

# *UEA Action*

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## **Front Page**

*UEA expects to see more tuition tax credit bills*

## ***2005 Legislature: More questions than answers***

As the state of Utah readies itself to inaugurate a new governor, it faces an unusual mix of change and uncertainty. The UEA Lobby Team is as anxious as anyone to learn how the new Huntsman Administration intends to interact with the newly-elected Utah Legislature – also under new leadership – to solve long-standing funding problems in a brand new location.

Here's what the Utah Education Association knows at this point in time:

### **Funding**

State revenue collections are currently running about 7 percent above projections, indicating that Utah's struggling economy of the past three years is finally on the road to recovery. This should provide the state with a much-needed surplus assuming the trend holds. Current revenues have generated a mid-fiscal year surplus of about \$70 million, and, even if the growth rate slows, projections indicate a surplus of more than \$100 million could be available for help in funding next year's education budget.

Anticipated growth in new students statewide is expected to be somewhere in the neighborhood of 10,000. While this represents an overall increase of about 2 percent, the growth will not be distributed evenly. Ogden, Salt Lake, Granite, and Logan will actually experience decreases of 1 to 2 percent, while districts in Utah and Tooele counties will have to cope with increases ranging from 3 to 5 percent. Funding new growth alone could cost upwards of \$35 million.

Public education employees have gone without significant cost-of-living increases over the past few years. In most instances, these increases have not kept pace with inflation. As measured by the most recent CPI index, inflation is currently running at 2.5 percent. Add to that a reasonable "catch-up" factor for the lost ground of the past few years and one can make a strong case for a WPU increase of at least 5 percent.

### **Tuition Tax Credits and Vouchers**

As has been the case over the past four years, tuition tax credits (TTCs) and vouchers will undoubtedly receive far more attention and legislative focus than they deserve. While Utahns see public education as a top priority, (*Utah Foundation Report of March, 2004*), they rank tuition tax credits and school choice at the bottom of the issues within public education — far behind funding, teacher quality, teacher pay, class size, and curriculum. And yet for each of the last few

years, lobbyists for tuition tax credits and vouchers, funded by well-heeled, out-of-state organizations, have succeeded in convincing legislators to support their cause. (*See story below.*)

In 2005, we can expect to see a tuition tax credit bill similar to the one carried last year by Representative Jim Ferrin, (*R-Orem*). We also expect alternative TTC bills that will contain some accountability measures and provisions, such as “hold harmless” clauses, in an attempt to protect public schools against a loss of funding.

While these alternatives may be preferable to a full-blown TTC bill, UEA will continue to fight against any effort to provide government subsidies to private businesses. What we will not have this year, however, is a governor poised to veto such a bill. That, together with a Utah State University report commissioned by the Legislature suggesting tax credits might, under certain conditions, actually save the state money, will not make the battle any easier to fight.

A number of other researchers and economists, however, are already questioning the assumptions, methodology and results of the USU report. As was the case last year, we believe the tiresome debate over tuition tax credits will be decided in the House where the margin will be slim. If every UEA member were to call or write his or her legislator urging opposition to tax credits and vouchers for private schools, the UEA Lobby Team’s task would be made much easier.

### **How to Lobby**

**The other dynamic which will be much different this year involves the temporary housing of the Legislature while the Capitol undergoes a four-year renovation. The public gallery area will be very limited, so following the floor debate will be more difficult. The UEA will provide its members with the e-mail addresses and phone numbers of all legislators in an effort facilitate communication from home. (*See the UEA website – Working for You-Politics and Legislation.*)**

**Members who want to stay informed during the legislative session should:**

- **Read the *Capitol Bulletin*. New editions are published each Friday and can be found on the UEA website at [www.utea.org](http://www.utea.org).**
- **Visit the UEA website, *Working for You-Politics and Legislation*. You’ll find voting records, a roster of legislators, and the latest on pending legislation.**
- **Attend legislative briefings. Meetings will be held in the new Capitol West Building, Room 130, each Friday at noon, beginning January 28, 2005. Please call the UEA office, 800-594-8996, to confirm times and locations.**

## **Gov. Walker announces education budget**

On December 10, Utah Governor Olene Walker announced her fiscal year 2006 budget recommendations, emphasizing fiscal prudence, quality education, and quality of life.

To maintain quality education, the governor is recommending a 5 percent increase in the Weighted Pupil Unit (WPU), or \$78.6 million. She is also recommending \$33.8 million to cover student enrollment growth and \$16 million for a Performance Plus Math Program. In addition, the governor’s proposal calls for \$6.5 million for the Utah Basic Skills and Competency Test (UBSCT) to provide remediation training for all tenth-grade students who don’t pass this test, which is needed to graduate from high school.

“We have had to tighten our belts the past few years and prioritize. We have established strong priorities in education, and we have focused on reserve funds, economic development, and quality of life. I hope the Legislature will continue to work to meet these priorities,” Walker said.

