

ROSE Newsletter

Retired
Oregon School
Employees



Looking out for the rights and benefits of retired OSEA members

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Benefits of being a ROSE (Retired Oregon School Employees) member include OSEA life insurance, member discounts, OSEA publications, PERS information, training, events and social activities.

Here we are again, getting ready for OSEA Conference 2025, which will be held June 26th through 28th in Portland. We are currently wrapping up our delegate elections and our ROSE Vice Chair election. The ballots are due and are being counted as I

am writing this article. You can find the election results later in this newsletter.

As delegates to the OSEA Conference, ROSE members can vote in the elections for the OSEA Board as well as on all resolutions except those pertaining to dues. The ROSE Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary/Treasurer are automatic delegates. They, along with one delegate from each Zone, comprise the ROSE chapter delegation to Conference.

While at Conference, the ROSE delegation also holds a raffle to raise money to help defray the costs of Conference attendance. This year, we have three



By **BONNIE LUISI**
ROSE Chair

separate raffles. The first is a "Margarita" basket, complete with a blender, tequila and everything needed to make those delicious drinks, as well as chips and salsa. All you need to add is ice! The second is a "Family Night" basket complete with games, snacks, puzzles, popcorn maker and more. The third is a "Picnic" basket with a tabletop grill, blanket, cooler, tableware and a lounge chair. Hopefully, these three baskets will bring in a good return and will help pay for our delegates' lodging.

There are eight resolutions to be voted on at Conference as well as elections for all three executive positions (State President, Vice President and Secretary) and Board Directors from Zones I, III, V and VII. You can check

the OSEA website for all pertinent information regarding Conference 2025.

Calendar

All ROSE members are invited
to our monthly meetings!

ROSE Meetings

- Friday, June 6, at 10:30 a.m.
State Office

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Reflections on Leadership Summit and LED

By Merlene Martin, Missy Johnson, Delores Piersol,
Susan Hardy and Everice Moro

Five ROSE members shared their reflections on OSEA's Leadership Summit and Legislative Education Day (LED) 2025. Here are their thoughts:

From ROSE Vice Chair Merlene Martin:

Susan Hardy, Delores Piersol and I attended Leadership Summit prior to Legislative Education Day.

I have been to many and led many of these training opportunities as OSEA State President.

The basics of this training have not changed much over the years; however, some tactics have.

Obviously, our communication tools have advanced giving us faster and, in some cases, more accurate options.

All in all, it was great to see familiar faces, staff and members, but there were many more new faces than familiar.

During the good of the order, I took the opportunity to introduce the three of us and ROSE in general. I assured them that if interested, there is life after OSEA and it is called ROSE.

From Zone I Coordinator Missy Johnson:

LED 2025 held at the Salem Convention Center March 1 and 2. Approximately 140 OSEA members attended, including four ROSE members: Delores Piersol, Everice Moro, Susan Hardy, and myself, Missy Johnson.

Sunday afforded us the chance to meet the members



Left to right: Delores Piersol, Missy Johnson, Everice Moro and Susan Hardy

of the Government Relations Committee, chaired by our own Delores Piersol. This was followed by OSEA Vice President Teri Jones speaking about what makes OSEA great. Executive Director Susan Miller introduced the OSEA staff and the 2023 legislative wins. Directors of Field Operations Cyndie Meyer and Rob Wheaton talked about how legislation impacts the field. The Director of Government Relations and Communications took to the podium to explain LED and our union's role in state-level advocacy and shared OSEA's legislative priorities for this year.

After lunch the workshops began. There were four workshop sessions: How to Tell Your Story, Legislative Process 101, Testifying in Committee and Networking 101.

A mocktail party was held before dinner with two members from our legislature.

On Monday, everyone was up and rolling early with a new electricity and excitement in the air.

After breakfast our surprise

guest speaker, Governor Tina Kotek, took to the podium. She spoke for a brief 10 minutes and took a picture with all the OSEA members.

We all prepared to make our visits to the capital. Reps. Darcey Edwards and Cyrus Javadi canceled their appointments with us, so my group of 11 only had one visit with our senator,

Suzanne Weber, who was warm and friendly as always.

Sen. Weber listened to each of us about the bills we wanted her to support and took notes. I had the privilege of speaking on HB 3187 to protect our older workers. Afterward she posed for pictures with the group.

From ROSE Zone VII Coordinator Delores Piersol:

I met with Rep. Greg Smith and Rep. Bobby Levy with Tammy Hillmick from Pendleton, who was an LED first-timer.

Rep. Smith was very supportive



OSEA group picture outside the Capitol.

of HB 3357 and said he would try hard to get to the hearing. He understands why we are testifying and need this bill passed. He was also agreeable to the AARP bill about age discrimination and said he would look into it further.

I presented him with two pairs of socks because he loves socks! He put a pair on and had



Susan Hardy (center) with some of her LED group-mates.

a picture taken with his pant leg pulled up. We always have fun with him and take a picture when we visit. Rep. Smith is always so easy and enjoyable to visit with. Time always speeds by.

Rep. Levy was also in agreement in favor of HB 3357 and while we were sitting there, she had a letter of support drafted to take to the hearing.

We have been friends for many years, so it was good to visit with her. As we spoke about the AARP HB 3187, she said she didn't understand why this was needed when there is an existing federal law to deal with this issue.

We did not meet with Senator Nash, who is new to the office. He did not respond to OSEA about scheduling a meeting.

