



Pima County School Retirees' Association

March 2019

We welcome all retired school employees



**PCSRA
POEpourri**



Teachers Who Already Give Their All Now Required to Pay to Give Their DNA? Really? (Do Not Ask)

It is the time of year that we often hear of the strange and wondrous bills that are introduced or get passed into law by the AZ State Legislature. Some of them are needed to make public education more easily accomplished, but so many of them are intended to punish the educational system workers for some theoretical wrong. We, who are PCSRA/AASRA members, are lucky that we have access to the often-strange workings of Arizona legislators through the diligence of the AASRA Legislative Team and our legislative consultant.

Most recently, Terry Bagwell and I (as members of the AASRA Communications Committee) have been implementing a new email service to keep AASRA members throughout the state informed of interesting activities on the state legislative front. Through a service called "Mail Chimp", the AASRA Legislative team has been sending out occasional email messages with information on particular bills to watch as these bills make their way through the legislative process. These emails may even suggest that you call or write your Legislative District Representatives to voice your opinion on a particular issue.

One particularly peculiar bill this year has been SB1475, which would have REQUIRED all school employees and volunteers to submit DNA for a statewide database. These same people would be REQUIRED to pay up to \$250 each to be included in the database, to pay for the analysis by a state approved company.

It was amended to make it more palatable through the committee hearing, and has not passed, as yet. It seems that only the employees of the DNA company to receive the \$250 fees was in favor. This is merely ONE example of the foolishness that we need to watch.

The point of this whole article is that we really need to keep informed of what goes on in our state, nation and our local communities. Your PCSRA/AASRA membership is only one of the things you can do to avail yourself of what is happening in the areas of education and retirement issues. Thank you for your interest, your membership, and anything else you do to make our representatives aware of your concerns.

Steve, PCSRA President



February Report

PCSRA Membership: 155

AASRA Membership: 62

Scholarship Fund: \$2,002.05

April 11th Luncheon at Viscount Suites

Recognizing Member Achievements

\$16.50 each Postmark by April 4 to:
PCSRA Reservations, 4315 E. Seneca St., 85712.

A - Quiche Lorraine w/ Fresh Fruit

B - Candied Walnut Salad

Name _____

Guest _____



Programs

~ Barbara Macpherson



In March, Carolyn Campbell, Executive Director of the Coalition of Preserving the Sonoran Desert, will talk about preserving desert habitat for animals and the land bridges that have been built for them to cross busy roads safely. Brent Dennis, Tucson Parks and Recreation Director, will talk about revitalizing Tucson Parks and about planting trees.

Frieda Baker is 2019 Honoree

In April, PCSRA will honor our own Frieda Baker, an outstanding educator and long-time member of PCSRA. Frieda graduated from high school in Cleveland, Ohio, and received her first college degree from the University of New York in Buffalo. Her first job in education was in the Buffalo school system. Her first position in education in Tucson was at Borton Elementary School. She also taught at Robinson and Davidson before being elected President of the Tucson Education Association in 1995. There is so much more! Come to the April meeting and learn all about Frieda's contributions to education and "kidz".

Members will also meet our two 2018-2019 University of Arizona College of Education Scholarship winners and learn about their educational goals.

Support Tucson Society of the Blind

Members of Tucson Society of the Blind, TSB, have a motto: "We may not have much sight but we have a lot of vision." Help TSB achieve its vision by attending its Spring Concerts, March 22 and 23, at Fellowship Square from 6:00 to 8:30 PM.

Christine Vivona, harpist, will play on Friday. The terrific Old Arizona Brass Band will perform on Saturday. You can buy concert tickets at \$10 each from Barbara or call the Fellowship Square at 520-721-3003. She is also selling raffle tickets, 6 for \$5. You do not have to be there to win. 1st prize is \$100 cash, 2nd Prize is two theater tickets, and 3rd prize is a \$25 gift card.



PCSRA BOOK CLUB

Dear Friends,

Our March selection is **AMERICAN LIKE ME: Reflections on Life Between Cultures**, by America Ferrera. From award-winning actress and political activist Ferrera comes a vibrant and varied collection of first-person accounts from prominent figures about the experience of growing up between cultures.

America has always felt wholly American, and yet, her identity is inextricably linked to her parents' homeland and Honduran culture. Speaking Spanish at home, having Saturday-morning-salsa-dance-parties in the kitchen, and eating tamales alongside apple pie at Christmas never seemed at odds with her American identity. Still, she yearned to see that identity reflected in the larger American narrative.

Now, in *American Like Me*, America invites 31 of her friends, peers, and heroes to share their stories about life between cultures. We know them as actors, comedians, athletes, politicians, artists, and writers. They are also immigrants, children or grandchildren of immigrants, indigenous people, or people who otherwise grew up with deep and personal connections to more than one culture. Each of them struggled to establish a sense of self, find belonging, and feel seen. And they call themselves American enthusiastically, reluctantly, or not at all.

