/national governments; they will reflect the aspirations of their community and contribute to its success.

Pringle sees her powerful vision succeeding through collaboration, building power, and then sharing that power in a way that can leverage all of our assets. Pringle went on to say, "We can't just say we're going to collaborate. We have to build the processes and the structures and the practices that support that collaboration and promote a culture of continuous collaboration so we can sustain it within and throughout the entire enterprise, all systems, both internally and externally with NEA staff and local and state affiliates." Pringle called for alignment and praised the work that NEA has done over the years getting our arrows lined up and heading in the same direction, making us more powerful. She calls this power, "dynamic alignment". Pringle said that she is not afraid to stand in her power, and knows that we are not afraid either.



Election Results

The NEA Board of Directors voted to add two new members to the NEA Committee on Program and Budget. The Committee is authorized by Bylaw 11-7 and is comprised of eight members. The secretary-treasurer of the Association is the chairperson of the committee, and the vice president is a member of the committee. The NEA Board of Directors elects five of its members for staggered two-year terms to serve on the committee. The state affiliate presidents elect one state affiliate president to represent them for a two-year term. Seven directors were nominated for two positions. Incumbent, Amber Gould (AZ) was elected to her second term on the committee. Brenda Robinson (AR) won a new seat on the committee after a runoff vote.



Gould



Robinson

The newly elected members will join current committee members, James Harris (NJ), Gina Harris (IL), Shannon McCann (WA), state president Denise Specht (MN), vice president, Princess Moss, and secretary-treasurer, Noel Candelaria.

NEA Members Benefits Makes a Difference

The NEA Student Debt Navigator powered by Savi was launched in February 2019. Since then, thousands of members have used the program to reduce their student loan payments. The program offers a free online student loan evaluation to determine eligibility for federal programs to help members manage, reduce, and forgive student loan debt. After the evaluation, members have the option of filing their own paperwork to take advantage of the program or have the system file automatically. As of May 2020, there were over 1,400 users enrolled in the program. The NEA Board of Directors heard personal stories from Sean Mabey, an NEA Members Benefits Affiliate Relations Specialist, about members whose lives were changed by loan forgiveness and the impact it had on their families. To find out more about the NEA Student Debt Navigator program, please contact your state NEA Members Benefits Affiliate Relations Specialist, or visit the NEA Member Benefits page.

Recruiting and Retaining Teachers of Color

The 2019 Delegate Assembly approved new business item 17, which called for the creation of a task force relating to the recruitment and retention of educators of color. Eventually, a cadre of educators will be formed to identify and recruit high school and college students for this purpose. The work was largely put on hold as a result of the pandemic, and in the absence of new business items at the 2020 Delegate Assembly, the NEA Board of Directors approved allowing this NBI to carry over into this year, allocating \$126,000 from the contingency fund. This is a decrease from the initial cost of \$178,600, largely in part to a change from in-person to virtual meetings.

Annual Meeting Hotel Selection

Packing thousands of Delegates from around the country into one city during the week of the NEA Representative Assembly (RA) is not a small undertaking. Each state is assigned a rotating "ranking" with points based on things like the distance each state was from the convention during the last two RAs, and the demand for the type of hotel chosen, which is then used to determine the order states will choose in the next round of RA hotel selection.

Adjustment points are given to states each year after the RA if the state experiences hardships or has other circumstances that might be less than desirable (such as caucusing at the convention center). In the case of a tie, delegate attendance is used to determine ranking. States with the

highest number of points are allowed to make their hotel selection first during the next process. The Denver RA hotel selection process has already concluded.

Since the RA this year was held virtually, the upcoming Dallas (2022) selection process would have been based on points earned in Atlanta and Denver, resulting in the Annual Meeting Review Committee (AMRC) being tasked with recommending changes to the NEA Board.

The AMRC asked state coordinators to discuss the process with state leadership and recommend adjustments for the Dallas selection process. A survey was also used to gain input from states. Based on the results of the feedback, the AMRC made a motion to NEA Board to use the points and rankings from Houston and Denver in the adjusted process. The board voted in favor, so the Atlanta RA will not factor into the process moving forward.

