



New Mexico Association of Educational Retirees

# NEWSLETTER

*Promoting the professional, economic, intellectual, social  
and physical well-being of NMAER members*

Volume 46, Number 3

Autumn 2023

## NMRHCA'S FUTURE...

What follows is a report authored by Therese Saunders, NMRHCA Board President. The content is so critical that I decided to make it the subject of my NMAER Newsletter article.

“Last spring, with the passage of Senate Bill 16 the governor moved one step closer to reorganizing several state agencies under the newly created Health Care Authority Department formerly known as Human Services Department (HSD). There have been many questions about the relationship between the Health Care Authority (HCA) and the Retiree Health Care Authority (RCHA). Those questions and concerns remain unanswered.

On Wednesday, October 25, representatives from the governor's office and NMRHCA met to discuss the new Health Care Authority and the impact on the Retiree Health Care Authority. Neil Kueffer, Executive Director of NMRHCA and Therese Saunders (President of the NMRHCA Board of Directors), met with Kari Armijo, Cabinet Secretary for Human Services Department/Health Care Authority (HSD/HCA) and Gina Deblassie, Health Policy Advisor for the Governor.

It was discussed that the upcoming report on the new Health Care Authority is set to be delivered on November 1st. This report contains the recommended reorganizational changes and will be presented to the legislative health and human services committee and legislative finance committee. The report contains statutory changes to move the Retiree Health

Care Authority under the new department.

No decisions were made/offered/or even discussed. It was stated multiple times that the governor wants all state agencies' healthcare benefits to be under the new Health Care Authority. There was no discussion on what that exactly means for RHCA and its current autonomy as an independent governing board with broad representation of stakeholders. It was very clear that there is frustration with contracts and the health care procurement process which was echoed by Neil Kueffer. Both sides agreed that there could be more collaboration between HSD/HCA and RHCA to achieve the common goal of better health care.

Neil and Therese both brought up their significant concerns over who would manage RHCA's Trust Fund, ensure solvency, and protect retirees and current

*NMRHCA continued on page 2*

## HAVE YOU MOVED IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS?

Please call or email NMAER when you move, so we can ensure that you continue to receive your NMAER Newsletter and other important information. You can call **505 275-6427** or send an email to **nmaer@cybermesa.com** to provide us with your updated address. It will help us keep our database up to date, while keeping you informed.

Thanks for your assistance!

## THE LATEST HAPPENINGS WITH THE EDUCATIONAL RETIREMENT BOARD

The ERB Investment Report for the First Quarter Report ending on August 31, 2023, showed the following:

- A one-year return of 5.79%, a three-year return of 9.6%, a five-year return of 7.6%, a ten-year return of 8.0%, and a 8.92% since inception.
- The total assets were reported as \$16,099,347,587 billion on August 31.

The ERB Investment Report ending on September 30, 2023, has not been provided as of this writing.

At the August 25, 2023, ERB Board of Trustees meeting, Board Members heard the following agenda items:

- The Board of Trustees heard and approved a report on the 2025 ERB Budget.
- The Board of Trustees heard and approved a report on Retirements for the period of June 1 - July 31, 2023; a total of 438 retirements.
- The Board of Trustees observed the swearing in of the Honorable Laura Montoya, State Treasurer.
- The Board of Trustees heard a report by the Board chair on the results of the Board Self-Evaluation Survey.
- The Board of Trustees heard a report on ERB Investments.
- The Board of Trustees elected new officers for 2024. Board Chair – Russell Goff, Vice-Chair – Mary Lou Cameron, and Secretary – Larry Magid.

At the October 13, 2023, ERB Board of Trustees meeting, Board Members heard the following agenda items:

- The Board of Trustees heard and approved the 2024 Board Meeting dates: February 23, April 26, June 28, August 23, October 25, and December 13.
- The Board of Trustees heard and approved Board Committee Appointments for 2023-24.

- The Board of Trustees heard and approved retirements for the period of August 1 - September 30, 2023; a total of 244 retirements.
- The Board of Trustees held a discussion on Board Policies. The Board will vote on any changes to Board policies at the December meeting.
- The Board of Trustees held a discussion on three possible Legislative options. The Board will vote on a preferred legislative option at the December meeting.
- The Board of Trustees heard a report on Investments.

