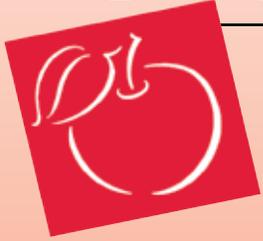


Spring 2022

# COMMUNIQUE

Publication for Members of Central OEA/NEA • Adrienne M. Bowden, President



## The New Year Brings New Hope to Student Loan Borrowers



**Why NEA Member Benefits  
is Dedicated to  
Serving Educators**

**Ohio Bill Would Force  
Curriculums, Materials  
to be Posted Online**

**Central OEA/NEA Local  
Training & Retreat**

**The Educational Service  
Center of Central Ohio**

# Securing Your Financial Future

Adrienne M. Bowden (Pickerington EA), Central President & NEA Director

Spring is a time of renewal. It's a time to clean out the old from the winter and bring in the new for the spring. I hope that each of you can relax and renew over break and strengthen your actions and thoughts to education advocacy. There will be many times throughout this year when we will need your support and action to strengthen public education, our profession and our Association. Stay tuned to our calls of action!

## We need your help to save STRS!

Starting April 1st you will have the ability to vote for the three endorsed candidates to the STRS Board Rob McFee and Jeff Rhodes (for the two contributing member seats) and Rita Walters (one retired teacher member seat). McFee and Rhodes have been on the Board since 2008 and need support to be re-elected. IT is important to have trusted teacher members on the board to continue making the progress to improve the funding of the pension fund. Ballots will arrive in the mail soon and you will have several different ways to vote before the May 2 deadline. If you happen to lose your voting information, you can call 1-866-720-4375 to request your voting details.

## Are you eligible for Student Loan Forgiveness?

As an educator, you may be able to have a part, or all, of your federal student loans, forgiven. This past October I received my letter stating all my loans had been forgiven! It was a great holiday surprise and a great financial relief for my family. The NEA Student Debt Navigator can help you find and apply for money-saving programs. This is a great NEA Member Benefit program helping members find legitimate options to better manage their student loan debt. You can visit:

[www.neamb.com/products/nea-student-debt-navigator](http://www.neamb.com/products/nea-student-debt-navigator) to learn more about Student Loan Forgiveness and refinancing.



This is also an example of how elections matter! In less than one year, the Biden Administration has accomplished more in student loan relief and reform than the past administration did in four years. This last election is having a direct and very real financial impact on the lives of many of our members. By working to cancel student loan debt and improve forgiveness programs, we can work to ensure that everyone who wants to continue their learning can afford to do so. Visit: [www.nea.org/student-debt-support](http://www.nea.org/student-debt-support) to learn about more ways you can be an advocate for student debt and student loan forgiveness reform. This will improve the financial opportunity for all those who want to continue in our great profession.



## Keep in Contact with NEA

If you prefer to get electronic media from NEA, consider opting into the NEA Today e-newsletter at [nea.org/signup](http://nea.org/signup). There is also the NEA Today app. To get more information, [nea.org/neatoday](http://nea.org/neatoday).



## COMMUNIQUE

Volume 49, Number 3 • Spring 2022

Published four times a year as a service of

**CENTRAL OEA/NEA, INC.**

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# Central OEA/NEA Local Training & Retreat

Linna Jordan (Hilliard EA), Membership Development chair

It is time once again to prepare for Central's Local Leader Retreat. Join us **June 13-14, 2022** at the Renaissance Hotel in Westerville as we return to in-person collaboration and training. We will start with training sessions on Monday morning for local presidents, vice presidents, treasurers, and association reps. All are welcome regardless of experience level. You can attend these trainings regardless of whether you will be participating in the retreat. After the morning sessions, the Local Retreat will begin with lunch and a presentation from Central staff. More information on each of the training sessions and the retreat itself can be found below.

**The President Training** (Monday morning) is open to all presidents and/or vice presidents. Even if you've been in office for years this is a great opportunity to receive a refresher on the nuts and bolts of holding office while meeting and interacting with newer officers around Central. We will go through pertinent information about OEA and Central including but not limited to the updated President's Handbook, Central Grants, the importance of FCPE and how to conduct a successful drive, and important information about conducting elections.