Ballot Measure Legislative Crisis Fund

The NEA Board of directors considered and approved three expenditures in the Ballot Measure and Legislative Crisis Fund.

This fund, created in 2000 by the NEA Representative Assembly, is dedicated to providing funds to Nea Affiliates' state legislative work. The three requests from three states -- Arizona, California, and Missouri -- all involved legislation intended to either fund public education or protect ethical campaigns. The three requests were evaluated by the Oversight Committee and brought to the Board for approval. As of August 31, 2020, NEA had approved \$2,164,000 in assistance to nine state affiliates for ballot measure campaigns and \$4,132,301 in legislative crisis fund assistance to fifteen state affiliates. The NEA Board of Directors' allocation expenditures are \$32,696,083 and the remaining allocation total is \$25,282,707.

Secretary-- Treasurer's Report

In his first report to the NEA Board of Directors, Secretary-Treasurer Noel Candelaria delivered. He started by praising President Pringle's vision for the Association and sharing his vision for his new position and its work. He emphasized that the tone from the top is what drives culture throughout an organization and that he intended to continue the tone established by previous leaders. "It's how we create an ethical atmosphere to promote sound fiscal stewardship of our Association's resources. It's about doing right by our members," emphasized Candelaria. He discussed the level of commitment needed to sustain an open, honest, ethical structure and promised to work with staff and governance to establish such throughout all levels of our organization.



Candelaria

He then dove into the NEA Audit timeline.

The second part of his report focused on the important work of modernizing how we organize our membership: "We organize two things -- people and money. It's about listening, planning, acting, and evaluating," said Candelaria. He acknowledged the many challenges we face through the pandemic and shared the changes made to address these challenges.

NEA's response has included "virtual site visits, virtual and digital platform training, moving members to online organizers, and integrated engagement ladder learnings," declared Candelaria, celebrating successes in North Carolina, Massachusetts, and others.

"Research has determined that the initial conversation is the most important! We must lay the foundation on what it means to be a 'citizen of NEA.'" Stated Candelaria.

Secretary-Treasurer Candelaria concluded his report by moving the modified Strategic Plan and Budget Framework, which was seconded by the Executive Committee. After answering questions, it was approved unanimously by the Board of Directors.

Observance Teaches Cultural Respect

On Saturday, the NEA Board was joined by Dr. Star Yellowfish, a member of the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians of Oklahoma and the Bird Clan. She currently works for the Oklahoma City Public Schools as the Director of Native American Student Services. The school district has over 2500 Native American Students enrolled, and Dr. Yellowfish describes her role as fighting for the contributions of Native Americans at the PreK-12 grade levels, pointing out that Oklahoma is home to 39 Federally recognized tribes.

During her presentation, she shared a video of an interview (<https://youtu.be/vgQL73C8w5k>) she completed with local news in Oklahoma City about a publication she developed to help community members better understand how to respectfully remember Thanksgiving. She explained that imitating certain traditions are only respectful if they are done accurately. The publication helps to dispel myths, activities to avoid, and alternatives that are not only accurate to the first Thanksgiving but are also meaningful and fun for students. A key part of this was recognizing both the pilgrims as "the English, or separatists" and the Native Americans by the name of the tribe, the Wampanoag. She told board members the importance of standing up for students, reminding us that we refuse to accept inaction from our school boards, simply because they don't know any better.

Dr. Yellowfish also talked about work and life in the world of COVID-19. Her department is adapting in many ways to make sure they



stay connected to their students. They've modeled a way to check in with families to make sure students have what they need to be successful, modeled after the way their district's nutrition service ensures students get food. They've also adapted what used to be in-person gatherings to a similar virtual experience and using the opportunity to share how to make some of the food featured in the gatherings.