Lastly, the NMERB held a groundbreaking ceremony on Wednesday, October 18, 2023, at its new building to be located at 5211 Las Soleras Dr, Santa Fe, NM. Completion date is set for early 2026.

In closing, thank you for continuing to monitor your retirement benefits.

*Russell Goff, ERB Representative*

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### NMRHCA continued from page 1

employees. Finally, what impact would a merger have on RHCA's current Trust Funds? There is no clear direction or answers from either Cabinet Secretary or the Governor's Advisor. Our concerns were merely glossed over, and the conversation side-tracked with something to be determined later.

This merger could have a significant impact on the RHCA, its sustainability and its independence with an elected board who have worked so hard and diligently to put the agency in a positive position and is improving every year. We will continue to watch closely and will follow up with updates regarding any legislation or details put forward and potential impact on the retiree healthcare program.”

*Tomas E. Salazar, NMRHCA Representative*

## FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The celebration of NMAER's 80th annual State Convention in September 2023 was a huge success. My "hats off" to the Planning Committee who spent countless hours in planning for the activities that were held in this year's event. I would like to expressly thank Allen Templeton and Patty Nordstrum for their efforts in coordinating the overall management of the Convention. Others who played a vital role in the success of the Convention include LaVerne Hanks, Evalynne Hunemuller, Linda Shute, Wendy Shanahan, Theresa Sanchez, Marilyn Richie, Nina Hobbs, Thelma Parker, Michele Buchanan, Cynthia Fusco, and Janice Sells. Their efforts were very much appreciated. The event was capped on Saturday morning with the announcement of our Grand Prize of a weekend for two by Vicki Smith of Membres, who also did a wonderful portrayal of Ethyl Percy Andrus, the Founder of National Retired Teachers Association (NRTA) and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP).

There were many highlights to this year's event including our speakers, the election of officers for 2024, Baila Baila dancers, the review of NMAER's history and Ethyl Percy Andrus, our Outstanding Unit Members, the Community Service Award Winners, the grand prize winner, and the announcement that we have doubled the number of new members in 2023 with over 325 new members. Raton AER's "Back to School drive" was very successful with 75 new members. Also, congratulations to City Different REA (Santa Fe), Otero County AER (Alamogordo), Albuquerque AER, Deming AER and Las Cruces AER who also had very successful membership campaigns in the spring.

Thanks to the 106 participants who joined in making this year's event A SUCCESS! On the last Day, participants voted to have the Las Cruces AER host the 2024 Convention. Tentatively, the Convention will be held on September 27-29, 2024. More details will follow.

In October 2023, the Social Security Administration announced that benefit checks will increase in January 2024 by 3.2%. This will amount to an increase of \$59 for the average retired worker. For more information contact your Social Security Office.

Lastly, on the final morning of the Convention we discussed Legislative activities for the upcoming session in 2024. Jeanne Hamrick, AARP Volunteer, gave an update on AARP's long-term plans; and Representative Joy Garratt discussed communications with legislators. Rep. Garratt stressed the importance of getting to know your legislator and not to assume that they fully understand the legislation we are following. We appreciate and thank them for their participation in this discussion. As we have previously indicated, we will continue to focus our attention in the upcoming session on our health care. Currently, we are attending interim legislative committee meetings to listen to possible legislative plans for the upcoming session.

PLEASE READ THE ARTICLE ON THE FRONT PAGE REGARDING THE LATEST NEWS ON OUR RETIREE HEALTH CARE AUTHORITY. Stay tuned. We will keep you informed as more information becomes available.

Remember, "Don't take your benefits for granted."

*H. Russell Goff, Executive Director*



## CELEBRATING 80 YEARS!!

FUN, great speakers, great information to take back to units, beautiful venue, FUN, excellent entertainment, yummy food, awesome silent auction items, super table decorations, FUN, terrific gift bags for all, wonderful comradery, touching memorial for those we have lost, beautiful salute to the 'Outstanding Unit Members'...these are just a few of the positive remarks heard at our unbelievable 80th NMAER anniversary convention. We also had four of our past NMAER presidents in attendance. If you missed it, we missed you! If you were fortunate enough to have attended the convention, you can certainly understand all of the remarks that were made!! The convention was a total success in SO MANY ways. The Albuquerque AER unit went above and beyond.

