

The 1148er

The official newsletter of the West St. Paul Federation of Teachers

FROM THE PRESIDENT:

Greetings 1148ers!

I had hoped to have this month's message be a little lighter fare, however the political winds that are blowing in Washington and in St. Paul will keep that from happening for now. The executive actions by both the President and the Governor (in the form of his proposed budget), as well as a state house that just now come back in session, have made for a challenging landscape for national, state, and local union leaders to navigate. What has given me some degree of calm is that much of these challenges have been anticipated, and in a slew of communications and training I

have received over the last few months, I have been assured that we have one helluva strong union that is working hard to ensure that our members and above all else, our students, weather these storms!

I recognize that many of you have been in those trainings and received those communiqués; AFT, NEA, and Education Minnesota make these publicly available to all of us, not just local leaders. However, I know that most of us don't have the hours in the day to keep track of it all, and so I wanted to summarize some of the action being taken by our union to date.

First at the national level, AFT, NEA, and AFL-CIO leaders have been working with their respective legal teams to respond appropriately to the slew of Executive Orders that have come from the White House that target public education and the larger labor movement. They have provided regular communications with state and local leaders keeping us informed of the shifting sands, and have provided legal guidance and tools on how to address ICE raids, the extent a particular executive order is legal, and to what extent the threats from those orders are immediate.

Second, Education Minnesota also has provided similar communications and tools, most recently trainings that relate to possible ICE raids and how to keep our LGBTQIA2S+ siblings and students safe. Those trainings are available on [MEA Online](#) if you missed them. Additionally, EdMn leadership hosts a local leader zoom meeting at least once every month where we discuss concerns and strategize about appropriate responses to them.

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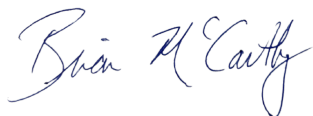
FROM THE PRESIDENT CONTINUED:

Third, I continue to connect with our state legislators and other local presidents to share our concerns and to build solidarity. Closest to home, I have regularly checked in with the superintendent and his communications team to review the messaging they are providing all of our community to ensure it is in alignment with the legal advice and messaging our union is providing me. These meetings have been very positive to date with the administration being very amenable to not only sharing it prior to its dissemination, but suggestions on how to improve the content. Also know that we have a number of our local leaders who have been involved in the aforementioned training/meetings and I am grateful for the time they are committing to them on behalf of us all!

I share all of this with the hope to make something very clear: when you are in our union, you are never alone! If you're feeling that way, please reach out! I am here for you! Your officers, negotiators, and building reps are here for you! We are all here for one another and most of all for our students! With that, I will end with a quote from President Denise Specht of Education Minnesota:

We will not quietly accept these attempts to defund our schools, harass our educators, terrorize our trans students or restrict the freedom to teach an honest history about our nation, both the triumphs and the times our nation felt short of our ideals. Educators believe every Minnesota student deserves a safe, welcoming and effective school; hateful and grandiose executive orders will not change that. Your union will do all it can to protect all we hold dear. Please also take care of yourselves and each other. We will get through this together.

In solidarity,



MINNESOTA AFL-CIO SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

The Minnesota AFL-CIO is now taking scholarship applications for high school seniors graduating this year. Applicants must be a union member or dependent of a union member, have a straight "B" average, and planning to attend a post-secondary institution within the State of Minnesota. **Apply Now**

Also, a reminder that the deadline to apply for the **WSPFT scholarship** is 5 p.m. Friday February 14. This information was originally shared via email on 12/14/2024.

RETIRING THIS YEAR? TAKING A LEAVE NEXT YEAR?

Be mindful that you need to inform HR by March 1. It would also be great if you could **let Brian know** as we begin to plan our spring retirement celebration. The March 1 deadline also applies for various types of Career/General Leaves. For more specific information, please review **our contract**.