NEA Members Benefits Spreads Relief

As of September 1, 2020, nearly 40,000 wildfires have burned over 4 million acres of the United States. In addition to the scope of the fires, many have incurred greater major property damage versus fires in previous years that burned remote areas. There have also been hurricanes, tornadoes, and other catastrophic climate events affecting NEA members. Due to global warming, this is the new norm. NEA Member Benefits (NEA MB) saw the rise in need and is taking action to help.

NEA MB is equipped to help in several ways, including acting as an agent to facilitate tax-deductible donations to members affected by environmental disasters. In this role, NEA MB pays the transaction costs and facilitates the donation process through its webpage. Two donation sites are up and running right now to supporting Louisiana and Oregon with their

current disaster clean up processes (<https://www.neamb.com/Pages/Help-Members-Affected-by-Recent-Disasters>)

NEA MB has also solicited Bank of America and other partners to contribute funds to support relief efforts for members. According to Gary Pheobus, NEA MB CEO, distributing funds needs an enterprise approach involving NEA national, state, local, and NEA MB working as a team of support. While NEA MB can collect money, it must rely on state and local associations to get the money to the right people at the right time. Over \$650,000 has been collected and given to members already. Beyond direct contributions, NEA MB works with business partners to provide flexibility to members going through tragedies.

The NEA Members Insurance Trust waives premiums to members affected by FEMA-recognized crises. California Casualty, and other financial NEA MB partners, allow payment skipping for those in need. Often members in crisis just need someone to help talk through options and how to proceed in the most beneficial way for them. That help can be found by calling 1-800-637-4636. In this way, NEA MB lives their values that they exist to make members' lives better.



Voces de la Frontera Unites Students' Power

Christine Neumann-Ortiz, the founding Executive Director of Voces de la Frontera, and a recognized national leader of the immigrant rights movement was honored with the 2020 NEA César Chávez Acción y Compromiso Human and Civil Rights Award on behalf of Voces de la Frontera. She inspired the Board as part of the Hispanic Observance.

Neumann-Ortiz showed how Voces partnered with Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association, stating, "It is a model for how we can organize, particularly as we approach elections amid this pandemic."

Voces de la Frontera organized Latino and multi-racial students to advocate for immigration, workers' rights, and public education. As Neumann-Ortiz explained, "Immigration is tied to broader labor, international labor struggle."

Neumann-Ortiz is the daughter of a Mexican national and German national, who both became teachers. They met in Mexico and moved to California because that was the "only state that allowed multi-racial marriage." She shared that her parents raised her with a "sense of pride in my heritage, responsibility to stand up for justice, and a sense of community." Her activism began in college while studying Chicano history in Austin, TX when she traveled to the border and saw the immigrant experience firsthand. Voces de la Frontera started there as Neumann-Ortiz, "saw how companies orga-

The organization grew from the bottom up to



Christine Neumann-Ortiz addressed the NEA Board of about uniting through struggle.

be known in immigrant rights and in labor, particularly for its capacity to organize statewide strikes. Their most popular action was the Day without a Latino, a one day boycott of schools and businesses. "It's about power and ability, the capacity to organize, the ability to understand power and thus use it. It's about knowing what you are up against," explained Neumann-Ortiz. "We have a willingness to adapt to any situation, to be responsive, to be democratic in our decisions, to build alliances."

This is where key relationships with teachers and the labor movement, in general, comes from. Neumann-Ortiz believes that there is greater and greater solidarity in linking these struggles. She shared that it was Voce's work with students in particular that highlighted this truth: "The youth understood the common struggles."

Voces organizes high school students to create

student chapters on their school campuses. "It's not imposed on [students], but a space to have fun and shape what happens in schools and neighborhoods," declared Neumann-Ortiz. After identifying student leaders, Voces builds power in students by centering the student voice in their work. "We create space for youth to find their voice, to make their own decisions," emphasized Neumann-Ortiz. Student chapters elect leaders to a statewide board with teacher advisors.