**The Association Rep Training** (Monday morning) is open to all representatives, no matter the experience. We will cover the role of being a rep, including but not limited to, communicating with members and administration, advocating for members, Weingarten Rights, knowing the different types of power, knowing your collective bargaining agreement, and representing members in those difficult meetings.

**The VIRTUAL Treasurers Workshop** (Monday morning) will be divided into a 2-hour session for new-ish treasurers and a 1-hour session for experienced treasurers. The novice workshop is intended for treasurers with fewer than five years of experience in that role. The topics will include but not be limited to, membership enrollment, accounting, budgeting, and tax issues. The experienced workshop is intended for treasurers with five or more years of experience in that role. This workshop assumes knowledge of basic membership enrollment and accounting issues. The workshop topics address practical in-depth knowledge in membership and accounting that may be of help to the participants such as membership reconciliation, early enrollment, and other topics. Experienced presidents are invited to attend the Treasurers Workshop with their treasurers.

Even though these sessions are virtual, treasurers are welcome to join us with their team during the retreat.

**The Local Retreat** begins with lunch on Monday and continues through Tuesday. This is focused, uninterrupted time for your local team to work on preparation for bargaining; review of your Constitution & Bylaws; a plan for the coming year; a plan for membership commitment and involvement; or whatever needs doing to make sure your local is organized and ready for the following year. During this time, you can also work with your LRC or request a meeting with other OEA staff.

We look forward to seeing everyone again this summer for the opportunity to network and learn from each other!

## June 13-14, 2022

### Register online



Information and Registration can be found on Central's website:

**[www.centraloearnea.org/teams](http://www.centraloearnea.org/teams)**

Each participating member must register for the conference. There will be separate registrations for the morning training sessions and the retreat.

A block of rooms will be set aside for local teams who live at least 30 miles from the hotel and are attending the retreat. Individual team members are responsible for reserving their rooms. They will be reimbursed for single occupancy based on the following: they must be registered for one of the trainings and/or retreat and live at least 30 miles from the hotel.

# The New Year Brings New Hope to Student Loan Borrowers

**Guy Kendall-Freas, Affiliate Relations Specialist from NEA member Benefits**

The Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program was supposed to be a way to attract people to work for government agencies and non-profit organizations but from the very beginning, it has been fraught with problems. Loose oversight and quality standards and loan servicers who misled borrowers resulted in around 1% of applicants getting approved. And during the last administration, we had Cruella DeVos at the Dep't of Education and she resisted forgiveness even after being ordered to do so by the Courts. Many borrowers have given up.

But there is new hope following sweeping reforms announced on Oct. 6, 2021, including a Temporary Expanded PSLF (TEPSLF) program through which borrowers who can "check all the boxes" needed to qualify for PSLF by 10/31/22 will be able to count all past months in repayment even if they were paying on a loan type otherwise ineligible, or using the wrong repayment plan, or if some payments were late or a few cents off.

Generally, the rules for PSLF are 1) that you work for a qualifying employer (governmental agency or a 501(c)(3) corporation); 2) that you have Federal Direct Loans (other loan types may be consolidated to Federal Direct Consolidation loans); 3) that you are enrolled in an Income-Driven Repayment (IDR) plan; and 4) that you make 120 on-time payments. Under TEPSLF, if borrowers can meet items 1 – 3 above by 10/31/22, they may find relief much faster or in many cases, immediately. But that makes it even more confusing.

Recently, a member who was aware of the criteria for PSLF shared a communication from their loan servicer. In 2017, the member consolidated loans to Direct Loans, enrolled in an income-driven repayment plan, and certified employment with a school system. The loan servicer's message was that after recalculating past payments, it was determined that the borrower's obligation has been met and no future payments are required, yet there was a \$116,000 balance. Since they met items 1 – 3 above, they got credit for the payments made before consolidation. Another member shared an equally confusing communication with a loan servicer. After being turned down twice, they had given up on forgiveness some 4 years ago and consolidated their loans, choosing an extended fixed-rate repayment with a \$440/mo payment. They met 1 & 2 but were in a non-qualifying payment plan.