Fantastic job! Russell Goff, Janice Sells, and Cynthia Fusco...thank you, thank you for your MANY hours of assembling all the moving parts that it took to give us all a memorable celebration. My most humble admiration goes to each of you!!

And to our new NMAER officers...I salute you! Thank you, in advance, for your willingness to continue to serve and work for all educational retirees!! This will be my final act as your NMAER president. I have never been more proud to represent such a devoted and committed group of people. We are a family of loyal and diligent people from across New Mexico. Because of this wonderful association, our voices are heard, our concerns are heard, and we do make a difference. We, standing together, are a power to be reckoned with.

Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for allowing me to represent you. It has been an honor I will never forget. My parting wish is that each of you are healthy, happy, and continue to be ready to fight for what we deserve as educational retirees!!

*Linda Carr, President*

## OUTSTANDING UNIT MEMBER UPDATE

The 80th NMAER State Convention, held this past September in Albuquerque, is now a fond memory. Along with vying for unique silent auction items, we visited with acquaintances, met new fellow retirees, and learned about the 80-year history of NMAER and the impact we, as an association, have had on this state's active and retired educators. That information was remarkable, and reaffirmed why this organization is so very important. Thank you, Russell, Janice, Cynthia, and I am sure others for compiling the historical documentation. Ask your delegate to share the presentation packet. And thank you, Albuquerque Association of Educational Retirees, for conducting an enjoyable and fun-filled gathering.

From units across the state, we recognized fourteen Outstanding Unit Members for 2023. It was an honor to highlight their exceptional talents and dedicated service and commitment not only to NMAER and their local units, but also a wide range of humanitarian causes and public service. Your unit's Outstanding Member or convention delegate should have a copy of the booklet. As you spend time reading it, I think you will agree that they are truly Outstanding Members.

It is not too early for your unit to start thinking about your 2024 Outstanding Unit Member nominee. So, once selected, send their contact information to Ray Vincent, your 2024 2nd Vice President.

It has been a privilege to serve as your 2nd Vice President these last two years, and I look forward to next year and the work we will accomplish on behalf of NM educators.

At the 80th NMAER State Convention the Outstanding Unit Members for 2022-2023 were announced. They are as follows:

Bonnie Weber Henry, Otero County AER  
(Alamogordo)

**Outstanding Members continued on page 5**

## ADOPT A LEGISLATOR PROGRAM NEEDS A FEW GOOD MEN AND WOMEN

Most of you retirees who are reading this Newsletter are already acquainted with the NMAER Adopt a Legislator (AAL), volunteer program that operates during each NM Legislative session. Well, we are a few people short to help us keep up the good work this group has been doing. People move out of state, need to spend more time helping with the grandchildren, go back to work, win the Lottery, and want to travel, etc. Well, you know the drill.

We are and have been for the last year concentrating on increasing the funding for the NM Retiree Health Care Authority (NMRHCA) that most of us use to take care of our health care needs during retirement. If you are one of those people, I probably don't need to tell you how important it is to keep the NMRHCA healthy and running. Hopefully at the present time your health care needs are small, but most of you have friends or acquaintances who are covered by RHCA who haven't been so lucky.

This year New Mexico will have a "short" session of the Legislature. (It will seem longer, but actually is scheduled to only last one month.) Many of our Legislators were new last year, and even some of the older ones are not knowledgeable about this issue. These men and women are overwhelmed with issues and bills during every session, and short sessions move very, very quickly for them.

So, we need your help. We make it easy to be an AAL thanks to the NMAER Director, Russell Goff, and our lobbyists, Richard Romero and Sue Griffith. You will be e-mailed all the information on an issue, kept updated on what committee is hearing the bill(s), and given the names and e-mails of the members of that committee who need to be contacted. (Think of us as a new Facebook friend.) I will get the

information out to you in as timely a manner as possible, and all that needs to happen is a short e-mail from you to your Legislator.