Representatives from each chapter meet weekly to integrate campaigns. From fighting against crumbling infrastructure, school privatization, sanctuary policies to fighting on, drivers' licenses, and the there is "intentionality of bringing struggles" and students are pipeline of experienced organizers with schools to grow the movement. High school students graduate, s are forming. Neumann-Ortiz their work "transforms people. ding is about transforming peo-

Voces is currently focused on organizing through the pandemic on racial justice, immigration, and getting out the vote. "It is a struggle that will continue beyond our lifetimes. I thought we would win immigration reform in one year; it's been 20 years," laughed Neumann-Ortiz. "I still believe we will win it." She concluded with this ringing statement of hope: "We are building a movement 365 days a year and we are stronger for it!"

Safe and Just Schools for All Students

Vice President Princess Moss and Secretary-Treasurer Noel Candelaria led a discussion with the NEA Board of Director about the Safe and Just Schools partnership funding and application process.

The budget passed by the Representative Assembly allocated \$5.5 million designated for assisting our affiliates to address the COVID 19 response. Last year's Budget Committee concluded that at least 60 percent of this \$5.5 million would be distributed to states and/or local affiliates through grants and that up to 40 percent be used for enterprise work initiated at the national level.

The work designated at the national level included federal or legal activities that NEA could drive at scale. For example, NEA could work with pandemic experts to do surveys to determine educators' needs nationally. The results would be a resource for our local and state affiliates to use in their work on the ground.

The other money was earmarked for promoting health, safety, and civil rights. NEA recognized the racial inequities exacerbated by the pandemic and worked to make sure this funding helped our local and state affiliates further their work to

address the problems. Locals have been creative in the ways they have engaged throughout the pandemic, and NEA wanted to give them the boost that they so desperately needed, especially during these uncertain financial times, to make a difference in communities of color.

NEA wanted to make sure that the added money would strengthen the connection between NEA and our members. The goal was for members to see NEA resources come directly to locals to help them engage with programs that could benefit their communities.

NEA hoped to have the application posted on nea.org live by October 1. Applications will be accepted through July 31, 2021, and awarded on a rolling basis contingent on available funding. The funding will be in the form of one-year grants for proposals priced from \$3000 to \$75,000. The applications will be reviewed and awarded in 30 days or less by teams using goal-based criteria. Final approval will be by the NEA President and Executive Director or their designees.

Remembering Ruth Bader Ginsburg



Alice O'Brien

NEA Chief Counsel Alice O'Brien began with a question Ginsburg often asked: "What is the difference between an NYC garment city clerk and a Supreme Court Justice?" Her answer? "One generation." A middle-class, public-school-educated woman who rose to the highest court in the land, Ginsburg always remembered her roots.

The daughter of an immigrant and a first generation American, her story could only happen in the United States at this time in history. Women of Justice Ginsburg's generation usually did not go to college, much less to law school. Ginsburg's America was full of sex-based distinctions. The limitations were embedded in thousands of federal and state laws and had been upheld by courts across the country, including the U.S. Supreme Court. When Ginsburg went to law school, she was one of only nine women in the school of 500 students. She went on to graduate first in her law school class, yet she still was unable to get a job because no law firm in New York City would hire a woman, much less one who was Jewish, and a mother. Only after one of her law school professors told a district court judge that he would never send him another law clerk if he did not hire Ginsburg, did she finally get an offer of employment.

Her eyes were opened to what a more equal society might look like after she lived for a time in Sweden where she saw women in all walks of life enjoying freedoms she could not in her home country. She came back to the United States and became a law professor at Rutgers University, hiding her second pregnancy until after she got her contract renewed. She began to volunteer with the American Civil Liberty Union, where she began the project that would revolutionize Constitutional law in this country, the work of extending to women Constitutional protection against discrimination.

The spark for that work was an assignment to teach a seminar on women in the law which inspired her to read every federal decision and law review article ever published regarding women's legal status.

She completed the task in a month.

Throughout the 1970s, Ginsburg was involved in litigating hundreds of gender discrimination cases, several of which went to the Supreme Court. She argued six and won five. By the late 1970s, Ginsburg was a well-known women's rights advocate.