# ***Understanding Tuition Tax Credits***

***[Editor's Note: The 2005 Utah Legislature is poised to introduce tuition tax credit legislation. The National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) have jointly researched the growing threat of tax credit vouchers (or tuition tax credits as they are referred to in Utah). Excerpts from their publication, "Tool Kit for Fighting Tax Credit Vouchers," are included in this article in an effort to better inform UEA members about the history and danger of tuition tax credit schemes.]***

The current push for tax credit vouchers is best understood in the broader context of the ongoing attacks on public education. For the last quarter century, a variety of organizations and individuals have sought to divert public tax dollars to private schools.

The effort began as a straightforward, if misguided, attempt by religious groups to win some form of subsidy for sectarian schools, and was subsequently embraced by a number of groups intent on reducing the role of government.

Today, proposals to aide private schools persist in a variety of forms. Most frequently, they surface as school voucher proposals, under which public dollars that might otherwise be spent sustaining cash-strapped public schools are diverted instead to be spent on tuition for a very small percentage of students attending private, often religious, schools.

But despite years of campaigning and litigating, voucher proponents have been unable to win widespread popular support for their plan; indeed, it has been defeated every time it has been put before the voters in the form of a referendum or initiative. In fact, the public appears to be tiring of the proposal. The 2003 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll found that 60 percent of the public opposes "allowing students and parents to choose a private school to attend at public expense," up 10 percentage points over the 2002 poll.

As an alternative, the movement has developed a hybrid proposal: tax credit vouchers. Under these plans, government dollars would reach private schools without the government having to write the check. Rather, individual or corporate taxpayers would be granted a tax credit – not merely a deduction, but a dollar-for-dollar credit – for money spent on tuition at private schools.

While these proposals do not involve a check from the government, they have the same practical effect as vouchers: funds that could otherwise be spent on public schools are spent instead on private ones. It matters little whether tax dollars go through the state's accounts or not, before ending up in private schools instead of public ones. Whatever the particular route of the monies, it is their destination that matters. In the end, public schools are denied funds they need to educate the 90 percent of children who attend them, so that a small percentage of students, generally from well-to-do families, can instead have a state-subsidized education at a private school.

In a particular disingenuous bit of public relations wizardry, proponents pitch their tax credit voucher scheme using the same argument they presented in traditional voucher battles: that the proposal will largely benefit poor families, who would otherwise be unable to afford private school tuition. In reality, this assertion has been even less true for tax credit vouchers than for "plain vanilla" vouchers: in the handful of states where tax credit vouchers have been implemented, credits have gone overwhelmingly to wealthier families already able to afford tuition bills. Tax credit vouchers have proved themselves to be vouchers for the wealthy.

In a further attempt to make the proposals politically palatable, proponents have begun to include provisions designed to appeal to the parents of children in public schools. Under these

proposals, parents would be able to claim tax credits for certain – actually very few – expenses associated with their children’s attendance at public schools, such as school supplies or calculators. These provisions are both an afterthought and a fig leaf. The lion’s share of the tax break would go to parents sending their children to private schools – and indeed, that is the real purpose of such proposals to begin with. The inclusion of provisions aimed at public school parents is more about winning adoption for the proposals than about making the proposals equitable.

Deadline for filing Declaration of Candidacy forms is January 10, 2005

## **UEA Board members, NEA RA delegates to be elected in 2005**

The following Utah Education Association offices will be subject to election in 2005:

- Color Country Director on the UEA Board of Directors\* (One-year term)
- Color Country NEA RA Successor Delegate (One-year term)
- Granite Director on the UEA Board of Directors (Three-year term)
- Granite NEA RA Successor Delegate (Three-year term)
- Jordan Director on the UEA Board of Directors (Three-year term)
- Jordan NEA RA Successor Delegate (Three-year term)
- Wasatch Director on the UEA Board of Directors\* (One-year term)
- NEA State Director on the UEA Board of Directors (Three-year term)
- Ethnic Minority Director on the UEA Board of Directors (Three-year term)

*\*Vacated seat to fill unexpired term.*

There will also be a vote of the UEA membership for Constitutional amendments in the general election as per the House of Delegates:

■ The delegate apportionment for the House of Delegates to include UniServ representation (limited to two delegates) and that each delegate is entitled to only one vote.

■ Language to clarify which items require a two-thirds vote of the House of Delegates in order to be considered. Amendments to the legislative platform, priorities and support positions, amendments to the budget and New Business items which are new, not having been previously submitted by the stated deadlines, will require two-thirds. Motions making amendments to legislative budget or New Business items previously submitted by the stated deadlines will not be subject to two-thirds vote for consideration.

## **Thoughts & Opinions**

### **We are an important voice**

*By UEA President Pat Rusk*

***[Editor's Note: UEA President Pat Rusk submitted the following letter to the Deseret Morning News in response to an editorial by an individual who aligns himself with the Parents for Choice Political Action Committee.]***

So, Royce Van Tassell wants everyone to celebrate the success of the Voluntary Contributions Act. (*Deseret Morning News* editorial — Friday, Nov. 5, 2004) Interesting, but not surprising. He personally aligns himself with the Parents for Choice PAC – which received nearly \$250,000 from wealthy out-of-state donors, along with money from a few other individuals contributing as much as \$50,000 each to push their pro-voucher agenda – and yet he believes that the Utah Education Association should be stifled in its ability to speak up for thousands of Utah teachers and students.

