

January, 2010



REFORM PEIA NOW!

AFT-WV and WVSSPA are launching a major campaign to reform PEIA. The short-term goal is to provide all education employees, both current and future, with accessible and affordable healthcare. Our long-term goal is to ensure highly qualified and certified staff and teachers are employed in all our schools. Our students deserve nothing less.

We will have a media campaign to influence legislators, the public and a “ground” campaign to maximize pressure on those who ultimately have the authority to *REFORM PEIA* – your Delegates and State Senators.

Reforming PEIA will mean:

- **Reconstituting the PEIA Finance Board to create more voting seats for public employees;**
 - There are two seats reserved for representatives from labor and education organizations and one for retirees. At best, we have three votes out of a possible nine and we are consistently outvoted. Public employees deserve a meaningful voice on the PEIA Finance Board.
- **Reinstating the Retiree Health Care Subsidy for New Hires;**
 - The Finance Board has voted to eliminate the subsidy. Therefore, those hired after July 1, 2010, will be required to shoulder the entire cost of their health care premium (an additional \$700 - \$1,000 a month) upon retirement, thereby making health care cost prohibitive. Full-time employees who take a leave of absence and return after July 1, 2010, will also be deemed a new hire upon reinstatement and will lose the benefit as well. Legislation needs to be passed to reverse the PEIA Finance Board’s decision.
- **Clarifying the 80/20 Cost-Sharing;**
 - Currently, premiums for health insurance are split 80/20; that is, the state pays 80% and the employee pays 20% of the premium. Any premium increases are split along those lines. But, when PEIA is faced with an increase in health care costs, the state only absorbs their share (80%) of the premium increase whereas employees are required to shoulder their share (20%) as well as the entire increase in other areas such as deductibles, co-payments and out-of-pocket increases. The law needs to be amended to provide for a true 80/20 division of costs.
- **Providing a Dedicated Source of Revenue for the PEIA Retiree Trust Fund;**
 - We understand the cost of health care is increasing. But we believe the State has a moral obligation to provide affordable and accessible health care for our retirees. To fulfill this obligation, we seek legislation to provide a dedicated source of revenue (e.g., increasing the tobacco tax) to fund the Trust to ensure education employees, upon retirement, will be able to afford health insurance.
- **Increasing the Experience Increments;**
 - This will provide a boost in salary for many of our veteran employees and reduce the financial pressure on PEIA as fewer employees will qualify for the retiree health care subsidy. Equally important, increasing the increments will provide an incentive for teachers to stay in the profession and help alleviate the shortage of certified teachers.

Can we count you in?

Shortly, we will hold regional meetings across the state as members learn more about our campaign to initiate our mobilization effort. We then will ask all employees to participate in meetings with your Delegates and Senators, to work a petition campaign designed to enlist the support of your Board of Education and to send postcards as part of our effort to persuade legislators to *REFORM PEIA NOW*.

Rarely does a policy issue touch so closely to each of our lives. We hear every day from members who tell us heartbreaking stories... the custodian who works two jobs in order to pay their medical bills... the teacher who can’t afford to fill her prescriptions... and the student teacher who has given up on teaching in West Virginia. The cost of doing nothing is unacceptable. Without PEIA reform, health insurance for current and future employees will be a benefit few can afford and the sole possession of a privileged few.