Jerry’s Message

It’s good to talk with you again. I was able to do some traveling on the East Coast this summer before I had foot surgery in late July. Since then I have been prohibited from being my usual active self. For the last several weeks I have been close friends with an easy chair and ottoman – not my usual companions. If you see me in the next few weeks, I’ll be wearing a large black boot on my left leg.

When I could walk again I worked at a polling place near my home for the primary election. I had not worked at that location before and was told by the regulars that we could expect a heavier than usual turnout of about 200 voters. We got 300 and another 200 dropped off early ballots that they had not mailed in. It was exhilarating to see so many people from so many different backgrounds exercising their electoral privilege.

Why do I mention that? I want each of you to be sure that you are part of the process for November. You know that the Red for Ed initiative, Prop 207 – Invest in Ed was removed from the ballot by the Arizona Supreme Court. You know that Arizona’s schools are funded at the lowest per pupil instructional rate ($4,077) in the country. You know that Arizona’s children are being robbed of an opportunity to have an education equal to states like New York ($15,746), Connecticut ($11,656) or Vermont ($10,720) or any other for that matter (source:www.governing.com). You know that our teachers are leaving the state in order to earn wages that will support their families. You know that one month after school started this year, we still have over 1500 unfilled teaching positions in the state.

Please support the candidates that support public education in our state. How will you know who that is? The AASRA Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/AzAASRA/) shares a link from the Citizens Clean Elections Commission of Arizona (https://www.azcleanelections.gov/) that lists the date, time and location of every debate between candidates that is scheduled right now. That includes all state legislative positions. For the state’s top races TV coverage will be available via PBS.

Don’t hesitate to look up those that interest you. By the time you read this some events will already have occurred. Go listen, ask a question, make your best judgment. But, don’t sit back and wait. This election cycle will have more money spent by big spenders than any other before. The stakes are high. Don’t rely on someone else’s opinion. Form your own, be informed. Let’s all vote for positive change! See you at the polls.

-Jerry

Nobody will ever deprive the American people of the right to vote except the American people themselves and the only way they could do this is by not voting.” -- Franklin D. Roosevelt

“Bad officials are elected by good citizens who do not vote.” -- George Jean Nathan

“All votes are not equally important. Every election is determined by the people who show up.” — Larry J. Sabato, Pendulum Swing
Vouchers Hurt Arizona

**Vouchers Hurt Our Economy.**
Businesses need an educated workforce and good schools with modern technology and small class sizes for their employees’ families. ESA vouchers compromise that.

**Vouchers Hurt Neighborhoods.**
Healthy neighborhood schools bolster property values and public safety. ESA vouchers siphon money from local communities leading to closed schools and fewer services.

**Vouchers Hurt Taxpayers.**
We have a right to know how our tax dollars are spent. ESA vouchers lack accountability.

**Vouchers Hurt Teachers.**
Classrooms are overcrowded and teachers are underpaid because of budget cuts to schools. ESA vouchers remove even more funding from our starving schools.

**Proposition 305 is the Empowerment Scholarship Account or ESA (voucher) expansion. A vote of NO stops the state from draining even more tax dollars from our public schools.**

**On Tuesday, November 6th, Vote No on Prop. 305 to Save Our Schools.**

For more information visit: SAVE OUR SCHOOLS AZ at [https://sosarizona.org/](https://sosarizona.org/)

In September, 2017, the AASRA Board took a position of support for the SAVE OUR SCHOOLS drive to put this issue before the voters. SOS succeeded in getting the referendum on the ballot, including fighting the opposition in court. The court ruled in favor of SOS, so it became Proposition 305.

A “YES” vote would keep the legislature’s expansion of ESAs without increasing accountability of the funds given to individuals.

A “NO” vote will halt the Legislature’s expansion of ESAs and keep public dollars for public schools.

More information about the proposition can be found at [www.ballotpedia.org/elections](http://www.ballotpedia.org/elections). Scroll down and click on “State Ballot Measures”. Then scroll down to “By State” to Arizona and click on Proposition 305. Use this website to learn about other Arizona ballot measures.

