



The Reporter

The Official Publication of the
West Virginia School Service Personnel Association
FALL 2008

A Message from Your President, Jackee Long

WVSSPA...Today, Tomorrow, and in the Future

Welcome back to another school year! As our students find their way back to our school buses, cafeterias, offices and classrooms, let me be the first to acknowledge the incredible work you do every day. While we all have different jobs and different roles, each and every one of us makes a difference in the lives of West Virginian school children. I'm proud of what we do day in and day out!

As many of you are aware, WVSSPA began the school year with exciting news. We affiliated (partnered) with AFT-WV. By partnering with AFT-WV, our organization is going to be better than ever! This partnership impacts us positively; it benefits us as individuals and it benefits our organization as a whole, as well.

Although you have already received a mailing from the executive committee about the affiliation, I think it's important to restate and re-emphasize that we are not being "taken-over" by AFT; we are not merging with AFT. WVSSPA will continue to be just as it always has been - a strong, independent organization dedicated to meeting school service personnel needs and providing a voice for our 8,000 members across the state.

The exciting news is that as individual members of WVSSPA, we will receive free "member-only"

benefits such as a \$1 million liability insurance, accidental death and dismemberment insurance and free life insurance. In addition, the partnership will provide increased and improved services for you. This means your calls will be answered more quickly and you will see WVSSPA officials at your county meetings and in your buildings on a more regular basis. More benefits, better services - that is what the partnership means for you!



The partnership benefits our entire organization. Partnering with AFT makes WVSSPA and AFT the largest, strongest, most powerful advocate of public education and school service personnel in the state of West Virginia. This affiliation gives us the best of both worlds now - we maintain our independence, but we get the benefits and protections of being under a larger umbrella.

We will have more power at the legislature and more power in our schools and at the school boards, helping us to increase our salaries and benefits. **More power and a stronger voice for WVSSPA - that is what the partnership means for our organization!**



WVSSPA members at headquarters during Legislature.



Members during Spring Assembly at the Charleston House.



**A Message from your Executive Secretary,
Bob Brown**

“Time does not stand still.....and nor should the WVSSPA”

Over forty-three years ago, WVSSPA was formed. Our organization was created with the belief that school service personnel needed an organization that would be responsive to their needs and concerns. Our members formed an independent association to promote their agenda, their goals and give them a voice at the county and state level.

As our organization enters the twenty-first century, a set of challenges as unique and formidable as the ones that gave rise to WVSSPA forty-three years ago awaits us. Because time does not stand still, WVSSPA cannot stand still. As an organization, we cannot employ the strategies used in years past and expect different outcomes. Put differently, we can't continue doing what we have been doing and expect different results. When the organization was formed, it required a vision and bold leadership. And today, WVSSPA needs a vision for the future that will help us navigate the hurdles and obstacles we face. We can not be blind to the fact that we are the target of ambitious organizing campaigns by multiple organizations. We face an increasingly hostile public that undervalues our work and is quick to blame education employees for their children's shortcomings. Unfortunately, we work in a political environment that increasingly seeks to contract-out our work and expects us to do more with less.

In short, WVSSPA faces a whole new set of challenges which threatens the well being of our members and our Association.

It was for those reason, as well as others, that your executive committee unanimously voted to formalize their partnership with AFT-WV. This action will preserve WVSSPA as it is - a strong and vibrant association that is autonomous and independent. We are now, more so than ever, able to address the unique challenges we face.

Your state leadership team and staff have been on the road visiting our county leaders to share the details of the partnership and what you can expect. To date, the response from our members has been overwhelmingly positive as members learn about the benefits of the partnership.

As we implement the partnership, my pledge to you is this: We will never forget the history and accomplishments of our organization, but we will rise to address the challenges that lay before us today. That is the only way we can continue to be relevant in the lives of our members and those we serve. Most importantly, we are and will continue to be WVSSPA...today, tomorrow, and in the future.

I join with Jackee and the rest of the officers in wishing you a great start to the school year. Thank you for all that you do for the children of West Virginia.