FROM TOM RAYMOND: LOCAL ACTION LEADER

For those who have been able to attend a site meeting on Pensions and Health Insurance already, THANK YOU! There is a lot at stake and hopefully you gained a better understanding of the challenges we face with Pensions and Health Insurance. We need 80,000+ squeaky wheels advocating for why we need a career rule and why the health insurance status quo is no longer sustainable for our teachers! As our Local Action Leader, it is my purpose to lead all in 1148 to act and push for change. This career is challenging but also rewarding! We need to make sure we are properly valued by a respectable pension when we need it and that may not be after teaching for 43 years or until NRA (Normal Retirement Age) of 65! It is time to get involved and stay involved!

Here's how you can do that:

- Attend your site meeting on Pensions and Health Insurance!** Bring your laptop/device!
 - Garlough*: Wednesday, February 12th at 3:45 in the library
 - Somerset*: Wednesday, February 19th at 3:45 in Mary Nelson's room (108)
 - If you missed/can't attend your site meeting: a [virtual meeting](#) on Thursday, February 13th at 6:00 pm
- Do your research!**
 - Learn about [Educator Pensions](#)
 - Read about the [State-wide Health Insurance Plan](#)
- Write and/or call your Legislators!**
 - Share your story with them!
 - Discuss Pensions!
 - Ask them to pass **60/30, COLAs** (Cost of Living Adjustments) and **lower penalties**.
 - Talk about Health Care!
 - Ask for their commitment to support our state-wide health insurance bill.
 - [Tips on contacting your Legislator](#)
 - [Sample Email to Legislators](#) (includes information on how to find your Legislator)
 - [EdMN's pension priorities](#) (overview)
 - [EdMN's Pension Advocacy Group recommendations](#) (includes info on lower penalties, COLA increases, and tentative final benefits with proposed changes)
- [Register to attend the Pension Rally on 2/18!](#)**
 - If you plan on attending, connect with [Tom Raymond](#) so 1148ers can meet up!
- Write "Love Letters" to your Legislators**
 - Information on this is coming very soon! Look for information from your Building Reps!
 - Love Letter template on next page!
- Be prepared to be an educated voter in the upcoming EdMN and TRA elections!**

*Please note, as many direct links as possible have been included to help guide you through this process, but all of this information can be found by logging in to <http://educationminnesota.org/>, clicking on Advocacy, then navigating to the Pensions and Health Insurance information.

Thank you for your advocacy and reach out with any questions to [Tom Raymond!](#)

KNOW YOUR CONTRACT!

You can find our contract on both [our website](#) and on the [197 website](#). Be sure to keep it readily accessible but above all, know your rights! If you ever need any help understanding them, your building reps stand ready to help!

Educators Love Fair Pensions!



THE VOICE FOR PROFESSIONAL
EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

USA 5287

ANGIE CRAIG VISITS TWO RIVERS!

On January 29th, Congresswoman Angie Craig (DFL- 2nd District) visited Two Rivers! As part of her tour, Congresswoman Craig met with TR Local 1148 members Heather Gardner, Melinda Weiss, JoAnne Teigland, and Bruce Carpenter as well as Superintendent Olson-Skog. Main stops on the tour included seeing the amazing things our students and teachers are doing in the Warrior Wakeup Program, as well as our Unified Physical Education Course. These are both unique settings where students of a variety of abilities work and learn shoulder to shoulder from and with each other!

Warrior Wake-Up and Unified PE are both integral components of the Two Rivers Community and we are grateful that Congresswoman Craig, a passionate advocate for Special Education, chose to come to Two Rivers to see them! There are many schools in her district and we are honored that her team made the special request to include union educators to lead the tour! We are proud of the work these educators, and all of our union educators, do to better the lives of our students!



Dear Brian McCarthy and the Educators of ISD197,

It has been widely reported that President Trump plans to issue an Executive Order to dismantle the Department of Education. I am alarmed by this possibility and share your concern for the future of Minnesota's public education institutions. I am hearing this may happen once President Trump's Secretary of Education nominee Linda McMahon is confirmed by the Senate.