### **U-PAC Accepts Contributions from Members, not Out-Of-State Donors**

Here's something you should know. The UEA Political Action Committee (U-PAC) accepts contributions primarily from our members, all of whom are teachers in public schools. The biggest contributors give \$100 a year, but the average contribution is far less. Most give up about a dollar each month in the hope of having a common voice to speak up for their profession and their students. They did this for decades by having that amount taken out of their monthly paycheck voluntarily, like they do for United Way or insurance premiums. After all, they earned the money and should be allowed to decide where it goes. Is that so sinister? It hardly compares to the huge contributions that corporations and wealthy individuals make to their favorite PAC. Yet, Mr. Van Tassell applauds a bill (Voluntary Contributions Act) that made giving that dollar a month more difficult. It seems wrong to him that 80 percent of our contributions came from those small monthly deductions of hundreds of Utah teachers, but just fine that 70 percent of the Parents for Choice PAC monies came from out-of-state organizations pushing their agenda in Utah.

And here's something else you might not know. U-PAC does not give up front, cash contributions to candidates. We offer a line of credit. That means we will reimburse campaign expenses to a given limit, but NO ONE has any of our teachers' hard-earned dollars sitting in their own "war chest" after the election. We are careful about how we spend those dollars and that's why we have a balance from which to draw when needed.

Mr. Van Tassell compares our contributions to other political action committees, but not to the corporations and individuals who give more in a single contribution than any teacher could contribute in a lifetime. He also doesn't mention that the Parents for Choice PAC spent significantly more than the UEA spent in this last election. But, I guess that's okay since their huge contributions weren't given through payroll deduction.

### **Teachers in this State are NOT the Enemies**

When will citizens realize that teachers in this state are NOT the enemy; nor is the organization representing them? We are the dedicated heroes of the next and future generations and we believe that we are an important voice in the debate on public schools. Celebrate? I don't think so. We should all worry. If we celebrate the loss of one collective voice, whose will be next? Remember, if you want dominance over a citizenry, you must first silence the teachers who could educate them.

# ***'It's good for both'***

***By UEA Vice President Kimilee Campbell***

Big words fascinate my elementary students. Not long ago, several students were huddled around a dictionary discussing the meaning of the word symbiotic. With the succinct wisdom of a ten-year-old, one of them announced, "It means it's good for both." Short, simple, and to the point.

To educators, the relationship between working conditions and student achievement is just that simple. What is good for one is good for the other. Lower class size is not merely a function of workload, it means more individualized attention for students which, in turn, improves student achievement and students' attitudes toward school. Adequate textbooks and supplies make our jobs doable and enhance student learning. Up-to-date technology is a must for both students and educators to succeed in an information age. Appealing salaries help recruit and retain skilled educators, and research points to a skilled educator as the most important variable to school success.

So how does student success affect educators' working conditions? Education is a people profession. We choose to be educators because we want to make a difference in students' lives. Many beginning and veteran educators leave the profession because they feel unsuccessful in meeting the needs of their students. Teaching is complex and demanding work even without the challenges of tough working conditions. Student successes, both small and large, are at the heart of why we teach and, sadly, sometimes at the heart of why we don't teach.

As we enter another season of lobbying and bargaining, it's almost a given that some will attack our efforts as self-serving. We know better. Caring about students and caring about working conditions are not mutually exclusive. In fact, just the opposite is true. It is a real symbiotic relationship. Simply put, "It's good for both."

## **Support the UEA Children at Risk Foundation**

***By NEA Director Jim Martin***

By the time you read this, the tinsel and lights may have been stored away for another year. New Year's resolutions may have been made, and Weight Watchers likely will be crowded with new inductees determined to lose those unwanted holiday pounds. I hope you got everything you asked for, and that your family spent quality time together, eating, drinking, and of course, being merry.

Once the holidays have passed, it is important to realize that the giving season should continue. Quality causes, such as those associated with the UEA Children at Risk Foundation, do not come and go with turkey, holly, and mistletoe. While true that many people dig deep to help those less fortunate during the holiday season, this same spirit of giving runs the risk of getting lost the other 11 months of the year. Christmas carols may fade, but the needs of many do not.

The UEA Children at Risk Foundation was organized by former UEA President Lily Eskelsen, who now serves as secretary-treasurer of the National Education Association. The Foundation is designed to provide scholarships, grants, and assistance to Utah students and teachers. Recently, the Foundation awarded several grants to teachers across the state who work with wonderful children and families, the needs of which may require additional creativity,

attention, and dedication. The Foundation continues through the generous donations of UEA members and corporate sponsors.

