



Executive Director's Report to the 2026 KEA Delegate Assembly

Report since the 2025 DA:

Since assuming the role of Executive Director in January, my primary focus has been on organizing and strengthening how our work is planned, coordinated, and communicated—internally, with our members, and with the public. This work has centered on fostering intentional and frequent conversations, reducing silos, and ensuring staff talents are fully utilized. These efforts have improved collaboration and alignment across the organization.

At the same time, we have worked to establish consistent brand standards for social media messaging and video content. As we continue to evaluate and refine our approach, we are adapting our communications to better reflect shifting membership demographics while strengthening clarity, consistency, and impact.

A unifying theme across all staff conversations has been membership recruitment and retention. Following last year's Delegate Assembly, our membership dropped below the threshold required to maintain two NEA Director seats. Regaining that second director seat is one of my highest priorities. While the loss of payroll deduction directly contributed to the membership decline, we have acknowledged this new reality and are focused on adapting our strategies to move forward effectively.

Through the successful Smart Pay campaigns, staff traveled extensively across the state and gained valuable insight into what makes locals strong. A consistent takeaway from this work is the critical connection between strong locals and strong local leadership. These experiences reinforced the importance of investing in leadership development at both local and site levels. Strengthening leaders strengthens our union, and I remain committed to continuing and expanding this work.

Initiatives for the remainder of 2026-27:

- **Student Behavior Challenges:** KEA launched the Student Behavior Support Survey (SBSS) to gather confidential input from certified and classified educators statewide on the frequency and impact of student behavior challenges, with broad participation encouraged between March 30 and April 27 to inform an independent, nonpartisan report guiding strategies to improve safety and support for educators and students. Our plans are to use this to have meaningful data driven conversations with the legislature and policy makers in the 2027 legislative session.
- **Artificial Intelligence:** KEA is approaching artificial intelligence with intentional leadership rooted in educator professionalism and worker protections. We recognize both the potential and risks of AI and are committed to closely monitoring its development while working toward a board policy that establishes clear, ethical, and worker-focused standards. At KEA, AI is viewed as a tool that can support professional work—not to replace human judgment, expertise, or critical thinking—and our evolving



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guidance reflects our responsibility to protect educators' professional integrity, safeguard staff, and ensure AI is used responsibly, transparently, and in alignment with our values.

- **Spring Drive:** Each spring presents a critical opportunity to grow our numbers and strengthen our collective voice. The Spring Membership Drive, launched March 1 will be running through the summer, is designed to meet potential members where they are—during new employee orientations, new hire events, and professional development opportunities—before the next school year begins. By offering a reduced introductory rate and an easy electronic enrollment process, the Spring Drive helps educators take the first step toward membership while positioning KEA for a strong start in the fall.
- **School Board Elections:** They matter because board members shape educators' salaries, benefits, and working conditions; we will take a more active role in recruiting and supporting pro-public education, pro-KEA candidates. This will lead to increased salary and strengthen collective bargaining language in new and existing locals—especially since the legislature has made clear that raises are decided at the local board level.

Staff Retirements in 2025:

- **Elana Crane:** UniServ Director in Louisville, started her career in May of 2000 and retired in June of 2025. Elana spent most of her career working with JCTA. She was an exceptional organizer and trainer.
- **Mary Ruble:** Was hired as an attorney in legal services in December of 2006 before being promoted to Assistant Executive Director of Programs in January of 2010. She was hired as Executive Director in May of 2016 and retired in December 2025. She helped guide our union through many difficult times during the “Red for Ed” movement, the loss of payroll deduction, and the voucher fight over Amendment 2.

Both retiring staff served our union very well and will be missed by the members they serve and the colleagues with whom they have developed relationships. We wish Elana and Mary an enjoyable, healthy, and long retirement. They will be missed!

**Respectfully submitted,
Rich Mullins, Executive Director
April 5, 2026**