Meet your WVSSPA State Executive Committee for 2008-2009



Bottom Left to Right:

- Nancy Jamison, VP Office
- Jackee Long, President
- Linda Thompson, Vice-President
- Karen Guminey; Secretary

Top Left to Right:

- Lloyd Hinkle, VP Transportation
- Terri Young, VP Teacher Aide
- Twillia Lykins, VP School Lunch
- Judy Goodson, Treasurer

Not Pictured:

- Chuck Rote, VP Maintenance
- Joe White, VP Custodial

Pension-Selection Transfer News

On June 3rd, 2008, school employees received great news when the results of the pension transfer selection were announced. The Consolidated Public Retirement Board reported that 14,871 participants (78.3%) in the Teachers Defined Contribution system had elected to transfer to the Teachers Retirement System. Thanks to the work of WVSSPA and the workshops we conducted throughout the state, we cleared the 65 percent threshold needed for the transfers to take place. Since 78% of eligible participants elected to switch plans, the buy-in cost for employees will be 1.5 percent of salary, multiplied by your years of service, plus 4 percent interest rather than the more expensive actuarial amount.

For school service personnel, over 6,000 of us were able to transfer from the new plan (TDC) to the old plan (TRS) on July 1, 2008. For the first time, these school service personnel will be able to look forward to an affordable retirement!

What is the next step for those employees who moved from the TDC system to the TRS system?

For those employees in the TDC system who chose to transfer to the TRS system, you should have already received two forms to complete and return to the retirement board: The two forms that you need to complete are:

- “TRS Enrollment Form”
- The “Beneficiary Form”

In addition, those individuals transferring to the TRS system will receive a “Certificate of Transfer” and a statement request form to submit. This will enable you to receive the actual cost for the purchase of the buy-back - the 25% service credit. You have until **June 30, 2009** to decide whether to purchase the service credit. WVSSPA will be providing workshops to assist you with the process, as we recognize that this is an important decision and will impact your retirement. WVSSPA’s goal is to help walk you through this process.



Lincoln County WVSSPA members enjoy the Legislative Session.



School Service Personnel & School Discipline

During the last legislative session, the Safe School Act of 2008 (House Bill 4368) passed. The bill gives school service personnel greater inclusion in the decision-making process relating to school safety and discipline.

The Local School Improvement Councils (LSIC) have two school service employees as members on each school’s LSIC. These appointments are made independent of the principal and/or supervisor; they are to be elected by school service personnel at each work-site or school. In accordance with House Bill 4368, one of the school service employees must be a school bus operator and the meetings should be conducted at a time that is convenient for the operators. LSICs will now be charged with the oversight and review of school-based disciplinary policies and actions. Further, LSICs will now have the authority to notify the superintendent if they believe student discipline is not administered fairly or consistently in the school or on the school bus. In addition, LSICs will be able to recommend increased penalties for chronically disruptive students. By empowering LSICs to address issues of school safety and discipline, school service personnel will have a voice in an area long reserved exclusively for principals. This is a great opportunity for school service personnel to be more active and assume a leadership role in reducing student violence and disruptive behavior in our classrooms and schools.

WVSSPA has prepared a workshop to assist faculty senates and LSICs in this endeavor and we are hopeful that we will be able to share the training with you in the fall.

News from the Summer Special Legislative Session

A special session of the legislature was held June 22-24. During the regular session, the legislature passed House Bill 4544 which provided for the re-certification of school bus operators every two years. The Governor vetoed the bill. Thanks to the hard work of Bob Brown, WVSSPA Executive Secretary, the Governor agreed to place our bill on the "call" so that the bill could be considered once again. The good news is that not only did the legislature take the bill back up, but the new bill is better. It provides for the re-certification exam for school bus operators to be administered every third year. (The practice had been to test school bus operators every year). This just goes to show that if you don't get what you want the first time, don't give up!

The legislature also passed a bill dealing with the pension transfer. The bill clarifies that those who transfer from the new plan (TDC) to the old plan (TRS) will be fully credited for their years of service as it relates to meeting retirement eligibility requirements (not retirement benefit) regardless of whether they purchase back 25% of their service time. Those who are transferring and who do not plan on purchasing back 25% of their service time will still be able to retire at age 55 with 30 years of service, at age 60 with 5 years of service, or at any age with 35 years of service. In another words, those who chose not to purchase back 25% of their service credit will not be penalized when determining retirement eligibility.

The legislature also appropriated \$25 million to cover the state's share of the cost of those transferring from the new plan to the old plan.

Please note: The bill does not reopen the window of opportunity for those who did not select to transfer under the provisions of the transfer selection process.

County News

Flowers were not the only thing budding this past spring. An increasing number of WVSSPA county associations continued to form education coalitions to work on issues of common concern. These coalitions yielded victories throughout the state.