Ranging from the heartfelt to the hilarious, their stories shine a light on a quintessentially American experience and will appeal to anyone with a complicated relationship to family, culture, and growing up.

We will meet March 28 at 1:00 at Steve's Poe's home, at 3331 E. Waverly Street (east of Country Club) between Pima and Grant.

...Just a teaser - for April, the selection suggested is **EDUCATED** by **Tara Westover**, a memoir. "Born to survivalists in the mountains of Idaho, Tara Westover was seventeen the first time she set foot in a classroom. Her quest for knowledge transformed her, taking her over oceans and across continents, to Harvard and to Cambridge University. Only then would she wonder if she'd traveled too far, if there was still a way home."



Legislative News

~ Jerry Holmes



News Brought to You from the Land that Achieved Statehood in 1912 on Valentine's Day

Kathy Hoffman's Support for LGBTQ Students Brushed Aside

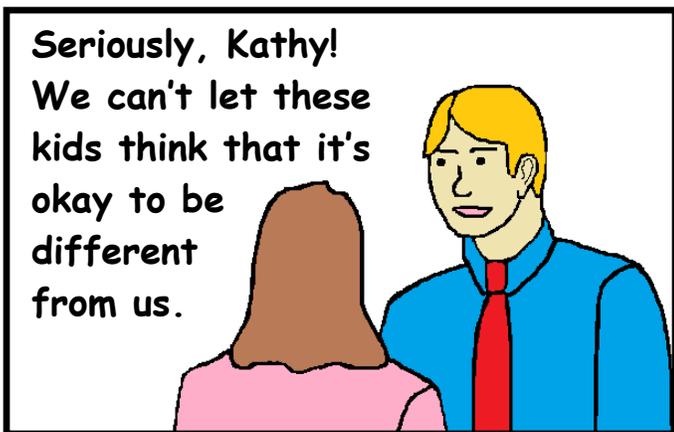
During her Feb. 4th State of Education address to state lawmakers, new Superintendent of Instruction, Kathy Hoffman (D), urged lawmakers to support the emotional well-being of ALL students. She advocated that the House Education Committee create “an inclusive environment that supports children from all backgrounds”. She went on to say that “a simple step we can take to reduce bullying and discrimination ... is to repeal the ‘no promo homo’ law.”

The law that she was referring to restricts schools from “portray(ing) homosexuality as a positive alternative lifestyle” during the course of HIV/AIDS education. Toward that end, Sen. Martin Quezada (D) introduced SB 1415, aimed at repealing the law.

The president of the Center for Arizona Policy (CAP), Cathi Herrod, responded by saying that Quezada’s bill was “a solution in search of problem”. The CAP mission statement says it exists “to promote and defend the foundational values of life, marriage and family, and religious freedom.”

Supt. Hoffman said the current law “makes teachers afraid to say anything or do anything to support students in the LGBTQ community.”

Sen. Quezada’s bill was assigned to the Education Committee chaired by the powerful and conservative Sen. Sylvia Allen (R) from Snowflake. The bill was never heard in committee and has died due to legislative deadlines.



Republican Calls for Charter School Accountability

Sen. Kate Brophy McGee (R) has introduced SB 1394, entitled the Charter School Transparency and Accountability Act, that, if passed, would provide more oversight to charter schools. Arizona has over 550 charter schools serving over 200,000 students.

Brophy McGee’s bill would require a three-member governing board for each charter and would not allow family members to comprise a majority. It would require financial accountability through an online clearinghouse, establish guidelines for procurement, and provide protections for ‘whistleblowers’. The bill would prohibit related-party (family member) restrictions in the same manner as public-school districts. Finally, it would expand the Attorney General’s investigatory and prosecutorial powers over charters.

Move Still on to Send Sales Tax for Education Question to Voters

Measures that I wrote about in February to put a sales tax increase aimed at education funding on the ballot in 2020 have been melded. Bills sponsored by Sen. Kate Brophy Magee (R) and Sen. Sylvia Allen (R) have been amended to reflect compromises. An identical bill will be sponsored by Rep. Michelle Udall (R) in the House. Those bills would refer an increase of .06% in the state sales tax to voters.

The additional funds would be split among K-12 public schools, including charters (75%), public universities (20%), and community colleges (5%).

Objections to the increased funding bill generally fall along the line of the regressive nature of a sales tax. Those with lower incomes pay a higher percentage of their income in taxes.

