

April 7, 2005



## Working for You...

As the legislative session is nearing the final days, WVEA has been able to make significant strides in the areas outlined in our Legislative Plan.

WVEA called for a statewide lobby day. On March 30<sup>th</sup>, hundreds of WVEA members participated. The goal was simple. Impress upon the legislators the need to address the areas of salary, pension reform and PEIA. WVEA members spoke to their delegates, senators and the Governor. They listened.

That day, the House passed HB 2984, the **pension** bill. That bill is now on the Senate floor. It allows members of the TDC plan to vote on whether to join the older defined benefit plan (TRS). After an education program, a vote will occur in March 2006 among TDC members with a majority rule. In addition, anyone hired after July 1, 2005 will be placed into TRS. Any savings to the state as a result of the pension reform will be put into a fund to pay for the unfunded liability in the state's health and pension programs.

Our members also discussed a moratorium on **PEIA** premiums until salary increases occur. Their lobbying follows a March 10<sup>th</sup> meeting between WVEA leaders and lobbyists with Governor Manchin and his staff as well as legislative leaders. At those meetings, the idea of freezing PEIA premiums was first brought to the attention of Governor Manchin and legislative leaders. This afternoon, Governor Manchin, working with House Speaker Bob Kiss, began crafting legislation that would freeze PEIA premiums for six months.

More needs to be done to fix the rising premium problem and WVEA will see those concerns are addressed during the special session.

**Salary** increases are yet to be addressed. A special session will be called in September to deal with the issues of compensation. WVEA is also leading the way for salary increases.

WVEA has called for a three-year 15% increase – 4% in year one, 5% in year two and 6% in year three. Most of that money is proposed in across the board increases; however, there are also increases in the increment steps.

WVEA is working on a member engagement plan that will begin in mid-August and run through the special session and we will be sharing that with you in the upcoming months. Because of member involvement our Legislative Plan has been a success. One more piece remains!

**WVEA** ...Working for You **and Delivering!**