

December 7 – Negotiations Begin – Wear Red for Unity!

Dear OEA Members,

Your OEA Negotiating Team begins bargaining with OPS on December 7. We are scheduled to meet from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. We look forward to a respectful, professional process that leads to a fair and equitable master agreement.

The Negotiating Team along with the Comp and Benefits Committee has met for more than 40 hours preparing and planning for negotiations. I want to thank members of these committees for this uncompensated, volunteer time.

Please show your support and unity for our members by wearing red on December 7!

This is a visible and tangible way to let your team know that we stand united. **Please take photos of your support and send them to me at bridget.donovan@nsea.org or text them to 402-709-1061.**

OEA educators are strong advocates for what is best for kids – and negotiating a fair and just contract for educators is of significant benefit to our students, our public schools and the district. **“A student’s learning environment is a teacher’s working environment”** remains a solid axiom of our negotiating philosophy.

As public school employees, our lives – both professional and personal – are directly affected by the decisions of elected officials. These policymakers shape everything from classroom safety, to the length of the school day, to educators’ paychecks, to union membership, to altering long-planned retirement decisions.

All levels of government in our democratic republic – from the school board to the state legislature to Congress – have a moral responsibility to use our common wealth to equally protect and empower the populace in an effective and efficient process. This belief is fundamental to the work of our Association.

It is important for OEA members to understand that the negotiating process is governed by Nebraska Public Sector Labor Law – the Industrial Relations Act. The Act requires both organizations in the process to bargain in good faith. Nebraska State Statute §48-816 reads, in part:

“To bargain in good faith means the performance of the mutual obligation of the public employer and the labor organization to meet at reasonable times and **confer in good faith with respect to wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment** or any question arising thereunder and the execution of a written contract incorporating any agreement reached if requested by either party, but such obligation does not compel either party to agree to a proposal or require the making of a concession.”

This statute provides for bargaining subjects which are mandatory. There are also permissive, or illegal bargaining subjects. **Mandatory Subjects** of bargaining flow from the phrase, “wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment.” For instance: Wage compensation, non-wage benefits, working conditions on the job. **Permissive Subjects** fall outside of wages, hours and other terms and conditions of employment; and **Illegal Subjects** cannot be bargained because they are against the law (an example of an illegal subject would be discrimination against a legally-recognized group of people).

As public school educators, we are committed to advocating for the best interests of our students. OEA believes the goal of negotiations is to ensure that our educators receive just compensation that is equitable for the work we do to provide every child a great public education.

Thank you for your support and your membership. You are the OEA – and we believe that “We all do better when we all do better.”

Sincerely,

Bridget Donovan

OEA President