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State Expanding Voucher Program Under the Table

Unlike the individual tax credits that we claim to reduce our taxes when we give to *public* education, the corporate tax credit allows businesses to donate funds and sponsor scholarships for *private* schools. That, of course, reduces corporate taxes and is money lost to the state as income. It troubles me that the state is subsidizing for-profit private education including schools that offer religious training.

The bigger problem is that the legislation creating the corporate tax for private schools, passed by the Republican-dominated legislature of 2006, allowed a **20% increase each year** in the amount of corporate dollars given to private school scholarships. That has ballooned over time to the point that \$89 million of last year's business income taxes were diverted from Arizona tax coffers to *private* schools. Current laws would allow that amount to double in another four years. In addition, privately owned Student Tuition Org. (STO) can take 10% of those donations to cover their "overhead" for administering and distributing the funds.

Sen. J.D. Mesnard (R) has introduced an innocent-looking bill (SB1485) that would cap corporate tax credit growth. However, the bill would allow one more year of growth at the current rate and **then** reduce the growth by 5% each year until 2024. That means the tax give-away would grow to \$145 million by 2023. The proposal is receiving support from both sides of the aisle and from the Arizona Center for Economic Progress.

Mesnard's bill was passed through committees in time to meet deadlines and will soon be heard on the floor of the Senate. Other bills that would have immediately capped the growth rate at 2% were not scheduled for hearings in committees in time to meet legislative deadlines and are now considered dead.

Steps Taken to Keep ESA Program Under Republican Control

The Finance Committee passed another voucher-based bill. SB 1320, sponsored by Sen. Livingston, would place oversight of the ESA program under the State Treasurer's office rather than the Dept. of Education where it has been since its inception. The State Treasurer, Kimberly Yee, is a Republican and the Dept. of Education is now led by Democrat Kathy Hoffman. Sen. Livingston claimed this was not a political move but would allow the Treasurer's office to hire a third party to provide oversight of the program.

Sen. Mesnard, head of the Finance Committee, argued that the bill was not a political move by claiming that it was a reiteration of a bill introduced last year while a Republican was in charge of the State Dept. of Education. However, the **Arizona Capitol Times** could find no record of such a bill in the previous session.

Supt. Hoffman has revamped the oversight of the ESA program and appointed a new head of the division, who has so far received rave reviews from parents. Democrats on the Finance Committee urged legislators and parents to display more patience while changes are being made in the Department of Education.

Redundant Bills Designed to Make Teachers Toe Political Lines

Rep Mark Finchem's (R) attempt to proscribe an Educator's Code of Ethics, HB 2002, that I wrote about in January never received a committee hearing. HB 2017 which would have prohibited schools from closing except during pre-approved breaks or emergencies was not heard by a committee. Both bills were seen as retaliation for the Red for Ed movement. The deadline for bills to be heard by a committee in order to be sent to the Committee of the Whole (in the House or Senate) has already passed.

Another bill that is viewed as retaliatory for the Red for Ed Movement, HB2015, passed the House Education Committee on a party-line vote of 8-5. Introduced by Rep. Kelly Townsend (R), the bill would prohibit teachers from using district resources to espouse a political or religious ideology. Violations would incur a \$5000 fine. The bill was amended by the sponsor to remove a clause that would have allowed parents to sue teachers for violations. Current state law already prohibits such activities. The bill has raised hackles in the education community and is strongly opposed by active educators.

See **Legislative News** on page 5.

Legislative News continued from page 4

Funding for Special Education Out of Kilter and Out Dated

Current funding guidelines for special education students were initially established in the 1980-81 school year. At that time guidelines were established for Group A and Group B students.

Under Group A guidelines a specific dollar amount (approximately \$600 per student) is allotted for special education, based on the number of students in the district for each district with at least 1000 students. The Group A guidelines were established so that districts would not over-identify students as disabled in order to attract more funding.

District M and District N, each with 1000 students, would receive the same amount of money to cover costs associated with educating students who are gifted, have specific learning or emotional disabilities or speech impairments. If 35% of District M's students are so categorized and only 5% of District N's students, they still receive the same dollar amount.

Group B guidelines were established to fund more intensive services for students with visual or hearing impairments, autism or multiple disabilities. Group B allotments are tied to a specific student so that if that student transfers to another school or district the funding follows the student.

Those guidelines ... are outdated by the realities of "choice" in education.

Those guidelines, specifically Group A, are outdated by the realities of "choice" in education. The head of Gov. Ducey's Classrooms First Initiative Council, in 2017, stated that there was a \$400 million gap between special education needs and current funding. That's only a guess because no cost study has been conducted on SpEd needs since 2007. The longer the needs are unmet the greater they become.

Many, if not all, school districts move money from their general education budgets in order to better fund services for SpEd students. Because of that move, both the general education population and special education students are shortchanged. Removing money from the general education budget affects class sizes, teacher salaries and other facets of school district budgets.

