



The Apple Corps

A publication of KNEA-Retired and KNEA



February 2026

President's Perspective



Dear KNEA Retired members,

As I write this, I am sitting by the window looking at pristine white snow and a bevy of cardinals and finches at the birdfeeder. It is a peaceful moment, and one very needed in today's turbulent world. I invite you to find some tranquil moments every day, as we continue our journey to support democracy and public education.

There have been many retirees helping in the mission of KNEA. I would like to thank those of you who have attended legislative hearings and who are participating in the KNEA initiative "At the Table" at the Capitol on Tuesdays. Others of you are standing up for your beliefs by relentlessly calling your state and national representatives and senators. Others are working with coalition partners on issues important to retired members such as a KPERS COLA, which we have not had for 29 years. Our voices need to be heard!

I urge you to read "Under the Dome," a weekly publication from Timothy R. Graham, KNEA Government Relations Director and our retired staff liaison, and Ann Marie Bush, Communications and Public Relations Director. You should be automatically receiving it via e-mail or find it on the web at ksutd.org. Please stay informed on bills which need our attention.

At the end of February, Timothy R. Graham, Mary Masters and I will be attending the annual Retired Conference in Phoenix, Arizona, which should be an energizing experience. We plan to bring back valuable information from retired members across the country. The theme of the conference is "Resilience. Respect. Power. Saving Public Education and Our Democracy. NEA-Retired, a Lifetime Commitment."

On that note, I encourage you to ask your KNEA retired friends to join KNEA-Retired, if they haven't already. Membership numbers are critical to the progress we can make and to our funding. If you need assistance, please reach out to me! As always, thank you for all you do to support public education!

Stay warm and continue to persevere! Happy Valentine's Day!

Best regards,
Sherry Turnbull, KNEA-R President
Sherry.Turnbull@knea.org

KNEA'S Advocacy Retreat

by Judy Johnson

"Ready or not, here we come!" Immediately after KNEA's Advocacy Day on Jan. 10, the 2026 Kansas State Legislative session kicked off on Jan. 12th. The previous Saturday, KNEA leaders from across the state, including retired representatives, listened and learned, discussed issues our public-school staff, students and parents are experiencing, and planned for the upcoming months' activism. Are we ready? Yes, yes, yes! And we're not playing games.



Timothy R. Graham, KNEA's Director of Government Relations and Legislative Advocacy, and Robin M. Bonsall, Administrative Assistant, collaborated with Ann Bush, Director of Communications and Public Relations, Makenzie Cochran-Dockerty, Communications and Teaching and Learning Assistant, and Anna Moon Bradley, Director of Teaching and Learning, for months to develop a vibrant and cohesive plan of action to use KNEA's resources and member engagement effectively.



After receiving welcomes from KNEA President Sherri Schwanz, Executive Director Dr. David Fernkopf and Rob Hill, an NEA Organizational Specialist, attendees participated in a "Gallery Walk" of six concise informational sessions. The topics included: State Board of Education Elections and Advocacy; The Current Legislative Environment; What is "At the Table" (i.e. an overview of how members can participate during the session); Coalitions & Partnership Power, our collective action; 2026 Elections: What's at Stake for Kansas; and Under the Dome 2.0, the new information-packed-yet-easy-to-navigate weekly legislative summary. Each session was structured around the same points: Why this matters for educators; What to pay attention to; and Possible discussion questions.

A working lunch included information from representatives from the Kansas Values Institute,

ACLU of Kansas and Mission Control, Inc. regarding the campaign for a 2026 Kansas constitutional amendment (SCR 1611) to replace the current merit-based selection of Supreme Court justices with partisan popular elections. The vote on this issue is set for the Aug. 4, 2026 primary. Be watching for more information about this important topic.



NEA and KNEA have a rich history of inviting candidates from both parties to speak at their events. The 2026 Advocacy Day did not disappoint. Attendees had the opportunity to hear from and ask questions of four candidates who accepted the invitation to participate. Ethan Corsan (D), Vicki Schmidt (R), and Cindy Holscher (D) are gubernatorial candidates. Chris Mann (D) is an Attorney General candidate. All four spoke of the education they received in public schools. They answered questions — some easy, some tough — from those in attendance. Education funding, especially Special Education, was a hot topic for the gubernatorial candidates.

In this edition of Apple Corps, you will read of other events and varying opportunities to get involved — from being at the Capitol live and in person to calling or writing your legislators. We retirees have lived through so many changes. Yet, in many ways, our struggles seem to pale in comparison to what our younger colleagues and their students are facing. Are we willing to say "Ready or not, here I come!?" And are we ready to demand that our elected officials don't play hide-and-seek?

