



United Voices for
NDU-
Retired

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School Boards & UPAC

By Gale Haug, NDU-Retired Vice President

School Boards across North Dakota make crucial decisions that have a huge impact on the education of our pre-K to grade 12 students and the working conditions of school employees. These decisions include, but are not limited to: choosing the vision for your school district, hiring and evaluating the superintendent, setting policy, and approving curriculum. Also, keep in mind - it is your tax contributions that fund local schools. Given these important factors, it behooves all of us to stay involved in our school board elections at the local level. Unfortunately, voter turnout at many school board elections across the state is very low. This is most likely because these elections are not well advertised and most patrons do not have a personal relationship with any of the candidates. Many voters are reluctant to participate in an election in which they do not know the candidates or their views.

North Dakota United is constantly working to amplify local school board elections and ensure that pro-education candidates are elected. We do this through our UPAC (United Political Action Campaign) fund, which will engage in school board races for the first time this year. While school board elections and candidates are non-partisan, issues and decisions made by our school boards are becoming much more politicized than in the past. Your involvement is the best way to ensure that your views and beliefs are represented within your local school district. To that end, UPAC has developed a handbook to assist local education associations in promoting pro-education school board candidates which includes GOTV (Get Out the Vote) activities, candidate screening tools, and a recommendation process. Research proves that a super majority of citizens respect and trust educators and other school employees and would respond favorably to their recommendations.

If you would like to be involved in the effort to elect pro-education candidates for school boards across the state, one of the easiest ways is to support UPAC financially. You can do this by making a contribution that will help pay for the cost of organizing candidate screenings, public forums, door to door efforts, and other GOTV activities in your local district. Your contribution does not qualify for a tax deduction, but it is imperative that we work together to support our local pro-education candidates for our school boards. Below is a QR code to facilitate your contribution.

Martin Luther King once said, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." Let us not be silent! Rather, let us be a voice for pro education school board candidates across the state.



Decline to Sign - Property Tax Measure



By JoNell Bakke, NDU-Retired Advisory Board
Northeast Member

For years, the people of North Dakota have expressed their concerns regarding the high property taxes. In response to these concerns, a group within the state has crafted an initiative measure aimed at eliminating property taxes. While this proposal may seem promising, it's important to recognize some potential challenges associated with it. To gain a better understanding, it's essential to begin by questioning the original purpose of property taxes.

The state, through legislative action, gives each political subdivision, school district, college and university, etc. a specified pot of money to fund a portion of their financial needs. This money comes from income tax and sales tax. The state never funds the entire budgetary needs of these entities. It is usually funded closer to 60% to 70%. So, where does the rest of the money come from? Property taxes.

Property taxes do not go into the state pot of money. It goes to fund the needs of the townships, county and cities. It goes towards roads, fire departments, police departments, sanitation departments, and school districts to name a few. Property tax is a mainstay of local revenue for special entities including school districts. 30-40% of school budgets come directly from property taxes.

Removing property taxes would result in a reduction of revenue for schools, posing a substantial dilemma for the state, school districts, and taxpayers alike, as they grapple with the question of where these funds will be sourced. The bottom line is that by signing this petition to eliminate property taxes, you would be eliminating the funding source and potentially cutting the budgets that go towards paying the salaries of the educational and public employees in our state.

Please use the QR code to DECLINE TO SIGN this petition and talk to your family and neighbors to make sure they understand the consequences of this proposed initiated measure.



Retired & Energized

By Karen Askerooth, NDU-Retired President

Your NDU-Retired Advisory Board is busy at work planning events for the new year. Please feel free to contact any of us to discuss union issues, events, or ideas you have for NDU-Retired. Wishing you a happiest new year. In solidarity.

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Make a Difference on Giving Hearts Day

By Deb Johnson,
NDU-Retired Secretary

Happy 2024! As we venture into this new year we have much for which to be grateful! And now we have a chance to show just how grateful we are for the things that make our lives just a little easier.