As you make plans for 2005, please consider a donation to the UEA Children at Risk Foundation. (*Call 800-594-8996 for more information.*) You may find that by doing so, by stretching your holiday generosity out for a full year, fewer charities will need to “beg” for support during the holidays.

## **Professional Development**

*Twenty-four Utah teachers are certified*

# **U.S. classrooms gain more than 8,000 National Board Certified Teachers in 2004**

ARLINGTON, VA – The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards® (NBPTS) has announced that 8,056 teachers earned their profession’s top honor this year by achieving National Board Certification®, an increase that promises to improve student learning in classrooms throughout the country. The total number of teachers certified by NBPTS now stands at 40,200. Twenty-four Utah educators achieved National Board Certification, bringing the state’s total to 79.

National Board Certification is the highest credential in the teaching profession. A voluntary process established by NBPTS, certification is achieved through a rigorous performance-based assessment that takes between one and three years to complete and measures what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do.

“With teacher quality serving as the benchmark in determining a student’s academic success, the National Board congratulates all teachers who went through the rigorous National Board Certification process,” said former Georgia Gov. Roy E. Barnes, chair of the NBPTS Board of Directors. “This announcement is especially significant with more and more solid research confirming that teachers who earn this distinction represent the gold standard in teaching and are among the most effective teachers in our classrooms today.”

“National Board Certification is one of the most significant education reforms in recent years, and it has provided a way for policy makers to recognize and reward accomplished teaching,” said Rep. Steny Hoyer, *D-Md.*, minority whip of the U.S. House of Representatives and senior member of the House Appropriations Committee.

### **Utah National Board Certified Teachers — 2004**

Sarah Kerley-Weeks, Mt. Logan Middle School, Logan  
Ann-Marie Proctor, Butler Middle School, Jordan  
Carolyn Gough, Jordan High School, Jordan  
Michelle Griner, Willow Canyon Elementary, Jordan  
Anna Smith, Midvale Middle School, Jordan

Polly Oveson, Millcreek Jr. High, Davis  
Rachel Ferrario, Bates Elementary, Weber  
Travis Lemon, American Fork Jr. High, Alpine  
Anthony Romanello, Alta High School, Jordan  
Whitney Child, Alta High School, Jordan  
Timothy Graves, Albion Middle School, Jordan  
Paula Landeen, Crescent View Middle School, Jordan  
Tammy King, Mt. Ridge Jr. High, Alpine  
Kaye Wootton  
Helen Wight, Indian Hills Middle School, Jordan  
Janice Flanagan, Orchard Elementary, Granite  
Terry Decker, Orchard Elementary, Granite  
Maureen Neufeld-Mccomb, Matheson Jr. High, Granite  
Joanne Fraser, Matheson Jr. High, Granite  
Pamela Johnson, West Kearns Elementary, Granite  
Marjan Hong, Copper Hills High School, Jordan  
Vickie Ahlstrom, Orem Elementary, Alpine  
Melody Cook, Churchill Jr. High, Granite  
Sheri Sample, Albion Middle School, Jordan

## **UEA: Making The Right Moves**

Since 1860, the Utah Education Association has worked actively to promote the educational interests of the community.

Today, as always, the Association's mission is to advance the cause of public education by promoting quality teaching and learning, while advocating for the rights and interests of its members. Here are some of the Association's recent accomplishments:

### **UEA Member Recruitment Program**

The UEA's Member Recruitment Program provides professional recruitment materials, targeted training, and fun incentives and rewards to Association Representatives (ARs) who make the Association visible and responsive to members' needs. Building effective local Associations begins with strong, committed ARs and the UEA thanks the 1,300 highly-trained individuals who have recruited and enrolled new members to the Association this year. Remember: Every Member Counts!

### **2004 UEA Convention**

The UEA's annual convention was, again, a great success this year, welcoming educators from all corners of the state. Attendees from San Juan County to Rich County enjoyed upbeat keynoters, Frosty Troy, and the NEA's own vice president, Dennis Van Roekel. Nearly 4,000 educators honed their skills, networked with colleagues, and shared best practices from the classroom.

Nearly 600 educators new to the profession gathered on October 29, 2004 to learn from the professionals by attending the UEA's "*New Educators' Workshop*." Praxis II preparation sessions, student behavior tips, and classroom short-cuts were hotbeds of idea exchange and enthusiasm. The UEA's outreach to teacher preparation colleges throughout the state brought over 200 pre-service teachers to this half-day conference, where they also met future colleagues and made helpful contacts.

### **UEA Promotes Ethnic Minority Participation**

The Utah Education Association's Minority Involvement Plan (MIP) details numerous state

policies, activities, and publications which are designed to involve ethnic-minority members in Association committees, events, decision making, and leadership positions.

Supporting educators and helping them meet the needs of all children — regardless of socioeconomic circumstances, race, religion, or any other societal obstacle — is a core value of the Association.

View the UEA's Minority Involvement Plan at [www.utea.org](http://www.utea.org).