KNEA-RA to be held April 11-12

The annual Representative Assembly (RA) will be at the Hyatt Regency in Wichita from April 11-12. Your elected retired delegates are Donna Adams-Zimmerman, George Blume (alternate for Susan Reusser), Shelia Blume, Alyce Edwards, John Hope, Amy Jensen, Judy Johnson and Kathy Meyer. They will be joined by President Sherry Turnbull and BOD representative Ruthe Goff. Once again, we give our thanks to Ogden Financial, which will host a luncheon for those at the KNEA-RA planning to retire within a few years.

Delegates have been busy attending UniServ District Representative Assemblies (UDRA) to learn about upcoming business at the KNEA-RA. Stay tuned for more information!

Retired Representative Update



By Ruthe Goff

Saturday, Jan. 10, 2026, I attended the KNEA Advocacy Retreat. What an informative day! You should have received your Under the Dome email. In that email you will find an article about the retreat with ways to get involved. It was good to see several retirees in attendance. We were well represented!

After the Advocacy Retreat, KNEA Board met for a special meeting. The focus was to review information from the Kansas NEA UniServ Committee; consider the 2026-2027 Operational Plan and Budget from the Budget and Audit Committee; review an update of the Strategic Planning Committee; and review Reading Circle Guidelines. Preparation for the Kansas NEA Representative Assembly and UDRA's before the assembly was also discussed.

Board of Directors Report Jan. 10, 2026

- KNEA BOD recommended sending the KNEA UniServ Review Report to the UDRA's.
- KNEA BOD recommended support for the 2026-2027 Operational Plan and Budget Proposal.
- KNEA BOD made recommendations to the Reading Circle Policy.

Board of Directors Report Dec. 6, 2025

Highlights of the meeting:

- The Budget Committee gave a detailed presentation of the KNEA Operational Plan and Proposed Budget for 2026-2027. The process for developing this plan began in September. The presentations will be made at the UDRA Sectionals. The Board will make a recommendation at the Jan. 10, 2026 Special KNEA Board meeting. The Board is waiting on the completion of the UniServ Review Committee Report. This is the same day as the KNEA Advocacy Retreat and will take place after the Advocacy meeting. This was an Open Budget Hearing for members and staff.
- A presentation by Security Benefit and Ogden Financial was given by their representatives.
- Items in the Consent Agenda were approved by the board.
- KNEA voted to approve the tentative agreement with KSO. This will now go to the UniServ Chairs and Vice Chairs (depending on each UniServ's Bylaws) for a vote.
- Financial Reports from September and October 2025 were reviewed.
- The proposed legislative platform was presented. Advocacy Retreat planned for Jan. 10, 2026.
- KNEA Policy statements on a variety of items were reviewed and passed.
- Kansas NEA Communication Update was shared.
- Procedures and information about the 2026 Kansas NEA Representative Assembly was shared. Delegates must opt out of being "Green" to receive paper copies in advance of the RA. There will not be any internet access on the floor or meeting rooms. All documents will have to be downloaded on delegate devices. There will be two screens on the floor to view information.

- A review of the proposed Reading Circle Policy was shared. Recommendations from the board were made.
- Proposed Amendments 2025 Constitution #2 was supported by the Board.
- Proposed Amendments 2025 Constitution #6 was supported by the Board; the vote was not unanimous.
- Resolutions Proposed to the 2026 Kansas NEA Representative Assembly were reviewed. No recommendation by the Board at this time.
- Reports were shared by NEA Board of Directors, KNEA Retired Board Representative and Higher Education Representative.
- A list of KNEA Statewide Election Candidates was shared.

As always, reach out to me with questions or concerns. Thank you for being a retired member!

As always, for more details, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, Ruthe Goff, KNEA-Retired Board Representative at Ruthe.goff.forkansas@gmail.com.

Member Spotlight

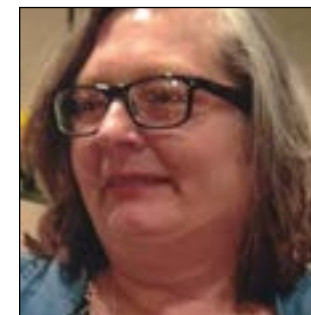


Joyce Tallman

My name is Joyce Tallman. I have bachelor's and master's degrees from The University of Kansas. I have taught in Basehor School District, Baldwin USD 348 and Lawrence USD 497. I have belonged to KNEA since I worked in Baldwin starting in 1988.

I served as President of the Baldwin Education Association and secretary of Prairie Fire Uniserv. In 2022, I became a member of the Educational Support Personnel of KNEA.

I serve on Coordinating Council from Lawrence and am retired. I am a bowler and enjoy photography. My oldest grandchild is following grandma's footsteps by becoming a teacher and belongs to KNEA through Fort Hays State University.



