



Ski Country Educator

May – June 2011

Reflections on two very difficult years

The last two years for me personally as a UniServ Director have been very difficult. I have seen teachers and school employees in our Ski Country locals accept salary freezes and in some cases salary reductions through furloughs and increases in out of pocket costs for insurance premiums. Members of whom I know personally have lost their positions through staff and program reductions because of budget cuts. In the meantime school employees are asked to do more and produce greater results.

The recession coupled with attacks on school employees and especially teacher unions have taken a toll on membership. In 2010 Ski Country's membership grew to its highest level ever – 1,206. In 2011 we lost almost 80 members. This loss resulted in lost revenue which leads to cuts in programs we offer our members. Loss in membership also takes a toll on our abilities to influence administrators and school boards through member advocacy and bargaining.

There are signs the economy is improving. There are now groups in Colorado, including CEA who are working to find solutions to our public school funding crisis.

As I said in the previous *Ski Country Educator* membership in this organization is more important now than ever. If we are to reach our goal of a quality education for all children this organization more than any other will be the leader. Public employee's voices must be heard and the Association will make that happen. If you are currently a member, work to become more involved in your local association. If you are contemplating membership – **now is the time.**

... Dennis Carlson, Ski Country UniServ Director

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2011 – 2012 Legislative Session Recap

The 2011 session of the Colorado Legislature is winding down. The Legislature officially closes Wednesday, May 11.

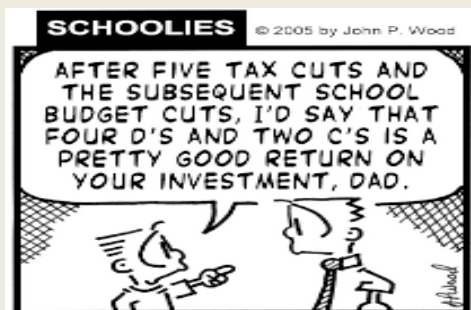
As you have read in Association publications since the session began in January, school funding has been and still is our biggest concern. Due to our members' persistent advocacy, the original K-12 funding cut of \$332 million has been significantly reduced. As the CEA Journal said, "It's bad, it's still really, really bad. But it's a little 'less bad' than it was." Many Ski Country members contacted their legislators over the course of the last two months and, as a result, the Legislature reduced the cut.

The Senate reduced the cut to \$250 million. The House shaved another \$22.5 million off the cut, making the overall cut \$227.5 million. In addition, the House passed an amendment to SB 230, the school finance bill, pledging that if the June 2011 state revenue forecast is positive (meaning more tax revenue is coming into the State General Fund because of an improving economy), the Legislature will put aside up to \$67.5 million more to prevent a mid-year K-12 funding rescission next year. While this additional money will not go directly to school districts now, it creates a small fund of money to keep the Legislature from taking back money from districts next winter.

But this is not enough. True, our state is recovering from the worst recession in 60 years and still losing revenues because tax collections lag behind the budgeting process. However, even if our economy recovers and the immediate future looks brighter, we know that our state's fiscal mess is not the temporary result of a current recession – but a combination of structural and long term fiscal challenges that Coloradans must address.

CEA is working with people in both the business and nonprofit sectors through a statewide coalition to decide how best to address these challenges. Short-term fixes will not work. The only thing that will work are solid fiscal reforms that will help our state achieve sustainable funding for public schools, colleges and universities, and other public services that make our state a great place to live and raise our families.

Our Association is totally on board with finding the right solutions which, we believe, will lead to putting ballot issues before the voters in November 2012. Watch for more information about this effort.



Ski Country Delegates Elect New CEA Board Representative

The following members attended CEA Delegate Assembly on April 28th through the 30th, representing Ski Country UniServ and their respective locals.

Summit County Education Association

Mark Clark

Dylan Nicoletti

Susan Arrance

Eagle County Education Association

Tanya Caruso

Sara Snowwhite

Kimberly Hetrick

Rhonda Tatham

Moffat County Education Association

David Grabowski

Julie Sperl

Brett Sperl

Michele Conroy

Aspen Education Association

Caroline Hanson

Cassie Harrelson

Evan O'Branovic

Jackson County Education Association

Allan Ward

Highlights at this year's Delegate Assembly were witnessing **Michele Conroy** of the **Moffat County EA** receive the CEA Award, electing **Cassie Harrelson** of the **Aspen EA** to the CEA Board of Directors, electing **Allan Ward** of the **Jackson County EA** as alternate to the Board, and electing Karen Green of the Aspen Education Association as the Region 6 representative to the CEA Fund for Children and Education Board.

CEA Delegates elected Lawrence Garcia of the Denver Classroom Teachers Association to the National Education Association Board of Directors to replace Brenna Isaacs of the Aurora Education Association.

Also at Delegate Assembly three members announced their candidacy for President of CEA – Jody Doshier, president of the Cherry Creek Education Association – Kerrie Dallman, president of the Jefferson County Teachers Association – Colleen Heinz, currently Vice President of CEA. This election will be held at the 2012 CEA Delegate Assembly.



Michele Conroy speaking to Delegates after receiving the CEA Award

Michele Conroy is known as a great teacher and a great Association leader in her local, in the Moffat County School District, on the Western Slope and throughout Colorado.

Michele's contributions to MCEA and Ski Country UniServ Unit include serving as local president and on the MCEA negotiations team. For the past six years, Michele has represented her UniServ Unit on the CEA Board.