## What the National Education Association is doing for you . . .

When the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress meets in January 2005, representatives from the National Education Association will be busy sharing their education priorities with policy makers. Here are a few of the NEA goals (*See entire list at [www.utea.org](http://www.utea.org)*):

### NEA Priorities — 109th Congress

Themes:

- Close achievement gaps
- Encourage respect for teachers
- Increase parental involvement

Goals:

#### I. Education Funding

- Maximize funding for Title I, IDEA, teacher quality, Pell Grants, E-Rate, and other critical programs.
- Block newly-proposed subsidies of private and religious K-12 education.
- Minimize further erosion of federal government's overall fiscal capacity.

#### II. ESEA Improvement

- Promote proactive agenda for 2007 ESEA reauthorization and high school reform efforts.
- Fix and fund No Child Left Behind.

## Teacher Tips

### Listening And Thinking

From Jay Edwards ([Obsbedia2@aol.com](mailto:Obsbedia2@aol.com)), a resource specialist at Hemet Elementary School in Hemet, California:

*"I take a class out to play 'Listening' once a year. It doesn't work more often than that, but then it doesn't need to. By the end of the game, they discover that 'Listening' can be renamed 'Thinking.' Take them out to the playground and tell them you are going to name an object, then they will run as fast as they can to go touch it and come back. Simple, huh? 'See that*

*fence on the other end of the field? Go touch a fence and come right back!’ Everyone huffs and puffs. This is repeated for all sorts of objects, and, after two or three runs, one of the more tired students will pause after everyone has run ahead of him, and ask, ‘You said touch A tree. Can I just touch this one right over here?’ A few more start catching on, suppressing giggles about having figured out the directions before their classmates. Pretty soon, everyone is listening very closely and scattering just a few feet, or reaching for their shirt to touch something brown, rather than the portable classroom 300 yards away. When we are ready to head back to the classroom, I ask them to explain what happened and how they could use what they learned in the game to help them learn faster in the classroom (only having to listen to the teacher’s directions once, asking on-topic questions, staying focused on what is being asked of them). The next day, everyone wants to play the game again, but it only works once.”*

## UEA People

# Eldredge most proud of being an employee advocate, helping to strengthen retirement system benefits

In his 23 ½ years working for the Utah Education Association, Jim Eldredge helped develop the state’s “Career Ladder” program, strengthen public employee retirement benefits, and convince legislators to allocate money for teacher-directed supply money.

But despite all of these accomplishments, Eldredge – who will retire from his position as UEA director of research and bargaining on December 31, 2004 – said he is most proud of being an employee advocate and serving the needs of the many members he has represented.

As a young college student, Eldredge took a job loading trucks for IML in Salt Lake City. It was there that he learned what it meant to have union support in times of crisis.

The first incident occurred when Eldredge’s loading dock partner said the union was planning a strike. Eldredge said he was making more money than he had his entire life and told his colleague he wasn’t sure he agreed with the strike. His partner was less than amused. “I like you, Jim,” he said. “I’d hate to see you get hurt.”

The second incident would forever strengthen Eldredge’s belief in organized labor. It happened when one of the managers at the trucking company took him aside and told him he was being terminated. Shocked, Eldredge picked up his gear and headed out the company gates. On his way out, Eldredge was met by several of his co-workers and shared the news about his termination. Later that day, he was summoned to a union meeting. When he arrived, he found the room packed with all of his friends from work, colleagues who had gathered to support him. And there was one message from the group to management: “We know him [Eldredge]. We know how hard he works. You get him his job back or we will wildcat!” Following the meeting, Eldredge was called back in to work and given his job back with the guarantee that his record would be expunged. He later learned that the termination had occurred due to a misunderstanding in which he had been falsely accused of not carrying out his job duties. “From then on, I [was] a strong believer in organized labor,” Eldredge said.

Prior to joining the UEA staff on July 1, 1981, Eldredge spent 10 years working for the Utah Public Employees’ Association (UPEA). He served as an employee relations representative, manager

of field services, and director of government relations. While at the UPEA, Eldredge was instrumental in organizing higher education employees.

Early in his career with the UEA, Eldredge found himself dealing with issues that are still in the headlines today. Voucher discussions were a part of the legislative debate because, as Eldredge put it, there were a couple of lawmakers who felt like choice and competition were a good idea.

In April 1983, the report, *A Nation at Risk*, was released and Utah legislators reacted by calling on teachers to do more. “We were told that if you [teachers] want a pay increase, you are going to have to do something different,” Eldredge said. “We got together with administrators and legislators and prepared our own “Career Ladder” bill that would provide more money for educators. If [educators] were able to take on more projects or work an extended day . . . all of these were things we felt enhanced the compensation for teachers, but there were also improvements for students.”

Eldredge played a major role in improving retirement benefits for educators and public employees. One improvement was the change from a contributory to non-contributory system. “The contributory system allowed the short-timers to take their money with them,” Eldredge said. “But the philosophy behind the [retirement] system was that it was [established] to reward the career employee. When the change occurred, there was enough money left over to allow employers to establish a 401(k) program for their employees. “It was a success story [in which] UEA and the Legislature [worked] together to make things better,” Eldredge said.