Their servicer said if they changed to an IDR plan where the payment would be 10% of discretionary income and made 5 payments, they could have the previous 115 payments count. But with a spouse who made a very good income, the 10% of discretionary income would make the payment increase to \$1,210/mo! Essentially, if they can come up with those 5 high payments, the rest of the loans are forgiven or they can continue paying \$440/mo for the next 26 years. For many borrowers, it just doesn't make sense.

And while the Dep't of Ed has created a special site to help ([www.studentaid.gov/pslf](http://www.studentaid.gov/pslf)), NEA Member Benefits and Savi, the partner behind the NEA Student Debt Navigator, can help, too. Members are encouraged to use the Navigator to see if they might qualify for TEPSLF and determine what action is needed. It's as easy as clicking on this link [NEA Student Debt Navigator](#) powered by Savi | NEA Member Benefits ([neamb.com](http://neamb.com)). The tool can identify the fastest way to be done with your student loans. And compliments of the NEA Members Insurance Trust, the first year of premium service is at no cost (normal cost is \$29.95/year).

This information was submitted by Guy Kendall-Freas, the Affiliate Relations Specialist from NEA member Benefits assigned to Ohio, Kentucky, and West Virginia. Guy can be contacted at [gkerndall-freas@neamb.com](mailto:gkerndall-freas@neamb.com) or 888-749-7380 for more information.



# Why NEA Member Benefits is Dedicated to Serving Educators

## NEA Member Benefits

NEA members are at the core of everything we do—from negotiating on your behalf to offering valuable benefits with trusted partners, to supporting your personal needs in each stage of your life and career. Find out more about why you inspire us and how we can help you.

At NEA Member Benefits, serving educators is personal.

You're devoted to improving the lives of public-school students, and we're devoted to helping you in all aspects of your personal life.

You work hard and deserve the very best, and we appreciate you. That's why we advocate for you by negotiating on your behalf, using the power of NEA's 3 million members, to bring you a wide range of best-in-class benefits with carefully selected trusted partners—everything from loans and insurance, to travel and everyday shopping discounts.

We give you the information you need to make smart decisions, and our benefits help do more for you and meet your financial needs at every stage of your life and career. Whether you're buying a home or car, sending a child to college, pursuing your advanced degree, or even planning for retirement, our valuable benefits can help enhance your life.

We're singularly focused on giving you and your family peace of mind, so you can spend more time doing all the things you enjoy.

With NEA Member Benefits on your side, you have people and benefits working hard for you. You can count on us to help support you in your personal life, with carefully selected benefits that can help you throughout your life and your long, rewarding career in education.

Here are some quick ways to find out more about how NEA Member Benefits can help you and how you can start taking advantage of the breadth of benefits available to you here as part of your association membership:

- Watch two short videos about how your local and state union membership affords you perks through NEA Member Benefits and how you can find great benefits [www.neamb.com/pages/nea-member-benefits-overview-video](http://www.neamb.com/pages/nea-member-benefits-overview-video) on our website.
- Find out 5 easy steps you can take [www.neamb.com/pages/top-5-things-to-start-using-your-nea-member-benefits-video](http://www.neamb.com/pages/top-5-things-to-start-using-your-nea-member-benefits-video) to start connecting with us today to get the most out of your membership benefits.

- See how to get easy access to some of our most popular membership benefits

[www.neamb.com/shopping-discounts/get-easy-access-to-our-most-requested-deals-and-discounts](http://www.neamb.com/shopping-discounts/get-easy-access-to-our-most-requested-deals-and-discounts).



### Ease Your Mind with the NEA Mental Health App

Avail yourself of free and low-cost resources to cope with all the stressors daily life may toss your way.