I anticipate this order will be met with legal action. Trump's Executive Order could weaken the Department of Education by shifting priorities or limiting enforcement of federal policies, but it cannot abolish the department without congressional approval.

Education should never be a partisan issue. Every child in this country – no matter their zip code – deserves access to a high-quality education so they can reach their full potential. As a mother of four children, the wife of an educator and the daughter of

a teacher – and as someone who benefitted from the public education system myself – I know we can never underestimate the power of high-quality education. I will fight any attempts to defund our public schools. I am an original cosponsor of a House Joint Resolution

that opposes the Trump Administration's executive actions and condemns any executive or Congressional action that would weaken or dismantle the Department of Education. I remain committed to fighting for bipartisan legislation to fully fund and protect critical programs like Title I and IDEA.

Please know that I will continue working across the aisle to ensure every student and school district are supported because when our students succeed, our communities are stronger. I encourage you to contact my District Office at (651) 846-2120 as this issue

develops, as my team is ready and willing to serve as a resource for you during these confusing times.

Sincerely,

Angie Craig
Member of Congress

EDUCATION MINNESOTA REPRESENTATIVE CONVENTION: FINAL DELEGATE CALL!

The 2025 Representative Convention will be held Friday, April 25 through Saturday, April 26 at the DoubleTree by Hilton Bloomington. The RC is Education Minnesota's highest governing body, with more than 600 elected delegates meeting annually to set policy for the union. WSPFT is allocated six delegates, and it is important that we make our voices heard at the convention to shape policy that is reflective of the values of our local. To be a delegate, you need not be an officer or a member of the Executive Board and we would love to have new faces in the mix! If you are interested in serving our union as a delegate please [email Brian](#). If we have more than six applicants, we will hold an election in accordance with [Article IV of our constitution](#), EdMn election rules, and federal law. *The deadline to apply is March 1.*

LOOKING TO BUY A HOME IN 2025?

[Tradition Mortgage](#) is the preferred mortgage lender for EdMn, and if you are purchasing a home in 2025, they are offering up to \$22,000 in down payment assistance at a low interest rate of 1.99%. You can find more details, as well as more great member benefits at [Benefit options - Education Minnesota](#).

RALLY TO FUND OUR FUTURE AT THE CAPITOL: RESCHEDULED FOR FEBRUARY 18TH!



Education Minnesota members from around the state will be rallying at the state capitol on Tuesday February 18th beginning at 3:30 p.m. We hope to have a large contingent of WSPFT members standing with our union siblings, sisters, and brothers as we drive home the importance of better pay, pensions, and healthcare for all Minnesota educators! The Governor's [recent budget proposal](#) cuts funding for Qcomp which funds ATPPS stipends for our members and similar programs for 1/3 of the districts around the state.

Add this to the already grim insurance forecast we have been receiving and it is clear that now more than ever our legislators hear loud and clear the need to fully fund our [legislative priorities](#)! [Register here](#) to join us in this important afternoon of action!

WANT TO SAVE MONEY ON HEALTHCARE? OF COURSE YOU DO!

There are two services in our healthcare plan that can save you, and our self-insured plan, money! When you use Amplify, deductibles and copays are waived! Overall, when you use practitioners within their network costs decrease between 40-70%! Check out this [three-minute video](#) or call 1-800-890-4017 to speak to a patient advocate who can help you find an Amplify provider who will meet your needs.