Her approach to the Court and the justices was pragmatic and strategic. The challenge she faced securing Constitutional protection for women was daunting. White men, of a certain age, who comprised virtually the entire federal judiciary viewed the differential treatment of women as a benefit protecting women, not as detrimental to them. Ginsburg had to

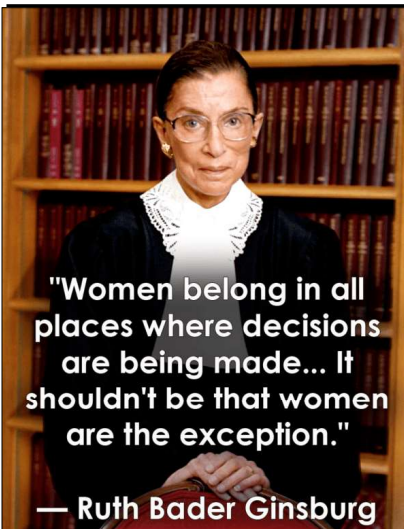
persuade the court that the differential treatment was indeed harmful to both men and women and that putting women on a pedestal was also putting them in a cage.

When President Carter took office, just one woman sat on a federal Court of Appeals out of 97 judges. President Carter expanded the lower court by 152 seats and appointed an unprecedented number of women and people of color to the positions. With 98 appointments, he appointed more women and people of color than all the prior presidents had, combined. We very much owe Ginsburg's service as a judge and justice to that bold move by President Carter. After 13 years on the Circuit Court, and a massive campaign waged by her beloved husband Marty, President Clinton agreed to interview Ginsburg for a possible Supreme Court nomination. At 60, she nailed the interview and President Clinton put forward her nomination to serve on the high court. O'Brien pointed out that Ginsburg surely would not have reached her position without the determined efforts of men and women who kept dreams of equal citizenship alive in days when few would listen, people like Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Stanton, and Harriet Tubman, which Ginsburg also recognized during her confirmation hearing.

Over her 27 years on the court, Ginsburg continued to expand Constitution protects. She wrote the opinion in *United States v. Virginia* that established that gender-based discrimination is unconstitutional based on the Virginia Military Institute's exclusion of women. She was also a determined force for civil rights, LGBTQ rights, affirmative action, and voting rights on the Court.

As the Court composition changed, her voice became louder. She issued sharp and pointed dissents in decisions like *Bush v. Gore*, and *Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co.*, and *Shelby County v. Holder*, to name just a few. In each dissent, she put forward a plan for future courts, or Congress to take up the cause and move civil rights forward.

And throughout her life and career, she kept talking to those with whom she disagreed. From her perspective, the job of a justice was to seek to understand the minds of other men and women and to weigh their interests of others alongside her own. She strove to listen without bias. She listened and thought hard before speaking, and frequently urged others to do the same and to react without anger, but with not in anger but with persuasion. She never gave up. We all stand on Ginsburg's shoulders now, and we still have much work to do to realize her vision of a more perfect union, which reflects the widest, broadest, and deepest participation of all people in government and government policy.



"Women belong in all places where decisions are being made... It shouldn't be that women are the exception."

— Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Honor Justice Ginsburg's Memory by Getting Involved

Send messages to Congress with urgent actions to support pro-public education- <https://educationvotes.nea.org/take-action/>

Sign up for racial and social justice action alerts- <https://neadjustice.org/sign-up/>

Learn more about NEA's Women's Leadership Training Program- <https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/leadership-development/womens-leadership>

Learn more about NEA's Minority Training Program- <https://neacsjpd.org/training-session/minority-leadership/>

Learn more about NEA's Leaders for Just Schools Program- <https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/leadership-development/leaders-just-schools>



Building NEA Organizational Capacity

Executive Director Report

Kim Anderson, Executive Director of the National Education Association reminded us of how far we've come in the 2019-2020 school year, including Congressional Hearings on the Mueller Report, elections in Kentucky, Louisiana, and Washington, transitions in leadership both within NEA and with several state affiliates, post-Janus litigation, and living and working during a pandemic. Anderson then described how NEA remained committed to the organization's strategic objectives, focusing specifically on coronavirus help for members, affiliates, students and public education, racial justice, membership organizing and connectedness, and the upcoming election.