We have been having a great deal of success with this program and hear back from our legislators that they appreciate the information we give to them. If you can help this year, please send an e-mail to Russell Goff or myself c/o the NMAER office in Albuquerque at [nmaer@cybermesa.com](mailto:nmaer@cybermesa.com).

*Evalynne Hunemuller, AAL Coordinator*

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### **Outstanding Members** *continued from page 4*

Grace Melendez Jaramillo, Albuquerque AER  
 Marcella Montano, Artesia AER  
 Patricia Archibeque, Curry County AER (Clovis)  
 Mary Lou Cameron, Deming AER  
 Debbie Klein, San Juan AER (Farmington)  
 Denise Beyer, Gadsden AER  
 Beverly Crowe, Gallup-McKinley AER  
 Maria Pearce, Las Cruces AER  
 Ina Jean Barnes, Grants-Cibola AER  
 Marilyn Valero, Las Vegas Area AER  
 Rhonda Seidenwurm, NM Retired  
 Superintendents Association  
 Linda Bennett, Raton AER  
 Barbara Romero Alba, City Different REA  
 (Santa Fe)  
 Edward Leland Abreu Sr., Taos AER

*Joelyn Pafford, 2nd Vice-President*

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## NMAER COMMUNITY SERVICE

“It’s a Bird... It’s a Plane... It’s Super... no it wasn’t “Superman,” but members who were “flying high” at the New Mexico Association of Educational Retirees (NMAER) Eightieth Annual Convention in Albuquerque – “80 YEARS AND SOARING.” As the theme of the convention implies, I believe everyone who attended would agree that it was a powerful and inspirational occasion to celebrate 80 years as we reach for the next 20 years (well maybe, we just want to reach the next two or five years?). But think about it—in 20 years NMAER will be 100 years old. WOW, what a feat. And the Community Service Program of NMAER is one important branch of this organization – it’s where we volunteer to maintain our sense of dignity and worthiness to ourselves and to our community.

During the dinner at the convention, it was announced that the total number of Community Service Hours for the year 2022-2023 were two hundred and eight thousand, six hundred and thirty-four hours (208,634) for a grand total volunteer service value of six million, six hundred and thirty-four thousand, five hundred and sixty-one dollars (\$6,634,561). Indeed, we were “flying high” with over \$1.6 million more dollars than last year, 2021-2022.

Also announced were the top three units and the top seven members with the highest number of volunteer hours receiving Community Service Awards for 2022-2023. The top three units were: Curry County Association of Educational Retirees – 59,755\*\*; Otero County Association of Educational Retirees – 42,983; and Las Vegas Association of Educational Retirees – 31,034. The top seven members were: two members from Curry County AER: Linda Riley – 8,760, and LaNeil Leatherwood – 8,760\*\*; three members from the Las Vegas AER: Dora Duran – 8,760, Joe Baca – 6,044; and Rebecca Baca – 4,488; and two members from the Otero County AER: Sharon Kirkpatrick – 3,766; and Alice Money – 3,766. \*\*Due to unforeseen circumstances these

results were not available at the State Convention.

Congratulations to each unit who participated in the Community Service Program and to the unit members who gave of their time, energy, and effort to volunteer and help others and their communities. And thank you, the members and caregivers, for your outstanding efforts to stay involved in the future of NMAER and the state of our retirement and health care system.

*Pauline Rindone, First Vice-President*

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## MEMBERSHIP NORTH

After a successful year of increasing our membership, let’s not lose the momentum. It takes all of us to make NMAER successful. Please help build our membership to the new goal of 7,000 by reaching out to retirees you know, or used to know for full membership, or current employees who can join us as associate members. Remember, they don’t have to go to meetings, but they will be kept informed of events and legislation that affects us all. Thank you for all your support as I leave the Membership North position and enthusiastically hand it over to Allen Templeton for 2024.