Besides being an exemplary second grade teacher, Michele is a compelling voice for rural educators. She works to make sure rural educators have the same resources as teachers on the Front Range.

Thus, as CEA legislative liaison to Senators Jack Taylor and Al White, Michele worked diligently on school funding through the Mill Levy Stabilization Act. Michele now serves on the Quality Teacher Commission where she is an advocate for teacher effectiveness.

Jo Ann Baxter, former MCEA leader and current school board president, said of Michele, "I am honored to have someone of Michele's extraordinary talent and enthusiasm as a teacher and leader in our district. Michele is recognized across Colorado as a source of information and a dependable, consistent, and trustworthy voice about educational issues.

...Reprinted from the Awards Program booklet at CEA Delegate Assembly



The Ski Country Delegates at the 2011 CEA Delegate Assembly elected **Cassie Harrelson** as the Ski Country Representative to the CEA Board of Directors.

Cassie is a math teacher at Aspen Middle School. Before she moved to Aspen she was a member of the Eagle County Education Association and served as their treasurer. Cassie has attended CEA Delegate Assembly as well as the NEA Representative Assembly. She is a graduate of the CEA Leadership Academy and a member of the CEA Teaching and Learning Cadre.



Brett Sperl of the Moffat County Education Association listens intently to debate at Delegate Assembly.

Mad as hell, and I'm not going to take this anymore

By Angela Beeley ... reprinted from NEA's "Education Week".

I am a public school teacher and a member of a union. Contrary to popular political rhetoric at play in Wisconsin and elsewhere, I am *not*, however, a leech on society, nor am I a lazy incompetent who shows up to collect a paycheck, not caring whether my students learn. I am a teacher and, in the words of Howard Beale in the film "Network": ["I'm as mad as hell, and I'm not going to take this anymore!"](#)

I am an English teacher who wakes up in the middle of the night, puzzling over how to engage 37 students in my third-period in an upcoming lesson. I am a teacher who gives up part of almost every evening and weekend to grade the never-ending deluge of papers. I am a teacher whose job performance is judged on scores from a test that counts for *nothing* for the students and their parents. I am a teacher of children who have been coldly molested, beaten, ignored, neglected, left hungry, and might not know where they are going to sleep that night. I am a teacher who cries at the end of every school year because, as they leave me, I am reminded of the basic goodness of the students I teach.

I am also a mother, a mother who shops for her family's clothes, including her own, at Target. I have a coupon file that embarrasses my older daughter. I drive a 10-year-old car that my parents helped me purchase. We coexist with termites eating away at the foundation of our house because we don't have the thousands of dollars it would take to rid ourselves of them. My husband and I aren't wearing Prada sunglasses or jetting to St. Tropez on this outrageous salary my union has negotiated for me.

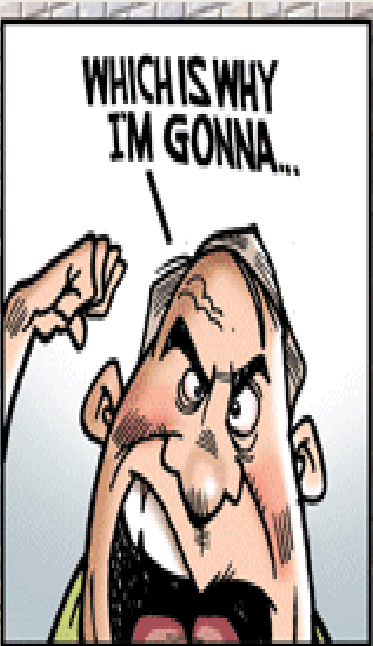
This misdirected anger at unions and public employees is a sad, cynical manipulation. Are there waste and hypocrisy in unions and public administration? Of course there are! Please name for me one sector of society that doesn't have these problems. These are human failings, not union failings. And can states spend money they don't have? No, they can't and shouldn't, and hard times call for sacrifice from all in both the public and private sectors. We must contribute, but we must never give up the right of the American worker to bargain collectively.

The outcry against unions and collective bargaining is a complete red herring. The unspoken message is: Let's make the average American forget that Wall Street crooks set up our economy for a meltdown and that, not only are they *not* in jail, they made money on the deal. Let's make them forget that the richest 400 people in the United States make more than the entire bottom half of all earners. Let's hide the fact that CEOs today make several hundred times what their employees make, rather than the 20 to 30 times more they used to earn. Let's snicker as the workers rip each other's throats out, scrabbling for the privilege of going to the doctor when they're sick.

I have a bachelor's degree from the University of California, Los Angeles, a masters degree from the Claremont Graduate University, and I am a National Board Certified Teacher. I am a professional. And I don't think it's too much to ask to make a salary commensurate with my education, to be able to take my daughters to the doctor, and to retire with a small measure of security after choosing to devote my life to educating America's children.

I love my students, but who on earth does the public—which is accepting these political shenanigans—think will choose to become a teacher now? No one in his or her right mind would go into this profession. After seeing teachers beaten up in the media for our society's failings and being portrayed by our elected officials as lazy fat cats when we are working our butts off to having to “teach” to a test, no student with two brain cells to rub together is going to want to become a teacher. I would challenge anyone—including Wisconsin's governor—who thinks that teaching requires little effort, no summer break, or no decent salary to spend a year in the classroom. Get in there, Governor Walker. You wouldn't last a week.

Angela Beeley has taught at Alta Loma (Calif.) High School for 18 years. She currently teaches 10th grade English. She earned certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards for the first time in 1999 and for the second time in 2009.



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