Alicia Rues

I currently serve as the Treasurer for Capital Area Retired Teachers (CARE) and also serve on the KNEA-Retired Coordinating Council.

My hobby is reading — especially hardboiled mysteries, noir films, listening to audio books, or watching PBS, BritBox, or Acorn TV.

Both of my parents were teachers — Mom, music teacher, and Dad, science, PE, and Basketball coach. That's how they met in the late 1940s. It was in my blood to be a teacher.

I love breakfast and/or brunch at First Watch in Topeka.

Chase away the winter blahs

We asked some of our members: How do you chase away the winter blahs?

"I'm inside staying warm and **READING**. There is nothing better than getting lost in a good book (or several books)." — Debi Ellis, Prairie Grass President

"I'm making old-fashioned chicken and noodles that I'll serve over mashed potatoes. Just like the lunch ladies of yesterday used to make. Oh, and there will be a cinnamon roll, too." — Scott Pittman, Heartland Retired President

"Staying indoors!" — Jenny Prichard, CARE Retired President

"Always enjoy the sunshine days of winter. Never stay in the house more than two days. Connect with the world outside!" — George Blume, KNEA-RA Delegate & Coordinating Council

Resolutions

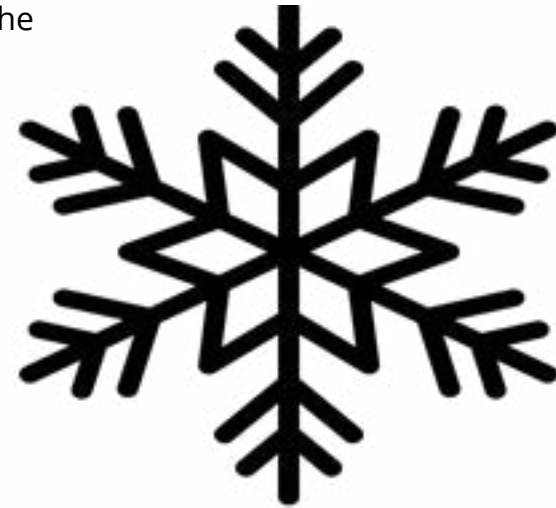
What is the KNEA Resolutions Committee?

by Shelia Blume
KNEA-Retired Representative to Resolutions Committee

If you have had the privilege of being elected as a delegate to the Representative Assembly (RA), you have seen a thick book of resolutions, also known as KNEA's belief statements. There are changes in wording, context, or new resolutions that are voted upon yearly at the KNEA-RA. That book is the work of the Resolutions Committee. It is the job of the Resolutions Committee to make sure it is clean and updated with the work of the association and best practices. The committee meets once a year in person and spends from eight to 10 hours looking at every word and phrase to make sure it still reflects the beliefs of KNEA. The committee meets by Zoom to complete the final draft for the RA.

The resolutions booklet is a living document. It changes with the changes in best practices and reflects what KNEA believes. It contains our ideals for a perfect educational world and is used by many to explain that world to others outside our profession.

There is a retired position on this committee, which is filled each year by a delegate at the RA.



Coordinating Council

UPCOMING KNEA-R COORDINATING COUNCIL: The next meeting will be via ZOOM at 9 a.m. Feb. 10. Please look for an email with the agenda and ZOOM invitation from President Sherry Turnbull. Lots of business and news to share!

Reading Circle

KNEA's Reading Circle

by Ruthe Goff

KNEA Reading Circle met recently. More than 500 books were read during the past few months and the previous 24 hours before the meeting. Recommended books received KNEA Stamp and Gold seal. Reading Circle members also wrote reviews for their top 10 books and up to 50 more at each level. The four levels are Primary, Intermediate, Junior and Senior High. Books will now be shared at the UniSerts as well at the Representative Assembly this spring. As your KNEA Board Retired Representative, I have the privilege of being on this committee. Retired member Ethel A. Edwards also served on this committee. It is just one way our members are involved above and beyond the classroom, even retirees!



Local Chapter News



Sunflower East Retirees met Jan. 22. A friendly debate was held on candidates for governor, as well as recommending voting NO on the Constitutional amendment concerning judges in August. The current process of appointing Kansas judges works. It also was shared that, for now, redistricting in Kansas will not occur. A good source for Legislative Coffees is info@jocolib.com. These retirees like to stay informed!



Prairie Grass Retired Educators met in December at Roma's Italian Restaurant in Hutchinson. It was our annual Christmas party and ornament/decoration exchange. Great food and wonderful conversations were shared.



Heartland Retired Educators met Jan. 22 to hear from our COLA Squad: Shelley Dunham, Chris Huntsman and Ruthe Goff. They asked members to stay informed by reading KNEA's Under the Dome and www.ksretirees.org.