Both Rep. Smith and Rep. Levy said they would try to talk with him about our bills and let him know how sorry we were that he didn't meet with us.

The thing that was new this year that stood out, and I believe went over well, was the four

workshops put on by our GRO staff Sunday afternoon.

From ROSE member Susan Hardy:

It's hard to think about Leadership Summit or LED without thinking of the remarkable people who are part of OSEA. All hold a place in my heart, but some hold an extra special spot. For example, Lauren Samet with AFT was there, as was Merlene Martin, who is always a special person to spend time with. Our amazing Field Rep sharing his wealth of information was awesome as well!

I was in a group that had only one legislator to visit with, Darin Harbick. Our group talked about HB 3357. I had a chance to share the information I have from schools around Oregon and the struggles that staff have had trying to find ways to report and deal with the reporting of injuries in the classroom. The reality is that reporting doesn't get done because there isn't time or because there is fear of retaliation, etc. Our team shared how HB 3357 takes care of our concerns about reporting.

I attended the House Hearing on HB 3357 as did a large group of OSEA members and other folks. Several OSEA members gave testimony at the hearing.

A final note for me about the HB 3357 hearing: At the end of the hearing Darin Harbick, with whom we had spoken earlier, signed on in support of the bill!

And finally, a short and sweet note from our most political ROSE member Zone II Coordinator Everice Moro:

I went with my Zone Director

April Biancone and other Zone II members. We saw my Representative Rob Nosse (HD-42) and their Representative Mark Gamba (HD-41). Our Senator Kathleen Taylor (SD-21) wasn't available. None of the others in the group had ever been to LED or spoken to their elected leaders before. I spoke with both representatives about HB 3187 to protect older workers. They were really excited to talk to their constituents.



ROSE Zone II Coordinator Everice Moro (left) with Zone II Director April Biancone.

In the end they all agreed, no matter how many times you attend LED there is always something new and exciting to learn.

ROSE Election Results

Vice Chair

Merlene Martin

Conference 2025 Delegates

Zone I: Missy Johnson

Zone II: Vicky Poyser

Zone III: Gloria Lundin

Zone IV: Susan Hardy

Zone V: Kathryn Riegger

Zone VI: Bob Bradetich

Zone VII: Delores Piersol

The Oregonian's Misleading PERS Articles

By JAY OSBORNE

On April 11, 2025, *The Oregonian/Oregon Live* published what might be considered a sensationalized and misleading article about a PERS retiree, Portia Seely, who, according to the article, is in her "golden years" financially because of her PERS retirement benefits. Portia receives over \$250,000 annually, when her original annual salary from the state never exceeded \$31,500.

If the initial article didn't get folks' attention, then there was a Letter to The Editor on April 13 by the Editor and Vice President of Content, reiterating the original article.

The article opened with: "Once a year, *The Oregonian/Oregon Live* updates its online database that lists Public Employees Retirement System beneficiaries and the amounts they receive. Every time, the top numbers are eye-popping and the stories behind them even more so. This year was no exception."

It's true - without any background information, Portia's benefits would seem outlandish to most people. But the context is important. Portia became a public employee in 1971 and left her position 14 years later in 1985. She had the good fortune to be on PERS Tier 1, meaning she retired under an annuity formula which gives her a guaranteed payout over a 15-year period. During that time, she or her beneficiary will be paid by PERS around \$4.5 million dollars, at a rate of \$21,551 a month, which amounts to over \$250,000 annually.

The legislature has since adopted several changes intended to regulate the cost of PERS for employers, but each of these changes only affect new hires after specific dates. Folks hired after December 31, 1995, are on PERS Tier 2, those hired after 2003 are on PERS Tier 3 or the Oregon Public Service Retirement Plan (OPSRP). Employees hired after June 30, 2014, can choose the

Optional Retirement Plan (ORP), otherwise known as Tier 4.

So how did Portia amass such generous retirement benefits? She opted to leave her money in PERS rather than retire when she was 58 years old. Portia, who is now in her mid-70s, finally began collecting her PERS benefits last December, about 40 years after she left her job as a public employee in 1985.

Portia's benefits were also calculated using the money match formula. Public employees hired after August 29, 2003, are not eligible for the money match calculation method. In 2024, money match was used for only 13% of retired public employees receiving benefits.

The idea of "PERS millionaires" grabs attention and sells papers, but Portia is an outlier among PERS retirees. In reality, 75 percent of retirees receive less than \$4,500 per month, and the average annual benefit is under \$35,000.

AFT Wins Temporary Stop to Trump DEI Threats

On April 25, 2025, a federal judge issued a decision in AFT's lawsuit against President Trump's Dept. of Education, temporarily blocking the "Dear Colleague" letter (DCL) that claimed Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) policies are unlawful.

The AFT and a coalition of educators (including Eugene School District 4J) won a temporary reprieve from the administration's attempt to threaten educators with

prosecution, or loss of federal funding, if they teach students important history, sociology and other lessons that reference race and racism, or if they provide support to students and foster healthy school communities through diversity, equity and inclusion programming.

Judge Stephanie Gallagher essentially put the letter on hold until the case is resolved. Schools should maintain and adopt policies to promote an inclusive learning environment, comply

with existing non-discrimination obligations, and continue teaching truthful curricula. AFT locals should push back against schools taking any steps attempting to comply with the "Dear Colleague" letter.

Judge Gallagher's order will likely be appealed to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. The case will also proceed "on the merits" to determine whether the order pausing the DCL should permanently block it.

- Adapted from AFT