**Concerns**

People are worried about the present and future of education in our state and towns and their former schools. **Our members worry about the stress of enormous workloads on current teachers and how are we ever going to attract new teachers to the job with the salaries that exist?** Most of all people talk about children. **How are these kids going to get the quality education that AASRA retirees offered in the past?**

**In part, that is why AASRA exists. In addition to advocating for our pension, we are proponents for high quality public education, adequate resources for our schools and substantive wages for teachers.** We watch bills in our legislature and ask our members to contact state representatives on bills and issues. **We keep track of the governor and his role in public education. We keep an eye on the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to ensure the focus is where it should be.**

Recently the AASRA board has taken a stand on vouchers and school violence and will soon be asked to stand up for appropriate funding for education. However, there is one thing that traditionally we have not done. **AASRA has refrained from endorsing candidates for public office in the past. My question is why? Why shouldn’t we stand up now and fight instead of later?**
The current administration and legislature in Arizona have, through their long history of deliberate neglect, caused the crisis that we have today. Arizona has 2000 classrooms that have no teacher or one who is unqualified for that position. Arizona’s teacher salaries and per pupil funding are the lowest in the country and class sizes are enormous. Buildings and busses cannot be maintained and technology in some places dates to the last century. Arizona’s College of Education graduates are moving to other states upon graduation so that they can teach without taking a second and third job to support themselves.

The 2018 election is one of the most important in memory. Every state office is up for election. From the governor through all administration and legislative positions are in play. And the lines are pretty clearly drawn in virtually every race. Will the candidate support the current policies or advocate for increasing dedicated funds for education?

My attitude is that we should take a stand regarding who is in charge in Arizona and what policies are being advocated. If AASRA is not being proactive in our advocacy, then we are forced to always be reactive in our defense. Jerry Holmes

Reasons to Vote
Taken from “50 Reasons Why You Should Vote” by Kathryn Bullington in Opinion Sep 26, 2014

2. People power is the only thing that can keep tyranny at bay, though it is no assurance.
8. Voting can make you Superman for one day, fighting for Truth, Justice, and the American Way!
11. Women suffragettes were jailed and force fed for 3 weeks for the right to vote
29. To probe older folks for words of wisdom and life lessons. Over 70 percent of those 65 and older turn out to vote.
30. The excitement of casting YOUR vote.
31. The anticipation of waiting to see who wins.
42. To honor the 2,852,901 U.S. citizens who gave their lives or have been wounded to protect the constitution that protects your right to self-determine your community, state, and nation.
46. Casting a vote feels great!
47. “Your silence gives consent.” – Plato
49. “Because there is hope for America.”– Duncan Webb

Funding Denied, Remember to Vote

The members of All Arizona School Retirees Association (AASRA) were disheartened to learn that a majority of justices on the Arizona Supreme Court chose to deny Arizona voters the opportunity to directly express their opinions on the funding of public education in our state.

The citizen initiative process is a long standing cornerstone of Arizona's constitution. The Court’s decision to remove Proposition 207 - Invest in Education from the November ballot was a slap in the face to the over 270,000 voters who signed petitions indicating their desire to give the electorate a voice in how Arizona education should be funded.

Furthermore, it is a patronizing, politically motivated insult to the 3.6 million Arizona voters who have had their opportunity to vote on this issue stymied.

Our discontent does not lie exclusively with the Supreme Court. For over a decade the Arizona Legislature has squeezed public schools to the point that Arizona ranks among the lowest per pupil funding in our country. That disgraceful funding level brought supporters out in droves in the summer heat to gather signatures for this ballot initiative that is now thwarted.

It is imperative that those most interested take their energy to the ballot this November. We must ensure that all citizens are informed about who is responsible for the level of current funding that cheats Arizona’s children and families and impoverishes our teachers. We must elect candidates who will support adequate and sustainable funding for public education in Arizona and we must hold those elected representatives to their promises.

Since our humble origins in 1950, AASRA has supported public education and public-school employees. Our members, all former educators and educational support personnel, will join with hundreds of thousands of others around Arizona to “Remember in November.”

Jerry Holmes, AASRA President
Membership Time

We, as school employees, think this time of year is membership time. Actually, it is all year and every day. All the unit presidents have received a new membership form to print out for YOU to use. Don’t use any of the old forms. Our office moved with the AARP Arizona office to North 16th Street in Phoenix.

One on one is a very effective way to gain new members. Try social media, mailings, phone calls, brochures, etc. Keep a membership form handy and know what AASRA does and its goals.

Our AASRA organization is open to any public school employee, active or retired, who is age 50 or older for active member status. Active members may vote and hold office at the state level. Our Friend of AASRA category is any person who advocates for public education. That member does not have voting privileges and is unable to hold office at the state level. Units may have different categories of membership.