An equally important retirement system change came in 1997-98 when the Legislature approved the Surviving Spouse Benefit. At the time, a friend of the UEA – Representative Kurt Oscarson – had died with 24 ½ years of service in the retirement system. But under existing law, there was no way for his widow and family to benefit fully from his pension. In the last days of the session, Eldredge was informed that the Legislature had failed to allocate the money to cover the Surviving Spouse Benefit. “This is a top priority. This is what should be done. We will absorb the cost,” Eldredge told lawmakers. The law passed and Mrs. Oscarson, along with many other surviving spouses, benefited from the change.

Eldredge was also on the scene when Speaker of the House Mel Brown suggested giving educators teacher-directed supply money to pay for classroom materials. What was supposed to be a one-time bonus has turned out to be a yearly stipend thanks to the efforts of Eldredge and the UEA Lobby Team.

Eldredge said he is saddened by the “level of meanness” exhibited now by the Legislature. “We always had differences of opinion, but you used to be able to talk about it with a smile on your face,” he said.

Because he believes local bargaining is where “the rubber meets the road,” Eldredge worked with his National Education Association colleagues around the country to create the National Association of Bargaining Professionals. The organization – open to state association bargaining coordinators – provides bargaining advice, training, and serves as a clearing- house of ideas.

During his career at the UEA, Eldredge has worked for five executive directors and countless presidents. He praised many of them for their work on behalf of the Association. “We have had some really great leadership here,” he said.

## ***UEA welcomes Clover Meaders, Salt Lake native is new associate counsel***

The most important thing the Utah Education Association can do for its members “is zealously advocate for their rights as educators and help them understand their responsibilities as professionals,” says Clover Meaders, UEA associate counsel and one of the Association’s newest staff members.

Meaders was born in Salt Lake City and is a graduate of Taylorsville High School. She holds a bachelor’s degree in political science from Westminster College and received her law degree from the University of Utah in 2003.

Prior to joining the UEA staff last summer, Meaders worked as a law clerk in the office of the Utah Attorney General – researching legal issues and drafting memoranda for assistant attorneys general in the Commercial Enforcement Division. She interned with the Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel from September 2001 through December 2001. There, she assisted the attorney assigned to education and quasi-governmental entities committees with general research and constitutionality reviews.

From September through December 2001, Meaders worked as a pro bono volunteer for the Office of Administrative Hearings, Utah State Department of Human Services. She assisted an administrative law judge by listening to recordings of hearings and writing opinions in child abuse substantiation cases.

Meaders says she likes working for the UEA because “as a graduate of Utah’s public education system and the daughter of an educator, I have always had great respect for the work our public teachers perform. The UEA office is comprised of dedicated and energetic employees devoted to improving the conditions in our public schools.”

## **Deadline for “*Golden Apple Award*” nominations is February 25<sup>th</sup>**

Once again this year, Utah Education Association members are invited to nominate their favorite school volunteers for a “*Golden Apple Award*.” The awards are sponsored by the UEA, KUED-Channel 7 (PBS), and the Utah PTA. **The deadline for nominations is February 25, 2005.**

In 1997, the UEA joined with the Utah PTA and KUED in nominating and honoring outstanding public education volunteers. These award recipients are recognized during KUED’s annual “*Golden Apple Awards*” broadcast. Six educators and two volunteers will be chosen during the 2005 judging. As in the past, the Utah PTA will accept nominations for outstanding educators. Both the UEA and the Utah PTA will collect nominations for outstanding volunteers through February 25, 2005.

To obtain a “*Golden Apple Award*” Outstanding Volunteer Nomination Form, visit the UEA website at [www.utea.org](http://www.utea.org).

## **Issues & Action**

### **Tuition Tax Credits: Questions & Answers**

#### **What are Tuition Tax Credits?**

Tuition tax credits would allow individuals and corporations a tax credit for all or part of the tuition they pay for students attending private schools. (Proponents claim this will relieve pressure on public schools by providing an incentive to send students to private schools.)

#### **Why is the Utah Education Association Opposed to Tuition Tax Credits?**

#### **Few Utah Students Benefit**

Tuition tax credits only benefit students who are fortunate enough to be accepted by a private school and who are able to afford the remainder of the tuition. Unlike public schools, private schools can be very selective, excluding students with special needs or low academic performance. Additionally, private schools do not provide the same services many students depend on in the public schools, like transportation to and from school, and free textbooks and supplies.

### **Fixed Costs Remain**

Utah public schools serve the entire community. America's public education system provides the foundation upon which our democratic nation thrives. Even if some students leave the public schools for private schools, most fixed costs will remain. This means that if tax dollars are cut to benefit a select few, the rest of us will be forced to cover the remaining costs.

### **Subsidizing Private Schools with Public Dollars is Wrong**

Private and religious schools are great options for some students and parents. However, it is not fair to promote and subsidize private and religious instruction with public dollars. In this era of increased school accountability, it is also counter-productive to fund a system that is not held to any public accountability standards. While many states have large private school sectors without government subsidies, Utahns have overwhelmingly chosen public schools for their children. In fact, in over half of Utah's 40 school districts, not one parent has chosen to send a student to private school.

