



## Executive Director's Report to the 2019 KEA Delegate Assembly

Before I started writing this year's report, I looked back at my 2018 submission. My comment in the 2018 report that we were "dealing with the legislative session" was a gross understatement. What happened last March and April was both amazing and appalling.

The amazing part was the enormous time and energy KEA leaders and members expended to be at the Capitol as often as possible throughout the entire 2018 legislative session. Our normal twice a week Days of Learning quickly turned into an every day event. But even that daily presence at the Capitol wasn't enough. Twice in two weeks – first on April 2, 2018 and again on April 14, 2018 – KEA called thousands of educators from across the state to show up in Frankfort. With the help of local and district presidents, and with the support of superintendents, transportation directors, the Frankfort emergency management crew, the Frankfort police department and the KEA staff and managers, oh boy, did you show up!

The appalling part was the reason you had to come: HB 151, otherwise known as the "sewer bill." My favorite photo from the April 14 rally was a line of porta-potties that were plastered with KEA signs, including the "We Are Watching You" signs. For me, that photo sums up exactly what was happening in Frankfort at that moment.

With the help of Attorney General Beshear and in partnership with the Fraternal Order of Police, KEA successfully challenged the process by which HB 151 was passed. The Governor and the leaders in the House and Senate didn't like that outcome, but it was the right and proper decision. No one is above the law, including lawmakers. In all the motions and documents that went back and forth during the litigation, the most compelling statement is from Judge Shepherd's decision from the Franklin Circuit Court:

. . . we should endeavor to make all governmental conduct conform to the commands of the Constitution. The wholesale violation of Section 46 is a threat to the integrity of the legislative process, and it undermines respect for the rule of law.

In other words, some legislators actually pose a threat to the legislative process and are actively working to undermine the rule of law. The governor's argument in support of the legislature's unconstitutional action was that they had done the same thing before, the classic "two (or more) wrongs make a right" argument. But Judge Shepherd and the Justices of the Supreme Court of Kentucky were not having it. Through their unanimous decision, the Supreme Court let both the legislative and executive branches know they had plainly overstepped the directives of the people by their unconstitutional acts. We should all be grateful that we have a judicial branch to balance the abuse of power.

Educators teach, but they also learn. Over the last year, every educator in the state learned to have a healthy skepticism about what happens at the Capitol, to watch carefully the actions of their elected officials and to ask blunt questions about their motives. That lesson carried forward to the 2019 session, during which we've seen unprecedented levels of activism by educators. As of this writing, the legislature has not yet gaveled out, and they are being more closely scrutinized by educators and the



## Executive Director's Report to the 2019 KEA Delegate Assembly

public than ever before. It's about time that the same group that constantly imposes "accountability and transparency" on everyone else feels some of that heat themselves.

### Initiatives for the rest of 18-19 and the first half of 19-20:

- This DA will bring newly elected leadership to the Association. The entire KEA staff and I look forward to working with the new leadership team, whoever they may be.
- As soon as the statewide primary is over in May, we will turn most of our organizational efforts to the races for the constitutional offices, particularly the governor's race. It's no secret that Governor Bevin, his policies and his cabinet members have not been friends to educators or to public education. Although the Governor has pushed money toward the pensions in his budgets, he simultaneously undercuts that positive action by constantly complaining about the "unfunded liability" and the "pension crisis," by blaming everything he doesn't like on the "teachers union" and by flat-out insulting public-school employees. His goal is to privatize education, turn it into a profit-taking venture, and to use our tax dollars to make that happen. For the sake of all students, but particularly for the underserved, financially challenged, housing challenged, medically challenged students everywhere, we must all stand firm against that agenda. That means over the next few months we must all work, work, work to elect constitutional officers who will support and protect public education, not undercut it for their own ends.
- In order to recruit and retain members, KEA will conduct a targeted Spring Membership campaign beginning on April 1 and continuing through May 31. This initiative will be discussed in more detail at the DA.
- After the Spring Membership window closes, we will turn our full attention to continuing to offer meaningful supports for New Educators (those who have been in their profession 5 years or less). NEA is conducting a convening at the end of March to discuss their new approach to identifying, recruiting, and supporting members who are also new educators. KEA is sending a team to that convening and looks forward to learning about their work.
- As part of our push to strengthen locals, support local leadership development, and offer meaningful support to individual members, we will hold three important events in June: the RESPECT conference, specifically for the benefit of our ESP members; the TALK conference, which is high-quality professional development by teachers, for teachers; and the Local Presidents/Next Generation Leadership conference.
- August through November is the annual window for our "New Educator Outreach" effort. Although that's been very successful each of the last 3 years, we plan to partner more closely with NEA to enhance our data collection and analysis and to follow up with the members and potential members we reach through the NEO activities.



## Executive Director's Report to the 2019 KEA Delegate Assembly

### Staff changes:

- New hires:
  - Heather Gibson is the Associate in the Barbourville office. Heather started in January 2018.
  - Colmon Elridge is our new Government Relations Director. Colmon started in April 2018.
  - Michael Wilson, UniServ Director in the Elizabethtown office, started in July 2018.
  - David Patterson is our new Communications Director. David started in October 2018.
  - Johanna (Jo) Pierce is a new Associate in the JCTA office. Jo started on March 1, 2019.
  
- Several staff retired since last April:
  - Gwen Darst, Web Specialist. Gwen was hired in July 1976 and retired in December 2018; she was with KEA for 43 years.
  - Susan Herron, UD in Florence. Susan was hired in July 1981 and retired in December 2018; she was with KEA for 38 years.
  - Beverly Pitts, Associate in Bowling Green. Beverly was hired in September 1988 and retired in December 2018; she was with KEA for 30 years.
  - Ann Eads, Accountant. Ann was hired in March 1996 and retired in March 2019; she was with KEA for 23 years.
  - Anne Marie Riddell, Confidential Associate. Anne Marie was hired in March 1999 and retired in March 2019; she was with KEA for 20 years.
  - Jeanine Scott, Associate at KEA HQ. Jeanine was hired in December 2009 and retired in December 2018; she was with KEA for 10 years.
  
- Other staff transitions: Craig Carter, who was a UD in the Paducah office, left in January to take a management position with the Louisiana Education Association; Roz Bryant recently moved from the UniServ Specialist position at HQ to become the UniServ Director in the St. Matthews office; Jerrod Neal moved from St. Matthews to the KEA Florence office. As of this writing, we have a UniServ vacancy in the Madisonville office, which will be posted soon for internal transfer.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Mary W. Ruble, Executive Director**  
**March 15, 2019**