So lend a hand, grab some membership forms and AASRA brochures, and invite potential members to your local unit’s meeting. Talk to pre-retirees as well as retirees. Don’t forget the retirees who haven’t been asked or turned you down before. Good luck in recruiting new members. Hope you will soon be running to your local unit meeting saying, I got two new members! Or I got another a member!!

ADD Helps AASRA

Automatic dues deduction, ADD, members help the organization maintain a steady cash flow. When an ASRS retiree member signs up for ADD, it is a continuing membership. The member’s dues are taken out of his/her ASRS pension. ASRS sends AASRA a check each month for the number of members on ADD times $2.50. So we have income the year around. Thanks to our ADD members AASRA has a steady monthly income.

Scholarship Fundraising

“RIP-ROARING SUCCESS”

Units across the state donated baskets, some themed, for the Foundation Raffle for which we give a HUGE thank you for your time and talents to construct such wonderful baskets for the raffle. The auction was made up of some items brought for the AASRA Scholarship Foundation Auction. $1,500.00 was the total from only the auction! A huge thanks to Steve Poe, our auctioneer extraordinaire! The convention was the major fundraising project for the year to raise monies for scholarship winners from each of the three state universities. The total amount donated during the Convention was an impressive $3,087.50.

Throughout the year, additional monies come from donations of individuals and units. Your continued donations contribute to larger scholarships for deserving education students in the universities. The Foundation has received some 53 donations since the beginning of the year. Let’s make it to a 100+ donations for this year!

Joanna Haspels, Executive Secretary
AASRA Scholarship Foundation

AASRA Scholarship Foundation

The AASRA Scholarship Foundation was started at the 1999 convention. Millicent Kasun (the past president) presented a resolution from the Cochise Retired Teachers Association, “Be resolved that AASRA establish a scholarship for a deserving SENIOR student at one of our Universities majoring in education”. It passed with great enthusiasm. President Dorothy Lisonbee in July, 1999 gave John Black the responsibility to establish the foundation and to seek nonprofit status for the new foundation. The AASRA Scholarship Foundation was approved by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501c(3) organization in February in 2001. The first contribution to the foundation was made by Garry and Marjorie York on February 8, 2001. John served many years as the Foundation’s executive secretary. (John is still a member at Westside and 97 years young.) Thank you, John for doing this very worthwhile project.
The first scholarship ($500) was awarded to a Northern Arizona University education student. At first the scholarship rotated to one university each year. Now, three scholarships are awarded each year to an education student at each university. This year each scholarship was worth $2,000.

Through the years the foundation had other dedicated executive secretaries. Following John were Bill Sullivan, then Alice Reule and currently Joanna Haspels. These individuals keep the records and file the government documents each year. Garry York was president of the Foundation for many years and contacted the universities for student scholarship applications.

John had started a benefactor component and even had a first benefactor. This portion of the Foundation has not been pursued in many years. The Foundation has been working just to have enough donations for the three scholarships each year and some to add for future use. The Foundation must work towards investing more of its funds for better growth of its reserves. The Foundation Board thanks the individuals and units for their donations each year, especially at convention. If every member donated just $10, the foundation could raise the amount of the three scholarships. Also, ask your other friends and acquaintances for a donation to help with the education of a future teacher. Teachers are needed for the future of public education in AZ.

Around the State

Saguaro Unit had an annual planning meeting a week after the convention attended by Trent Cone, Patsy Cone, Pat Combs, Mary Henderson, Gloria and Jim Grosbach.

The speaker for the East Valley Unit’s May meeting was candidate David Schapira for Superintendent of Public Instruction. The unit had an officer and committee chairman planning meeting in June.

Graham-Greenlee Unit had a shot of energy from President Jerry Holmes in April. Jerry answered so many questions. We are fortunate to have a knowledgeable and articulate president.

These Units earned the Unit of Distinction Award: Westside, Saguaro, Pima County, Northwest, and East Valley. Congratulations.

Speakers at the convention were: Julie Bacon – ASBA, Allegra Fullerton – Save Our Schools, Charlene Fernandez – Legislator of the Year, Jeremy Pond and David Cannella – AZ State Retirement System, David Lujan – INVESTINED and John Moody – Legislative Consultant.

AASRA Scholarship Foundation awarded a scholarship to Daffine Lladivia an education senior at the U of A. She is planning to become a Spanish teacher. The NAU and ASU recipients’ names were not identified to the Foundation Board.