Features of the NEA Mental Health Program:

- On-demand mobile App provides clinically validated tools for managing stress, anxiety, depression and more
- Many App resources are free of charge, and others are discounted for NEA members
- Available tools and services include daily mood tracking, guided meditations and journeys, an anonymous community of peers, and individual coaching and therapy
- Learn more at [www.neamb.com/mentalhealth](http://www.neamb.com/mentalhealth)



### NEA Discount Tickets Program

Ramp up the fun in 2022 with special deals on tickets to theme parks, attractions, shows, sports, ski packages and more adventures nationwide with the new NEA Discount Tickets Program! Find your tickets now at [www.neamb.com/tickets](http://www.neamb.com/tickets)



### NEA Discount Marketplace—Exclusive Offers for Members

The NEA Discount Marketplace, powered by Rakuten, enables members to earn Cash Back when they shop and save on brand-name merchandise from over 2,500 top retailers and online stores. Check out member-exclusive deals at [neamb.com/marketplace](http://neamb.com/marketplace)

# Ensuring Ohio's Maps are Fair

Jarrod Weiss (Marysville EA)

The U.S. Constitution states that every 10 years a census of America's population must be taken and those numbers used to determine the appropriation of representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives. In addition, those numbers are used to determine the population breakdown for the Ohio House and Senate district maps.

However, like much of the country Ohio has had issues over the years drawing state Congressional, Senate, and House maps that unduly favor the political party in charge. Through a process called "Gerrymandering," a concentration of political power has shifted the balance away from the will of the voters and into the hands of partisan bosses.

Ohio voters finally had enough of this political "gerrymandering" and in 2015 voted to change the state's Constitution to create a bipartisan commission charged with the drawing of political maps that included a set of stringent criteria meant to make our state more politically competitive. This group, the Ohio Redistricting Commission (ORD), would be tasked with using census numbers to create competitive political maps that respect the majority political will while protecting the views of the political minority.

Over the past 10 years, Ohio voters have favored Republicans 54% of the time and Democrats 46% of the time. The goal of the ORD would be to create political maps that are compact (not snaking across the state), keeps political entities together (like cities and townships), and maintain the partisan breakdown of Ohio's voters. The commission must have a bipartisan vote to approve 10-year maps and uphold the will of Ohio's voters. In theory, this is exactly what we want, but in practice, it is something else entirely.

The ORD has been working to create new competitive maps which would be in place from 2022 to 2032. However, the political power within the commission has continuously created maps that favor Republicans by nearly two-thirds in both the Senate and the House -- not living up to the spirit of the creation of the bipartisan commission. As of this writing, the Ohio Supreme Court has ruled twice in the past two months that the maps approved by the majority, without the support of the minority, are unconstitutional and have been sent back to the commission.

These maps are vitally important to the health and welfare of our public school system, our teachers, our families, and, most importantly, our students. Political maps that do not advance a competitive balance push the policies of our state to the extremes. Without maps that reflect the will of Ohio's voters, one political party can move forward with an agenda that does not mirror that which the voters of our state want, much to the detriment of public education.

As educators, we must continue to push for competitive political maps that protect the will of all Ohioans, not just those in the political majority -- and a slim majority at that. Competition is good in a free enterprise economy, so there is no doubt that it is good in our politics as well. The will of the people was obvious when they voted to create the Ohio Redistricting Commission and we need to hold our public leaders accountable for living up to their charge of creating competitive and balanced political maps.

Go to [www.ohea.org](http://www.ohea.org) today and take action in supporting fair, competitive, and balanced political maps in Ohio. For our schools, families, teachers, and students we must push for Ohio to have political maps that reflect the will of the people, not just the slim majority.



# Ohio Bill Would Force Curriculums, Materials to be Posted Online

**Molly Wassmuth (Westerville EA)**

House Bill 529, a bill introduced in Ohio would require school districts, charter schools, public colleges (with respect to courses taught to secondary students through the college credit plus program), and private schools to post on its publicly accessible website an internet link or title to all of the following used by each school, course, or classroom: every textbook, a course syllabus that includes a list of all “instructional materials” and activities to be “used for student instruction” in each instructional course, a written summary of each instructional course, the state academic standards related to each instructional course.