Local Chapter News



Dec. 11, six CARE members journeyed to St. Marys and toured the Immaculata with brochures for a self-guided tour. It is open daily and is a beautiful, meditative space. Our guide shared the history of the Jesuit priests in the early days of Kansas and the start of the College of St Marys.



Sunflower West members traveled in the fog to Atchison to visit the Amelia Earhart Hangar Museum on Nov. 20. The museum has many interesting interactive exhibits and the last Lockheed Electra 10-E that is identical to the plane Earhart flew on her last flight. After the museum, the group had lunch at Lopez de Mexico in downtown Atchison.

Elections

Upcoming NEA Delegate Elections

You will soon receive an email with a link to vote in the upcoming election for our delegates to attend the NEA Retired Annual Meeting (RAM) and the NEA-RA in Denver this coming July. Please remember to vote between Feb. 15—March 31. KNEA-Retired will elect two delegates to attend these important national meetings. Sherry Turnbull also will attend as Retired President.



Under the Dome and At The Table

Under the Dome (kstud.org) provides weekly updates, podcasts, a testimony database, and additional information about the 2026 Kansas legislative session. KNEA Government Relations is currently tracking 190 bills, and is supporting our members at the statehouse as they come to welcome legislators, listen, and give testimony. Legislative Alerts also may be posted through Under the Dome, urging members to contact their Kansas Senator and/or Representative when critical legislation is coming to the floor for consideration.



Mary Masters and Ethel Edwards at the KNEA ambassador table at the Statehouse, welcoming legislators and others.

If you're not receiving the Under the Dome updates via email, please call (785) 242-8271 and make sure your contact info is up-to-date. Ask for Tracy, KNEA's Membership Specialist to verify your email address.

In the Under the Dome email, look for "At the Table" to advocate in person at the Capitol. Signing up and "Tabling" is easy and fun. At the KNEA Table, members and staff greet visitors and legislators with information about our KNEA Advocacy. Volunteers are needed on Feb. 10, 12, 17 and 24; and March 3, 10, 17 and 24.

Here's the link to sign up: <https://form.jotform.com/KNEAgovernance/2026-at-the-table---events-w-ksleg>.

Here's the website to volunteer for KCPR Tables at the Statehouse: <https://www.ksretirees.org/volunteer.html>.

Donate to KPAC and NEA-PAC

Another way to help advocate for public schools legislation and to support pro-public education candidates is to donate to KPAC and NEA PAC. KPAC is led by KPAC Chair Sherri Schwanz and KPAC Vice-Chair Kimberly Howard. KPAC Commissioners are appointed across Kansas UniServ Districts, including representatives from KNEA-R, KNEA Aspiring Educators, and two KNEA Board of Directors liaisons. Each KPAC Commissioner is an active KNEA member and is responsible for carrying out their assigned duties. These duties include assembling teams to conduct interviews with candidates to identify pro-public education potential office holders.

You will find a link to sign up to donate to KPAC in your Under the Dome and for NEA PAC in educationvotes.nea.org. It's easy to do monthly by bank electronic fund transfer (EFT).

As always questions are welcomed!

Susan Reusser, KNEA-Retired KPAC
Ruthe Goff, KNEA Board Retired Representative

Deadline Approaching: The deadline to nominate a retired member who has contributed time, leadership, and service for the KNEA-Retired Pam Johnson Taverner Distinguished Service Award is March 1. Nominations must be on the proper form. If you need one, please contact Robin.Bonsall@knea.org and she will email it.

Please remember you can donate to the NEA-Retired Jack Kinnaman Scholarship for Aspiring Educators at any time! Go to www.donatekinnaman.com. Thank you!

The next Pre-Retired seminar for active members planning to retire in the next few years will be held by ZOOM at 9 a.m. Feb. 14 on KPERS I and II. Members will receive an invitation to sign-up for the ZOOM. Thanks to KNEA-R member Tom Schwartz for arranging the presenters and to President Sherry Turnbull for hosting the ZOOM. You can register until Feb. 12 at <https://form.jotform.com/260196093418157>.



Save the Date: March 17, 2026, for the KNEA "Lucky to Be in Kansas" Public Education Rally in Topeka at the Capitol. Details soon! Watch your email!

Please remember to create/update your KPERS account. The website is KSPERS.org. After you create your account, you can print your 1099 statement, see exactly what date your check will be deposited each month, change beneficiaries, etc.

Thank you to our own Chris Huntsman for serving on the KPERS Board of Trustees!



If you have any information you would like to share for the Apple Corps, please contact KNEA-R Communications Chair Shelia Blume at booklady13492@gmail.com.

Thanks to Makenzie Cochran-Dockerty, KNEA Communications Assistant, for helping design our newsletter! Thanks to Ann Marie Bush, KNEA Communications Director, for helping send our retired members our newsletter.