In addition to Amplify, Teladoc can also save you and our plan money! Teladoc gives you round-the-clock access to U.S. board certified doctors, from home or on the go. Check [this link](#) out for more information. You can also call them at 1-800-Teladoc or visit Teladoc.com

HEALTH INSURANCE UPDATE

Here are a few items of note from our January Labor Management (Insurance) Committee meeting that were also shared with our Executive Board:

1. RFPs (bid requests) were sent out to the usual players (PEIP, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Medica, Health Partners, UMR, among others).
2. On 2/12 we will "open" those bids. This is a statutory formality and will take about ten minutes.
3. On 2/27 we will do our first renewal review. That will be the meeting where we specific benefits each provider would have available to us should the district choose them, and what kind of cost it would be for our plan to contract with each provider.
4. One Digital now projects a 13.65% increase to our plan costs (up from 11/1% last month which is due largely in part because of ax` \$1.6 million claims payout by our plan in December (the largest monthly payout by the plan in 36 months). This has us now at 90% of our expected accumulative claims (last year we were at 81%, two years ago we were at 75%) for the year.

Your building reps were provided the summary report in its entirety. If you would like to review that document, please connect with one of them. Looking ahead the LMC will "open" final bids from potential providers on 3/20 (after One Digital does some further negotiating with them on our behalf), with the committee providing a final recommendation to district administration on 4/3. Remember the committee can only make a recommendation. Should there be a potential for a "decrease in aggregate benefits" to the terms and conditions of our contract, this has to be negotiated! Should this become a feasible course of action, we will keep you informed with the necessary details. For now, continue to follow the Executive Board updates sent by your building reps, and should you need more specific information, please feel free to reach out to any of your elected reps, negotiators, or officer team. They work in these roles for the good of us all!

FROM YOUR NEGOTIATORS:

Dear WSPFT Members,

Please join us in upcoming listening sessions and participate in the survey to share your concerns about working conditions, salary/benefits, and contract language. This information helps us formulate language and financial proposals for the upcoming negotiating meetings with the district.

We have several language items already drafted that will align with Minnesota legislative changes, including Paid Family Leave, the READ Act, and Federation business. We seek to continuously improve our contract language to better support our members at all levels and sites.

Your voice matters. Take the [survey](#)! Please add your thoughts and priorities for the upcoming round of negotiations. Negotiators will use this initial survey to formulate plans.

There are three [virtual listening sessions](#) planned for March. Please choose one to attend. There will be other opportunities later in the spring for in person sessions.

**** March 3rd @ 5:00 pm ** March 12th @ 4:00 pm ** March 19th @ 5:00 pm ****

Information shared by *YOU* will help guide the work of the negotiators in the next contract. We plan to meet with the district in April.

Your WSPFT Negotiator Team,

Matt Beniak, Anne Bolsem, Phil Hayes, Kristy Otte, and Brian McCarthy

ATPPS FUTURE IN DOUBT

The governor's budget proposal includes language to discontinue funding of Q-Comp (what we call ATPPS) starting in the 2026–2027 school year. This is just a proposal and budget approval is a legislative process. If you are interested, the full budget proposal is linked [HERE](#) (see pg. 80 in PDF/actually numbered pg. 72). The outcome of this will likely not be known until late May or early June at the earliest, with the possibility of a special legislative session being called for this summer if a budget cannot be agreed upon by the legislature.

To understand the context of the proposed budget changes, it's important to know that our Teacher Development and Evaluation (TDE) plan operates in conjunction with our ATPPS plan, which provides funding for coaching and stipends with State Q-comp dollars. Furthermore, as we shared this fall, statute requires that TDE rubrics incorporate culturally responsive methodologies starting next school year (2025–2026). These elements--coaching, stipends, and rubrics--will all be affected by the proposed elimination of Q-Comp funding by the governor.

The ATPPS Oversight Committee met on January 30th to discuss 2025–2026 hiring in light of the proposed budget and rubric changes. Their primary goal was to respond to this proposal to ensure the successful continuity of our ATPPS program for the coming year and to minimize disruption during the rubric transition. The committee recommended offering a one-year extension to the three Instructional Peer Coaches (IPC) completing their third year of service. The committee voted 5–4 in favor of this extension with union members and administrators voting for and against the recommendation. The extension will help maintain experience during the rubric transition, mitigate the steep learning curve new coaches experience, and reduce training costs. After offering the extension to the IPCs set to cycle out of ATPPS at the conclusion of the school year, there is one position that will be open for 2025–26. Because funding is only guaranteed for one year under the governor's proposal, this position will also be for one year only. The posting was shared by Cari Jo Drewitz via staff email on Feb. 4 with applications due by 3 PM on Tuesday, February 18th.