*Cheri Dotson, Membership North*



## OFFICERS 2024

Pauline Rindone, President  
 Linda Carr, Past President  
 Joelyn Pafford, First Vice-President  
 Ray Vincent, Second Vice-President  
 Cheri Dotson, Third Vice-President  
 Jim Conyers, At Large Amendments  
 Allen Templeton, At Large Membership North  
 Open, At Large Membership South  
 Russell Goff, NMERB Representative  
 Dr. Tomas Salazar, NMRHA Representative

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## AMENDMENTS COMMITTEE

At the end of my two years on the NMAER Executive Board as Amendment Chair, I wish to thank the committee members who have helped with both the Constitution and By-Laws and the Policy and Procedure Manual. The first term was dedicated to reviewing the Constitution and By-Laws. The major items were getting the length of the term of serving in office changed from one year to two years. Also, it allows a person to serve in the same office after being out of the office for a period of two years. The second term was occupied with working on the Policy and Procedure Manual that had not been reviewed for a number of years.

Happy to say, the NMAER Constitution and By-Laws are now posted on the NMAER website for everyone to review. There is hope the multiple changes in the Policy and Procedure Manual that were passed by the Executive Board in April will soon be completed and also posted on the website. With these two major accomplishments I am hopeful I have represented our members well and I want to say, Thank You for the opportunity to have served on the Executive Board as Amendment Chair for the past two years.

*Ray Vincent, Amendment Chair*

## AARP UPDATE

The Albuquerque and Santa Fe Community Teams continue to work to increase participants and membership in their communities. Both are hosting Movies for Grown-ups and free Shredfest document shredding events in their communities. Albuquerque provided support for tabling events at the October Balloon Festival. They have also hosted Baseball Night at the Isotopes Park.

The Las Cruces team has completed a four-game baseball event at the El Paso Chihuahuas' Southwest University Field. This is a first for a cross region, cross state, cross city event. The event was originally planned in 2019 for the 2020 baseball season but was cancelled due to COVID. The Las Cruces community team/chapter picked up with El Paso where we left off in 2019, for the 2023 season. All four games were sold out of available tickets. Tickets were provided to AARP members and their guests at a 50% discount with food discounts included with the tickets. The tabling was done jointly between El Paso and Las Cruces and highlighted Fraud Prevention.

The Advocacy Team has been busy monitoring Interim Committee meetings and providing reports. We are now in monthly advocacy meetings in order to do the pre-session work, such as contact with legislators on AARP and NMAER priorities and preparing for testimonials during the session.

The Executive Council held an in-person meeting on October 26 in Albuquerque. The status for the three projects are:

- Community Teams — the Community Team in Silver City is functioning, and they are working on projects related to their community.
- The Native American project is completing several summer health care events in various locations. Health fairs will continue into October.
- Disaster Resilience/Preparedness — A state-wide symposium was held in Las Vegas in August.

*AARP Update continued on page 11*





*Convention Participants*



*Stan Rounds, Keynote Address*



*Outstanding Unit Members*



*Viki Smith in her portrayal of Ethyl Percy Andrus,  
founder of NRTA and AARP.*



*Baila Baila Dancers*



## SUMMARY OF MINUTES

### In-Person Meeting of the NMAER Executive Board September 21, 2023

The Executive Board met in person on September 21, 2023, between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m. Eight of ten voting members and five of seven non-voting members were present, as well as two guests.

After opening ceremonies, the following actions were taken by the Executive Board: Approved the Agenda; Approved the Minutes from the June 19, 2023, Executive Board Meeting; Approved the Financial Report as of August 31, 2023; and Approved the Membership Report as of August 31, 2023. The Profit and Loss report for the period of January 1, 2023, through August 31, 2023, showed Total Ordinary Income of \$115,245.24 and Total Expenses of \$94,153.25 for a Net Ordinary Income of \$21,091.99. In addition, Convention Income for the period was \$9,131.11, for an overall Net Income of \$30,223.10.

Also Approved Actions for submission to the Delegate Assembly: Approved Legislative Priorities for 2024 and Approved the proposed 2024 Budget. Additionally, the Board received reports from officers and committees.