### **We Need to Provide Public Schools with the Resources they Need**

Over 97 percent of Utah students attend public schools. Instead of diverting scarce education dollars to programs for a select few, we should focus our efforts on providing our public schools with the resources they need to implement common sense reforms. We know what works to help raise student achievement – reducing class size, higher academic standards, research-based instructional programs, high quality professional development for teachers and extra help for struggling students. Our children and our schools deserve proven programs with a track record of effectiveness – not gambles on tuition tax credits.

### **Have Tuition Tax Credit Programs Worked in Other States?**

Arizona, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Minnesota have all lost money. Arizona lost \$115 million during the first four years of its program. In 2002, Illinois lost an estimated \$65 million in revenue due to its credit, and that year cut education funding by almost exactly that amount — \$64.5 million. Pennsylvania lost \$86 million and Minnesota lost \$227 million due to tax credit legislation and a 1997 decision to expand the state's existing tax deduction policies.

The latest Utah version of tuition tax credit legislation surfaced during the 2004 session of the Utah Legislature and would have provided tax credits to individuals who pay private school tuition and corporate tax breaks to businesses contributing to scholarship granting organizations.

## **UEA/NEA Benefits**

# NEA Group Term Life Product lowers premiums across rate classes

Positive trends in NEA Life Insurance claims experience have led the NEA Members Insurance Trust<sup>®</sup>, in conjunction with The Prudential Insurance Company of America, to design a new term life plan that lowers premiums with a net reduction of ten percent.

The NEA Group Term Life Plan began on November 1, 2004. In addition to a more favorable rate structure, the new Plan enables NEA members to obtain coverage in amounts from \$25,000 to \$300,000. The member's spouse or domestic partner\* may also apply for coverage at the new, lower spouse rates, and all Plan participants may benefit from full coverage up to age 70.

Another NEA Members Insurance Trust product, the NEA Guaranteed Issue Life Plan, also issued by Prudential, now offers spouse coverage and two options for coverage amounts: up to \$10,000 and up to \$20,000.

For more information about the NEA Group Term Life Plan and the NEA Guaranteed Issue Life Plan, including any exclusions, limitations and restrictions which may apply, call the NEA Member Service Center toll free at 1-800-637-4636, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (or Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) ET, or go online to [www.neamb.com/insurance](http://www.neamb.com/insurance).

*\*Domestic partners are not considered dependents in all states.*

## News You Can Use From NEA Member Benefits

### Paying for Home Improvement Projects

You may be asking yourself how you're going to pay for all your remodeling ideas. As a homeowner, you're in an ideal position to use the growing equity in your home to finance home improvement projects. This is one of the smartest means of financing because it allows you to:

- Lower the cost of your remodel over the long run, since mortgage and home equity interest rates are generally lower than most other kinds of consumer credit

- Potentially deduct the interest payments from your taxes, lowering your cost even more.<sup>1</sup>

You can use your equity in two different ways:

- Mortgage refinancing. If current interest rates are favorable, you can replace your first mortgage with a new, larger mortgage that includes the cost of your remodeling project. In addition to this standard "cash-out" refinancing, lenders offer other products that give you even more money up front by adding in the value of the planned improvement. If you refinance your mortgage, you'll keep the convenience of one home loan and one monthly payment.

- Home equity financing. Instead of refinancing, you can keep your existing mortgage intact, and supplement it with a home equity loan or line of credit. Home equity accounts allow you to use your current equity to pay for your home improvement projects.

### Mortgage Refinance or Home Equity Financing — How do You Decide?

It all boils down to simple math. Find out how much each financing option will cost by checking current interest rates and monthly payments for each, considering the loan terms you desire. You'll want to consider:

- Which option is more affordable? Calculate how much each of these options will cost, including the effect on your monthly payments as well as up-front costs and fees, some of which may be assessed at closing. Make sure you can pay for the loan terms that you select.
- What is the ultimate cost of the loan? A 30-year mortgage can spread out your mortgage payments and lower your monthly costs, but you could wind up paying a lot more interest over the life of the loan. In addition, don't forget to factor in the effects of the up-front costs and fees, some of which may be assessed at closing.

NEA members can learn more about using their equity to pay for home improvement projects by calling the NEA Home Financing Program<sup>®</sup> at 1-800-632-4968 and speaking to one of Wells Fargo Home Mortgage's experienced home mortgage consultants. They are available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to midnight, and Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (Eastern Time).

## **Community**

### **Five Utah high school students named '*Scholarships in a Snap*' Photo Contest winners**

The Utah Education Association, in partnership with R.C. Willey Home Furnishings and Pentax, is proud to announce the winners of the 2004 "*Scholarships in a Snap*" Photo Contest.

The contest, which ran from September 1, 2003 through May 31, 2004, created a unique opportunity for Utah high school students to use their photographic talents and skills to obtain scholarship funds to further their educational pursuits. Each of the five winners received a \$1,000 scholarship.

