

**2011 NEA
Annual Meeting and Representative Assembly
Chicago, Illinois
Report by Leslie Marsland, USA Delegate**



The **National Education Association (NEA)**, the biggest of the teachers' unions, had its "Annual Meeting and Representative Assembly" this past July 4th weekend. The Annual Meeting takes place during the final week of June and the first week of July. This year's Annual Meeting took place in Chicago, Illinois.

The Representative Assembly (**RA**) takes place during the final four days of the Annual Meeting. The RA is the largest democratic deliberative assembly in the world representing more than 3.2 NEA million members. The assembly adheres to Roberts Rules of Order.

Every Annual Meeting kicks off with conferences, and various committees, constituencies, caucuses, leadership groups, and delegates from state and local affiliates gather to set policy and chart the direction of NEA. I attended the **NCESP** Annual Meeting. The **National Council for Education Support Professionals (NCESP)** works within NEA to represent the specific interests of education support professionals (**ESPs**). Of NEA's 3.2 million members, nearly a half-million are **ESP** members making us the largest organization of school support employees in the world.

The RA consists of ~9,000 delegates representing state and local affiliates. These delegates are elected by their local and state Associations and represent preK-Higher Ed educators, including education support professionals, student members, retired members, and other segments of the united education profession.

The RA is the primary legislative and policy making body of the National Education Association and derives its powers from, and is responsible to, the membership. The Representative Assembly adopts the strategic plan and budget, resolutions, the Legislative Program, and other policies of the Association. Delegates vote on Amendments to the Constitution, Bylaws and new Business Items. Additionally delegates vote to elect the executive officers, Executive Committee members, and at-large members of the NEA Board of Directors.

Highlights of the RA:

Business from the Representative Assembly, July 2-5, 2011

100 New Business Items were presented.

6 Standing Rule Amendments

1 Constitutional Amendment

3 Bylaw Amendments

21 Legislative amendments

5 Resolutions

2 NEA Policy Amendments



View of Sears Tower, Chicago



Massachusetts Delegation

NEA endorsed Barack Obama's re-election: The Representative Assembly recommended that NEA members vote to **re-elect President Barack Obama in the 2012 election**.

A few members felt that the NEA should call for the removal of U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan as the price for an early Obama endorsement—the delegates earlier approved a measure listing 13 frustrations with the secretary—but the call for Duncan's ouster didn't come to pass. The NEA RA passed New Business Item C, a.k.a. "13 Things We Hate About Arne Duncan." U.S. Department of Education and Secretary. New Business Item C begins as: "NEA is appalled with Secretary Duncan's practice of ..." then lists the 13 things.

This year's **Friend of Education Award** was given to **14 Democratic Senators from Wisconsin** who stalled Gov. Scott Walker from passing an anti-worker budget bill. These Senators made the bold decision earlier this year to leave the state, rather than vote for a bill to strip public employees of their collective bargaining rights. NEA delegates gave them a rousing and emotional welcome as they welcomed members of "Wisconsin 14". Members held "Thank You 14" signs, wore T-shirts bearing the nickname and chanted "We are one!"



Ernest "Jameel" Williams -

from North Carolina was chosen as the **2011 NEA ESP of the Year**. Jameel is a bus driver and teacher assistant from Henderson, N.C., where he taught at L. B. Yancey Elementary School for all 23 years of his education career. At Yancey, he has served as a teacher's assistant with at-risk youth and in the art and music department. Jameel gave a dynamic speech at the RA. I felt proud as one of our own was being honored.

Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear -

was presented with the **Greatest Education Governor Award**. The annual award recognizes and honors governors who have made major, state-level education strides that improve public schools.



2011 **Teacher of the Year** was presented **to Michelle Shearer**, a 14-year veteran of Maryland public schools. She is a chemistry teacher at Urbana High School in the Frederick County Public School System. Shearer was named national teacher of the year by President Barack Obama at a White House ceremony in May on National Teacher Day.

Sadly, one of our own, **Len Paolillo** - a sociology professor at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) in North Adams, Mass., lost his re-election to the NEA's Executive Committee. Len has served for the past three years and has led NEA's Committee on Legislation, which guides the organization's legislative efforts to create great public schools.



Mass delegates wore blue T-shirts in support of Len's re-election.



Vice-President Joe Biden's Speech to Delegates on Sunday, July 03, 2011 was outstanding. Biden's moving address was met with cheers and standing ovations from the assembly.

VP Biden sited that "*The current attacks on teachers unions are attacks on students, educators and fundamental American values*". Thousands cheered!

Also on Sunday, members paid tribute one of their own-- **John Wilson**. Wilson has fought for a minimum salary of \$40,000 for every teacher and a living wage for Education Support Professionals (ESP). He also launched an NEA initiative to engage the best teachers in sharing ideas on staffing high-poverty, low achieving schools with the most accomplished teachers, and chaired the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. Wilson, a long-time special education teacher, will step down as executive director of the NEA in September.



Full coverage of new business items, amendments, resolutions and other items considered during the 2011 Annual Meeting can be viewed at: <http://www.nea.org/grants/nbis-amendements-resolutions.html>

Media, pictures, speeches and other information about the RA can viewed at: <http://www.nea.org/grants/1357.htm>