**GIVING
HEARTS
DAY**

In 2008, North Dakota and Western Minnesota started the Giving Hearts Campaign, which is centered around Valentine's Day, to show love for the local charities that give back to our communities. Giving Hearts Day this year is February 8, 2024, although you can start giving to charities as early as January 2, 2024. All donations on Giving Hearts Day are matched, meaning your donation is automatically doubled.

Did you know that on Giving Hearts Day, more dollars are raised for charities throughout the upper Midwest than any other day throughout the year? Your contributions benefit critical organizations such as food pantries, disability services, local non-profits, and educational foundations. And the money goes directly to the charities you choose and love the most. The North Dakota United (NDU) Foundation is just such an organization that needs the support of all educators and public employees. The purpose of the NDU Foundation is to promote educational excellence and community service across North Dakota.

The NDU Foundation is an independent not-for-profit corporation, supporting the members of North Dakota United, their dependents and students preparing to teach, and serve the public sector. The NDU Foundation has awarded scholarships and grants since it gave its first \$500 scholarship in 1991. These scholarships and grants are awarded to a wide range of deserving individuals, to be used in pursuit of secondary and post-secondary degrees, or for professional development. In 2023, the NDU Foundation awarded 40 NDU members and dependents over \$60,000 in total scholarships and grants.

This year the Foundation has added 4 new scholarships:

- Fern Pokorny Education Scholarship – Available to a student pursuing an undergraduate degree in elementary education from Dickinson State University.
- Harris & Arlyce Widmer Family Business Education Scholarship – Available to an active NDU member or dependent of an active member who is pursuing undergraduate or graduate education, or professional development opportunities in business education.
- Holland Family Experiential Learning Grant – Available to assist members engaged in developing and/or presenting experiential learning to improve public service or public education in North Dakota.
- NDU Fine Arts Grant – Available for an individual member or a group of members to enhance arts at the elementary or secondary level, support professional development, and/or support student activities in the arts.

There is no finer way to start your New Year than to give back to the profession that provided for us all! Here's how to donate to the North Dakota United Foundation:

- Visit the GivingHeartsDay.org website to find the NDU Foundation .
- Beginning on January 2nd and through the big day, February 8, 2024, donate any amount from \$10.00 and up to the Foundation. It's the best way to show your support and how giving your heart is.
- Share the Love - Use #GivingHeartsDay to share the day on social media, too.

On behalf of the North Dakota United Foundation, myself included, thank you from the bottom of our hearts for giving so generously and supporting educational and public service excellence throughout North Dakota!

NDU-Retired Organizing Plan

By Gale Haug, NDU-Retired Vice President



The NDU Retired Board is in the process of revitalizing “post Covid”. One of our areas of focus is increasing membership. In 2023, sixteen new members were given a promotional NDU-R stadium blanket. These new members were contacted through various means, i.e. through one-on-one contacts, and informal gatherings such as retired teacher lunches. We need to do more of this type of outreach to encourage membership with recently retired teachers, classified staff and other prospective members across the state.

With this goal in mind, we are planning to contact presidents and other leaders in the larger locals and smaller locals nearby. Our plan is to organize and fund events with our local NDU leaders and invite all local retirees this year to attend. These events could take the form of retiree recognitions and celebrations to be organized in conjunction with locals and attended by local executive board members and retirees. NDU-Retired Advisory board members will be contacting local leaders to plan these events.

NDU-Retired Advisory Board members will be reaching out to local presidents to ask to attend a Building Representative meeting or other local event to promote NDU-R membership. We would also discuss issues including but not limited to: pensions, property tax, vouchers, UPAC, upcoming elections. Work will continue throughout the year.

In May of 2024, the NDU Retired Advisory Board will look at hosting regional meetings in targeted school board race locations to discuss upcoming races and help locals get involved. If successful, we would consider doing similar outreach for legislative elections in the fall.

These are a sampling of efforts that we as the retired contingent of NDU are currently planning. This is a work in progress. We look forward to increasing our involvement statewide and we appreciate your membership and input!



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