Rep. Brett Hillyer (R-Uhrichsville), who introduced the bill in December, says his bill would require schools to post curriculum, reading material, and lesson plans on their websites. But he says it’s not in response to the teaching of what Republicans have called “critical race theory” or divisive racial issues.

Currently, schools are legally required to provide parents with the information if it’s requested.

OEA remains concerned about any additional burdens being thrust upon members during these incredibly stressful times. Ohio Education Association President Scott DiMauro said the bill is unnecessary and creates hardship for teachers. “As educators, we know that collaboration with parents is critically important. I don’t think we need a piece of legislation like this to continue encouraging collaboration between parents and educators,” DiMauro said. “The impact of this is another example of what frustrates our members. It’s another thing that feels like big government overreach that micromanages the things that are done in schools. It’s going to take so much time, and it seems to actually encourage distrust. It’s going to have a negative impact on people who are already overwhelmed.”

This Bill has been referred to the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee. Members of this committee are Adam Bird Vice-chair, Gary Click, Sarah Fowler, Catherine Ingram, Don Jones, Kyle Koehler, Mary Lightbody, Susan Manchester, Gayle L. Manning Chair, Joseph A. Miller III., Gail Pavliga, Tracy Richardson, Phil Robinson Ranking member, D.J. Swearingen and Lisa Sobecki.

State representatives contact information may be found here: [www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative](http://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative)

# The Educational Service Center of Central Ohio

**Barry Alcock (OEA-R), Member, ESC Governing Board**

In November 2022, with the strong assistance of Central OEA and OEA, I was elected to serve as a member of the Governing Board of the Educational Service Center of Central Ohio. There are fifty-one ESCs across the state, and all but one of the 615 school districts in Ohio belong to an area ESC. ESCs are school districts themselves under state law and exist largely to provide solutions to member school districts, mostly through helping reduce duplication of services, and providing technical assistance and support functions, often through inter-district assistance. I have attended four Board meetings, although only one as an official member, having been sworn in on January 14, 2022. At each meeting, the Board is asked to approve various contracts for dozens of Intervention Specialists, Occupational Therapists, Speech Therapists, and other educational and teacher aides who will serve in districts across Franklin and Delaware Counties.

There have been other actions of note. I will mention two here, with more to come in succeeding issues. Many smaller districts demonstrate a real need for, among other positions, more school psychologists to serve growing populations of students, but without the financial reserves to hire additional full-time persons. To that end, the ESC is funding stipends for four students enrolled in the graduate program in school psychology at OSU. Each student will spend twenty hours per week serving in particular districts, dividing time among the districts, for the stipend, and when s/he completes the degree, each will serve those particular districts as a school psychologist for a number of years. Each will serve in more than one district, thus sharing resources in ways that benefit both students and districts.

The ESC will actively participate in the initiative “Success By Third Grade.” A recent study indicates that scores in the Third Grade Reading Assessment dropped for each district in the ESC area, with the greatest drops in the ten districts with the greatest numbers of financially needy students. To that end, the ESC will commit thousands of dollars and efforts to provide literacy programming not in the schools themselves, where many interventions have already been implemented, but in the actual neighborhoods, housing developments, and centers where the greatest concentration of needy students live. This will be part of the ongoing third-grade initiative over the next dozen years being undertaken in Franklin County.

# COMMUNIQUE

Spring 2022



**THANK YOU**

**for being a member of  
Central OEA/NEA**

You are the true expert in education!

You deserve a voice  
in how best to educate our students.

We are here to support you.

Adrienne & Jim,  
Central Leadership



## Association Benefits

NEA Micro-Credentials  
Loan forgiveness Information  
Springtime Discounts

## Upcoming Events

|            |                           |
|------------|---------------------------|
| Apr 22     | RA                        |
| May 7      | OEA RA                    |
| June 13    | Treasurers workshop       |
| June 13    | Local Leader Training     |
| June 13    | Building Rep Training     |
| June 13-14 | Local Association Retreat |