Sen. Heather Carter (R) sponsored a well-regarded bill in this year's legislature that would have changed the current formulas. The bill required that the State Auditor General conduct an analysis of special education needs and expenditures and make recommendations to the legislature. Sen. Carter's bill never received a committee hearing date. That means, due to legislative deadlines, it is dead for this year.

Sen. Allen Finds a Way Around Voters' Decision on Vouchers

Sen. Sylvia Allen sponsored SB 1395 which, she said, would clarify a number of problems with the Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESA) (vouchers) in their current form. Because misspending of voucher funds by parents can lead to freezing of the funds, Sen. Allen claims her bill fixes those problems. Some parents claim that they have received advice from the Department of Education that, when followed, lead to funds being frozen.

Sen. Allen's bill was passed by the Finance Committee chaired by Sen. JD Mesnard (R). Allen's bill expands the age range at which a voucher can be applied for without first attending a public school. It also broadens school boundary lines of a failing school -- one of the criteria for which an ESA can be applied.

Of the changes, Sen. Mesnard remarked, "If you change a definition and it snags a few more folks, I don't know if that's really expansion". His remarks and those of Sen. Allen's, after the 6-4 committee vote along party lines, were referring to the overwhelming 2-1 rejection of voucher expansion by voters last November in the voting on Prop 305. Joint Legislative Budget Council analysis says that passage of the bill would lead to \$1.7 million more being spent on vouchers in the next three years.

Farewell



- ANGUS**, Mary Lou (98) ~ 3/4; Teacher
- BONE**, Nancy (80) ~ 2/17; Teacher 30 years
- BROWN**, Wanda (94) ~ 9/20/18; Teacher
- BURRUEL**, Cruz (87) ~ 2/17; Teacher 
- CASTELAN**, Debra (?) ~ 2/4; Teacher
- COYKENDALL**, Ruth (91) ~ 1/13; Teacher
4th grade 25 years and Special Education
Resource Teacher 11 years.
- DYSON**, Gregory, Sr. (71) ~ 2/23; Educator
- FRENCH**, Doris (96) ~ Feb. 2; Teacher 
- HAMMOND**, Frances (74) ~ 2/5; Teacher
- HERNER**, Harlan (88) ~ 2/22; Teacher,
Canyon Del Oro High 
- JACOBS**, Stephen (90) ~ 2/24; Professor
- JOHNSON**, Rosalie (81) ~ 2/12; School Bus Driver
- KIM**, Kyunghiee (60) ~ 2/17; Teacher 
- LINNAUS**, Betty (89) ~ 3/4; Teacher
- MARTINEZ**, Martha (74) 2/13; Teacher
- NASH**, Larry (70) ~ 2/13; Educator
- PAULOS**, William (69) ~ (?) Teacher, & Postmaster
- PEREZ**, Sylvia (65) ~ 2/26; Teacher, Sahuarita
- SAUL**, Lynn (73) ~ 2/22; Teacher 
- STACY**, Ron (79) ~ 1/31; Director of
Transportation for TUSD 26 years

Foundation Has Reason to Alter Our Pension Funds

By Jerry Holmes

Because the Reason Foundation is one of the groups trying to affect the Arizona State Retirement System, I wanted to do a little research on who they are. Their website says that

(The) Reason Foundation advances a free society by developing, applying, and promoting libertarian principles, including individual liberty, free markets, and the rule of law.

They are most interested in “advancing the values of choice, individual freedom and limited government.” They want to “promote choice, competition, and a dynamic market economy”. They push for the privatization of many government functions. They also push for education reform, including the myth of school choice.

As Margaret Thatcher wrote in one of the Reason Foundation publications, it is their belief that “State control is fundamentally bad because it denies people the power to choose and the opportunity to bear responsibility for their own actions.”

The largest donors to the Reason Foundation, a non-profit organization, include The David H. Koch Foundation (\$1.5 million in 2012) and other very conservative organizations.

In addition, the Laura and John Arnold Foundation is involved in trying to change the structure of our retirement system. John Arnold was/is a hedge fund manager who was heavily involved in the Enron Corp. bankruptcy. Their goal is similar to the Reason Foundation’s in that they want to privatize many government functions – with public pensions being a primary target.

This article from Rolling Stone magazine details how they go about profiting from public pension funds. <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/looting-the-pension-funds-172774/> Caution: it contains profanities (maybe it should).

Please support the Arizona Retirement Security Coalition (ARSC). AASRA has been heavily involved in planning and organizing with this group in an effort to protect our pension system. Find out more at <https://protectpensions.org/states/arizona/> OR <https://www.facebook.com/AZRSCo/>