Later this week we will be voting on the continuation of our TDE and ATPPS programs. These votes happen annually and despite the budgetary uncertainty we are currently facing, will go on as planned. Keep an eye on your email for more information about this.

SOCIAL MEDIA



@wspft1148



@wspft1148



@wspft



<http://wspft.mn.aft.org>

MEMBER RECOGNITION

Know of a member who is doing extraordinary things that deserves a shout out? [Email Brian](#) and we will look to get them into the next e1148er and on our social media feeds!

SAVE THE DATE: **SPRING** **MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

Be sure to save the date for our Spring meeting on 5/21/25, hosted by [FoodSmith](#). We will also honor our retirees! More details to come!

FUTURE 1148ER ISSUES

Have ideas for future issues or want to help in the production of the e1148er?

We'd love to [hear](#) from you!



EDUCATION MINNESOTA AFFINITY GROUPS

You may not be aware, but EdMn has established affinity groups for BIPOC educators. If you are interested in finding out more information on racial justice resources, or how to get involved, click [here](#), and/or reach out to [Brian](#).

UNION MEMBERSHIP AFTER RETIREMENT

Thinking of retiring in the next few years? Education Minnesota offers membership for retirees.

You may be eligible for a membership at no cost to you!

Have a [look here](#) to see if you are eligible and the benefits of staying an EdMn member.

UNION PLUS: EVEN MORE BENEFITS!

If you haven't already, check out [Union Plus](#) for myriad types of fringe benefits that come with our membership in the AFL-CIO. They offer [scholarships](#), mortgage assistance, credit and medical bill assistance, shopping/travel discounts and more!

PEOPLE TO KNOW

OFFICERS:

- *Brian McCarthy (TR), President*
- *Lora Messer-Nilles (FHMS), VP*
- *Laura Scott (TR), Treasurer*
- *Beth Rabe (MO), Secretary*
- *Phil Hayes (FHMS), Past President*
- *Kim Zellmer, ATPPS Coordinator*

NEGOTIATORS:

- *Anne Bolsem (PK)*
- *Phil Hayes (FH)*
- *Kristy Otte (H)*
- *Matt Beniak (PK)*

BUILDING REPS:

- *Margaret Citta (TR)*
- *Matt Malmberg-Merthan (TR)*
- *Janelle Christensen (TR)*
- *Jodie Darwitz (FH)*
- *Patrick McCormick (FH)*
- *Angela Penttila (H)*
- *Kristi Cooper (H)*
- *Hayley DeMers (H)*
- *Lea Beniek (ELC)*
- *Michelle Smith (ELC)*
- *Lisa Jasper (GEMS)*
- *Julia Linehan (GEMS)*
- *Samantha Schiltz (ME)*
- *Anna Thul (ME)*
- *Anna Banti (MO)*
- *Shari Niemczyk (MO)*
- *Joann Cudo (PK)*
- *Julie Fitzgerald (PK)*
- *Mary Nelson (S)*
- *Lori Thomas (S)*



EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS

Just a reminder that Executive Board meetings are open to all Local 1148 members. For a complete list of meeting times/dates, you can always refer to our [website](#). If you would like to attend you can reach out to any EB member who can provide more information. All are welcome!

CONTACT INFO UPDATES

Do you have a NEW address? Do you have a NEW last name? Do you have a NEW building assignment/FTE? Please contact Laura Scott, our Treasurer, at wspft1148treasurer@gmail.com with any and all changes to keep our records up to date, and our lines of communication with you uninterrupted.