NEA acted swiftly to respond and provide information to members and affiliates, including town halls and re-opening schools, podcasts, and webinars on legal issues and requesting leave and issuing guidance on equity for black and brown students in the context of reopening schools. 40 Education Support Professionals participated in a year-long Leadership Institute, where they developed an ESP Growth Continuum for affiliate staff and leaders and articulated their value to the community. Three cohorts of affiliates participated in learning about community schools and how to support blended learning. Educator Voice Academies worked on action plans for state and local work and focused on guiding the safe re-opening of schools. Over 2000 members participated in a Summer Justice Series focused on advancing racial justice in education.

Throughout all of this, NEA continued to build a culture of organizing, utilizing digital assets and programs to support new members across the NEA spectrum.

Anderson then pointed board members to the priority goals for the year. The first? "Lead a movement to reclaim public education as a common good that is the foundation of this democracy and is a racially, socially just & equitable system for EVERY student." This goal will be met by taking action to expand advocacy for structural economic and tax reform at the federal level, building on NEA's work on racial justice professional support and leadership development, scaling the community schools model, continuing the work on bargaining and advocacy for the common good and collaborations on labor management and labor-community partnerships.

The second goal, "Leading through the coronavirus, economic, racial injustice crises (always focused on our aspirational goal) with a strong, focused, unified response" will be met through ensuring that public schools and institutions of higher education protect the health, safety and civil rights of students and members, addressing



NEA Executive Director Kim Anderson puts forward her goals for the new year.

the racial and social justice and the needs of communities of color and other diverse or underserved populations, focusing on student learning by providing access to professional practice supports and resources to assist members however they are teaching, strengthening the connection between NEA and its members, utilize intentional and innovating experiments to recruit and engage members and continue to build partnerships and a movement to support public education.

The third goal, "Election 2020 – we need a new president AND pro-public education Senate: Elected leaders who care about our students; respect educators; believe public education is a common good; understand and support the rights of workers to organize and collectively act; will commit to taking on racial, social, education, economic justice, and strengthening our democracy" will be met through electing Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, electing a pro-public education senate majority, and actively engaging the new administration during the transition to ensure the personnel selected will work to advance our mission.

There are many ways for members to get involved in the election cycle. Educators for Biden conducts a weekly phone bank focused on turning members out to vote in key battleground states (<https://www.mobilize.us/nea/event/326492/>), and NEA is also hosting phone banks focused on turning members out to vote in key battleground states (<https://www.mobilize.us/nea/event/324632/>) sign up to help today.

Strategic Framework Evaluation

The Saturday Board meeting kicked off with a Café Style exploration into NEA's Strategic Framework. Board members were grouped into six Zoom rooms for the activity.

The activity involved six rounds of presentation and discussion: one for each of NEA's Strategic Priorities:

- Enhance Organizational Capacity
- Secure a Pro-Public Education Environment
- Support Professional Excellence
- Advance Racial Justice in Education
- Recruit and Engage Early Career Educators
- Increase Educator Voice, Influence, and Professional Authority

Each round included a presentation of one of the Strategic Priorities by an Executive Committee member and the Strategic Priority Lead staff person. Each presentation focused on an overview of the Strategic Priority, a celebration of NEAs achievements for the last two years, and an outline of plans for the next two years. After each presentation, Board members were shifted into breakout rooms of 4-6 to discuss two key questions.

- 1) How does this Strategic Priority align with NEAs Mission, Vision, and Values?
- 2) What about this priority excites you?

These important breakouts were a chance for Board members to engage with each other in deep conversations about the vital work of NEA as we continue to advocate for education, educators, and students during extraordinary challenges and remarkable opportunities. The rich discussions around the Strategic Framework solidly set the tone of our new President's term and started a year that promises to be exciting and full of important work.