Westside Unit gave a high five to its intrepid volunteers (callers), who contact all members, who are available, to tell about its varied monthly meetings. The callers gather and note life changes and needs reported by members. The callers play a significant role in Westside’s success.

Sue Davis was honored in the Kachina Unit’s September newsletter. “Sue Davis has retired – again! First she retired from teaching and now she has retired after 13 years of being our AASRA rep. Our thanks for all you have done over the years, Sue.”

John Black (97), Westside member, and his wife Polly (95) celebrated their 73rd wedding anniversary this summer.

Kingman Area Unit had its annual super “Ditch Day” event at a local bed and breakfast in September. The theme was "Our Family Gathering".

Involving more members at meetings is a goal for the Phoenix/Scottsdale Unit. Involving more members seems to be a concern in many units.

Last spring the Kachina Unit awarded two $1000 scholarships to local students. The group is planning fundraising events to replenish its coffers.
**Westside Unit** had Allison Porter from Save our Schools Arizona to receive more information about Prop. 305.

**Saguaro Unit**’s September meeting’s program included Sine Kerr, AZ State Senator and Jerry Holmes, AASRA President.

Learning about Prop. 305 and discussing primary candidates for Superintendent for Public Instruction were topics for the **Graham-Greenlee Unit** meeting in August. Its next meeting is in January.

**Kingman Area Unit**: In May had master gardeners present interesting information about gardening in their local area. At July’s meeting, the members donated lots of school supplies for a designated school. A report on the recent convention was given. The unit had four members attending the convention.

**ASRS Report**

**ASRS IS AN EARNED BENEFIT!**

GOOD NEWS! The ASRS total fund earned 13.9% for the fiscal year of 2017 ending June 30th. The complete report will be out in the fall. This year it is running about 9%. The total balance is $40.3 Billion.

**ASRS Health Insurance**

President Jerry Holmes, Barb Weber and Janet Fee attended the ASRS Health Committee in June. We were given information about the insurance plans for 2019. ASRS will be sending out information about the Health plan for 2019. **Open enrollment will be the month of November.** The packets will be arriving in October.

The ASRS has set up a fund to offset the premiums for the health insurance, which is the RRA refund. The RRA refund was monies which ASRS negotiated in its contract with United Health Care. The fund has approximately $112 million. **This will be given out over the next three years.** With this refund the two Medicare programs will be much lower. A mailing will be coming out in October to explain the changes in the health plans. In addition to the RRA refund, the Premium Benefit is also used to help lower the premiums. Keep checking the website of ASRS www.azasrs.gov.

*Janet Fee, ASRS Liaison*
2018 Convention - Keys to Success

Honored L to R: Jim Grosbach – Meritorious Award, Marge Threewit – Outreach Award, and Rep. Charlene Fernandez – Legislator of the Year, all with AASRA President Jerry Holmes.

Units of Distinction Awards

Mexican Dinner Evening

ROOK – the magician

Photos received from: Terry Bagwell, Steve Poe, Margery Webb, Marge Threewit, Barbara Weber, and Joe Carter.
The office of AASRA and AARP Arizona has moved to:

7250 North 16th Street Suite 302
Phoenix, AZ 85020-5279

Be sure to use this address when mailing items to AASRA. Please empty your files of forms and brochures with the Peoria address.

AARP Arizona furnishes meeting and office space to AASRA. AASRA appreciates all the support AARP Arizona gives our organization.

AASRA Board 2018-19 meetings will be at the above address.

Meeting dates are:
Monday, September 24
Monday, November 19
Monday, January 28
Monday, March 25

Remember to Vote

Study the issues and candidates. Make an informed opinion. Vote for positive change.

Vote “NO” on Proposition 305.

Hats off to Sue and Pearl

Two of our officers busy with convention business

Sue Secrest as treasurer and Pearl Nancarrow as secretary have held these ASSRA positions for over ten years. Each is very dedicated to her work for the organization.

Sue spends hours handling AASRA’s financial records and balancing our books. She files our government documents and keeps the official membership roll. Sue prepares the mailing addresses for this newsletter.

Pearl prepares the official minutes for the Board and for the annual convention. She listens, takes notes, records meetings and tabulates the motions as they are written and placed in order in the minutes. Then she distributes them to the Board members and archives them.

Sue and Pearl we value the dedicated service you do for organization. Hats off to both of you!