The scholarship recipients included Mark Bennett, West High School, Salt Lake City, for "Reflections America"; Jeremy Stuart, Ben Lomond High School, Ogden, for "Humble Power"; Amanda Hansen, Murray High School, Murray, for "Do not feed the Animals"; Cody Marchant, West Jordan High School, West Jordan, for "Perfect Play"; and Alyssa Anderson, Alta High School, Sandy, for "Look At The Possibilities."

Photo categories included landscapes, people, wildlife, sports, and general subjects. To view the photographs, please visit the UEA website at [www.utea.org](http://www.utea.org).

### **Teachers, administrators, and parents asking Legislature to remove cap on school trust land revenue**

In July 2004, almost \$10 million dollars was distributed to schools statewide to improve student achievement through the School LAND Trust Program. This is the fifth year schools have received the funds. The first year schools received \$4.9 million and four years later the statewide distribution has almost doubled.

The 2003 Utah Legislature decided that the most local schools could receive from this unique revenue stream is \$12 million. Teachers, administrators and parents across the state are now asking policy makers to support removing the \$12 million cap, ensuring that local schools will continue to receive the revenue as the funding increases.

### **Platforms Support Lifting the \$12 Million Cap**

In the spring of 2004, delegates to both the Republican and Democratic state conventions voted to support platform changes dealing with school trust revenue. The Democratic Platform states:

*Utah Democrats support. . . site-based decision making where parents, teachers, administrators and students working together can solve local problems, and allowing those groups to use all interest and dividends from the permanent school trust fund to improve student performance.*

The Republican Platform now includes the following language:

*We support the prudent and profitable use of school trust lands. We support all interest and dividends from the permanent State School Fund being distributed to each public and charter school to improve student academic performance.*

Over the past five years, more than \$35 million (total for five years) has been distributed to schools to improve academic achievement through implementation of school plans prepared by School Community Councils and approved by local school boards through the School LAND Trust Program. The Legislature placed a limit of \$12 million annual distribution for the program in 2003. It is possible that the revenues could exceed the \$12 million cap this year. It is the intent of many parents and teachers in Utah to remove that cap in the upcoming (2005) legislative session. The Utah Education Association is encouraging its members to use the platform positions to encourage legislators to remove the \$12 million cap.

### **Money for Schools from School Trust Lands**

The revenue from 3.5 million acres of the School Trust Lands granted at statehood generated nearly \$48 million last year. All revenues go into the permanent State School Fund and are invested by Ed Alter, Utah's treasurer. The interest and dividends from the fund are distributed annually to fund the School LAND Trust Program statewide. Schools across the state receive their portion of the annual distribution to implement school plans designed to improve student achievement.

School Community Councils in each Utah public school decide how to best use their dividend for academic improvement. For many schools these are the only discretionary funds the school receives.

### **Cap Limits Schools' Ability to Address Local Needs**

Most schools across the state of Utah are using the revenues schools receive through the School LAND Trust Program to provide remediation at the school level. State law asks School Community Councils to identify the greatest academic needs of the school and prepare a plan to address those needs.

Schools can search the School LAND Trust database to see what other schools are doing to address similar needs. (*Search and view the plans and the results through a search function found by going to [www.schoollandtrust.org](http://www.schoollandtrust.org). Choose General Information and Search Plans for Ideas.*)

Under current law, the maximum annual distribution to schools is \$12 million for the program even when the revenues exceed that amount. It is possible that more than \$12 million could be available to School Community Councils in the next school year if the cap is removed.

**Please contact your legislators and tell them why the revenue from the School LAND Trust Program is important to your students and ask them to remove the cap.**

## **Authors of *The Utah Mama's Handbook* support UEA Children at Risk Foundation**

Want to know the operating hours of the Ogden Dinosaur Park and Museum? Need a good vocal coach for your son or daughter? Searching for some kid-friendly websites?

Information about all of these subjects can be found in *The Utah Mama's Handbook*, a reference guide for Utah mothers and families.

Book co-authors Rachael Herrscher and Stephanie Peterson, both mothers and Utah residents, say their mission is “to make motherhood easy by making parenting resources accessible and easy to use. Our goal, like every other mother’s, is to educate, enrich and inspire the children in our lives.” *The Utah Mama's Handbook* includes over 25 chapters with information ranging from places to go and things to do, the outdoors, day care, community services, libraries, computers, and more.

Herrscher has a degree in Family and Human Development with a minor in English from the University of Utah. Peterson is pursuing a degree in Construction Management from Weber State University. Working together, they formed Utah Mama, Inc., and *The Utah Mama's Handbook* is the first of many resources planned for parents.

In addition to helping mothers and parents, Herrscher and Peterson are donating \$2 from the sale of each book to support the UEA Children at Risk Foundation.

For more information about Utah Mama, Inc., and *The Utah Mama's Handbook*, go to:  
[utahmama.com](http://utahmama.com).