*Cynthia Fusco, Secretary*

Secretary's Note: Copies of the approved minutes are available upon written request to the NMAER Office at 3900 Juan Tabo Blvd., NE, Suite 7, Albuquerque, NM 87111



## MESSAGE FROM THE PAST PRESIDENT

NMAER strongly believes in “DON’T TAKE YOUR BENEFITS FOR GRANTED.” I have been a member of the Executive Board for the past six years and have enjoyed serving on the Board.

Having completed my time on the Executive Board, I will continue to stay active with our local Unit and inform potential retirees of how important it is to join the association, to help all retirees, and to make sure that our benefits are always available.

Let’s stay strong and active with our Units. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you on the Executive Board.

*Michael Torrez, Past President*

## TREASURER’S REPORT

This covers the period of January 1, 2023 through September 30, 2023:

<b>Regular Checking Account .....</b>	<b>\$ 220,439.91</b>
<b>Investments .....</b>	<b>\$ 99,866.17</b>
<b>Total Assets .....</b>	<b>\$ 320,306.08</b>
Income to Date .....	123,699.46
Expenses to Date .....	110,575.64
<b>Net Income to Date .....</b>	<b>\$ 13,123.82</b>
<b>Political Development .....</b>	<b>\$ 5,873.75</b>

*Janice Sells, NMAER Treasurer*

## LEGISLATIVE DEVELOPMENT FUND

As the end of the year nears we urge you to consider contributing to the NMAER Legislative Development Fund. This fund is very helpful to our advocacy efforts in the Legislature. Please contact Janice Sells, Treasurer, NMAER State Office, for more information at 505 275-6427.



## AN AMBULANCE COULD TAKE YOUR SAVINGS FOR A WILD RIDE, TOO.

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New Mexico Association of Educational Retirees



## AARP Update *continued from page 7*

Several localities throughout New Mexico attended and discussed ways to prepare for disasters in their particular regions. Three AARP volunteers will attend the Red Cross Ready training and Sound the Alarm training to initiate awareness in their areas. These presentations will be evaluated as to their effectiveness, and we will look for other volunteers to take the presentation training if successful with the pilot program.

State planning and budget preparations are underway for the 2024 year. All five Community Groups are making plans for the 2024 year.

*Dave Lynch, AARP State President*

## MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Please find below a current count of your membership.

Associate 2022 .....	30
Associate 2023 .....	209
Associate 2024 .....	41
Auto .....	4,148
Life .....	170
Paid 2022 .....	261
Paid 2023 .....	1,354
Paid 2024 .....	27
RAMP .....	48
<b>Total Membership .....</b>	<b>6,298</b>
Additional Mailings .....	252
<b>Total Database Entries .....</b>	<b>6,550</b>
Deceased since 1/1/23 .....	79
Deleted since 1/1/23 .....	2

*Debbie Garrison, Database Manager*



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## IN MEMORIAM

The following New Mexico educational employees have passed away and their names have not been previously provided in the Newsletter. Henceforth, if you know of any deceased educational retirees in your area and would like to have their name included in this Memoriam, please send that information to Glenda Dickey, 2327 Camino Pintores, Santa Fe, NM 87505, or email them to [dickeyglenda@gmail.com](mailto:dickeyglenda@gmail.com)

### **Anthony**

Mary Valenzuela

### **Albuquerque**

Nick Abdalla

Howard Leroy Anderson

Sally Berger

Philip Bock

Katherine Mary Doherty Brogan

Clem Charlton

Marguerite Cooper

Cynthia Cranston

Joseph Dimas

Carolyn Wade Eaker

Elreena Gallegos

Micha Gisser

Gary R. Guyes

Mary Ellen Hanson

Connie Molecke

Jerry Seidenwurm

Rosemarie Monica Smith

### **Clovis**

Mona Pomeroy

### **Santa Fe**

Helen M. Foster

Mary Finney

Dolores Martinez

Ursula Moeller

### **Silver City**

Patricia Ann Flynt Coulter

### **Tatum**

James L. Odle

**NEW MEXICO ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATIONAL RETIREES**  
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**Albuquerque, New Mexico 87111**

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**Remember,**  
**“there is strength in numbers.”**

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**We encourage you to reach out  
to all educational employees  
and current retirees and  
URGE them to join NMAER as we  
focus on ADVOCATING for our  
retirement benefits.**

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