In Preston County and in Barbour County, employees will now receive an employer-provided dental and vision plan. While most education employees in the state have had this benefit for years, it was not until WVSSPA formed an education coalition and jointly lobbied the Board that these benefits became a reality.

In Boone County, employees will receive a \$500.00 county-funded salary increase. The salary increase, a result of many meetings with the Board of Education, is a direct result of an education coalition.

In Cabell County, employees will receive a \$300.00 county-funded salary increase. This victory was the result of a two-year campaign by the coalition and would not have occurred but for the hard work of the coalition.

All told, members in 36 counties have seen increased dental and vision benefits and salary increases at the county level. But increased benefits and salaries were not the only victories.

In many other counties, such as Wayne, Kanawha and Marion, WVSSPA and AFT-WV worked together and endorsed joint candidates for the school boards. In Marion County, the coalition now has a pro-education Board of Education for the first time in many, many years.

Members of the education coalitions will be the first to tell you that there is strength in unity. The superintendents and Boards of Education acknowledge the presence of these coalitions and the power they represent. As our coalitions like to say, **"There is a new sheriff in town....and it is the education coalition!"**

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Member Benefits Exclusively for Members of WVSSPA

As a result of the partnership with AFT, WVSSPA members will now have access to the AFT+ Member Benefits program. Many of the benefits are provided at no cost to you. For example, all WVSSPA members will receive the following benefits:

- Free \$1 Million Dollar Professional Liability Insurance
- Free Life Insurance (\$12,000) for one year
- Free Accidental Death and Dismemberment Coverage

In addition, the following membership benefits and services are available to WVSSPA at a discounted rate:

- Disability Income - A program that will provide non-taxable replacement income in the event a member is unable to work due to an accident or extended sickness.
- Limited Supplemental Medical Plan - Offers cost-effective, limited health insurance to WVSSPA members and eligible dependents who might otherwise go uninsured due to lack of employer coverage or the cost of plan participation.

Substitute employees are eligible.

- Pet Insurance Program
- Mortgage Program
- Dental Discount Program
- Magazine Discount Program
- Hotel Discount Program



*To schedule a member benefit's meeting, contact **Brandon Tinney, Member Benefits Specialist, at 1-800-222-9838.***

Members will be receiving their "Member Benefit" kit at their membership meetings, through WVSSPA officer and staff visits to the worksites, and at WVSSPA workshops. Brandon Tinney, the Member Benefits Specialist for WVSSPA and AFT-WV will be scheduling meetings in your county in the near future. If you would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact the WVSSPA office at 1-800-642-9150.

Not a Member?

*It is not too late to take advantage of all WVSSPA has to offer.
Don't delay. Join today!*

*Just complete the following application and mail to:
WVSSPA, 1610 Washington St. E., Charleston, WV 25311.*

West Virginia School Service Personnel Association 2008-09 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Date of Application: _____ **Social Security No:** _____
County of Employment: _____ **School Where Employed:** _____
Home Phone No: _____ **Work Telephone No:** _____
Name: _____ **E-Mail:** _____
Address: _____
City: _____ **Zip:** _____

Check your classification category:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Custodial | <input type="checkbox"/> School Lunch |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Office | <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher Aide |

Check member status:

- | |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regular Member (\$85 annually plus county share) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Substitute (\$45 annually plus county share) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Retiree (\$5 annually plus county share) |

CHECK ONE: CASH PAYROLL DEDUCTION

The Following Paragraph Applies to Payroll Deduction Only

I hereby attest that I am a continuing member of my service personnel association, and, in accordance with the laws of the State, hereby assign to the West Virginia School Service Personnel Association such money as necessary to pay the annual cost of the dues for my service personnel association, the said amount to be deducted from the salary due me from the _____ County Board of Education, and in such manner as agreed between the Board and my county school service personnel association. It is understood that this assignment is entirely optional with me, reserving the right to cancel such for any succeeding year before Sept. 1 in writing to the county board of education.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

The sign of a healthy association leader is one who.....

- Breaks down your association's workload into lots of small, manageable tasks and spreads them around so that your members don't get overloaded.
- Does not feel they have to do everything and delegates.
- Puts the spotlight on one or two key issues as opposed to trying to solve every problem.
- Stays in contact with members and potential members.
- Calls a member who is thinking about dropping their membership and asks why.
- Calls and congratulates members when they have a child or grandchild or other noteworthy event.
- Includes potential members in any events, meetings, trainings, surveys.
- Celebrates a victory or success.
- Always explains the benefits of association membership to new employees.

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