

WEA PAC 2010 Questionnaire

1) Name: Andy Billig
City: SPOKANE

2) What legislative position are you seeking?

State Rep - 3rd District, Position 1

3) Washington Education Association members believe the State of Washington must fulfill its paramount duty to amply fund our public schools. The 2009 Legislature passed SHB 2363, which suspended the annual cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for education employees for two years. The COLAs were mandated by voter-approved Initiative 732. SHB 2363 requires the Legislature to reinstate educators' annual COLA in the 2011-12 school year AND incrementally restore the COLA percentage educators lost during the two-year suspension. After four years, educator salaries will be what they would have been without the suspension. WEA supports current law (SHB 2363), which reinstates the annual COLA for educators in the 2011-12 school year and incrementally restores the lost COLA percentage over four years. Do you support WEA's position?

Yes

4) Please explain your position:

The COLAs are well-deserved by teachers and should be implemented. The problem, of course, is how to find the funding. I believe we need to have additional revenue sources, including an income tax, to secure the revenue necessary to fund the COLAs.

5) The 2009 Legislature passed ESHB 2261, which sets out to "enhance the current salary allocation model" through deliberation and input from "teachers, administrators and classified employees." WEA members oppose tying teacher pay, in whole or in part, to student achievement or test scores. Do you support WEA's position?

Yes

6) Please explain your position:

In theory, I support the idea of tying salary to performance for many jobs. However, I have yet to hear of a fair way to implement such a program for teachers. I am in complete agreement with WEA that student test scores are not a fair way to judge teachers. Plus, there is already too much pressure created by standardized tests for students and teachers. Tying teacher pay to such tests would be a big step in the wrong direction.

7) WEA believes any alternative compensation system must be subject to local collective bargaining, fully funded, available to all and based on objective criteria. Do you support WEA's position?

Yes

8) Please explain your position:

Most importantly, any alternative compensation system must be fair and there has to be buy-in from educators.

9) WEA opposes differentiated pay based on the subject taught. Do you support WEA's position?

Yes

10) Please explain your position:

I generally support this position, but I leave open the possibility that at some point in the future, there would be such shortages in certain areas that differentiated pay could make sense. Once again, I believe buy-in from teachers would be essential and I would seek the WEA's opinion if this issue were to come before me as a Legislator.

11) WEA supports the current practice of providing salary bonuses and other support for teachers who achieve certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Do you support WEA's position?

Yes

12) Please explain your position:

I have two friends who are Nationally Certified teachers and I know that it is a very rigorous process to achieve certification. The salary bonus recognizes and rewards exceptional teachers who have the desire and the skills to achieve national certification.

13) Washington educators currently are required to work until they reach age 65 to qualify for their normal retirement pension, regardless of the number of years they serve. Some educators must work more than 40 years before earning their normal pension. WEA supports legislation that allows educators to retire with their full normal pension based on the number of years they work rather than requiring them to reach an arbitrary age of eligibility. Do you support WEA's position?

Yes

14) Please explain your position:

I support this position, but I have not studied the financial impact if it were put into place. I am careful on all of these questions to make sure I only give definitive answers after doing thorough research. For now, I would say I support the concept but would need to study it more before giving it my unqualified support.

- 15) The 2009 Legislature passed ESHB 2261, which changes the definition of basic education and makes other changes to the K-12 school system. WEA members called ESHB 2261 a "false promise" because it ignored the current underfunding of basic education and did not include new funding. WEA members believe the state Legislature should keep its promise and fully fund the programs called for by this bill, which is estimated to cost an additional \$3 billion annually. Do you support WEA's position?

Yes

- 16) Please explain your position:

Whether it be for the programs in ESHB 2261, or other educational programs, we are not adequately funding K-12 education in our state. We need to increase revenues in order to have the resources necessary to educate our children effectively.

- 17) The 2010 Legislature passed SHB 2776, which promises to reduce the average K-3 class size to no more than 17 students per teacher by the 2017-18 school year. Washington currently has some of the nation's largest average class sizes, and the Legislature recently eliminated Initiative 728 class-size-reduction funding. WEA believes the Legislature must restore funding for Initiative 728 and provide the additional state funding to reduce class sizes as promised by SHB 2776. Do you support WEA's position?

Yes

- 18) Please explain your position:

I believe this is the highest priority in terms of education funding. I have read the studies and seen with my own eyes when my daughter has been in small and large classes - smaller classes equals a better educational experience and better results for students. While I would like to see smaller class sizes at all levels, it is the K-3 years that are most essential to closing the achievement gap.

- 19) In the 2010 legislative session, WEA helped draft and pass SB 6696, a research-based approach to improving student achievement. This legislation was forged between the Governor, the Legislature and education stakeholders, and it represents a major step forward in reforming teacher evaluation, assistance to struggling schools and teacher certification. SB 6696 establishes statewide criteria for teacher evaluations and allows local school districts and education associations to develop their own local evaluation systems. The legislation was tailored to the needs and conditions of Washington State and will allow our state to compete for federal Race to the Top funding. WEA supports SB 6696 as passed by the Legislature in 2010 and opposes further changes to the law. Do you support WEA's position?

Yes

20) Please explain your position:

I believe SB 6696 is an excellent example of how legislation should be developed and passed into law. All stakeholders had input and the result is a good law that has buy-in from all parties.

21) ESHB 2261 established the Quality Education Council (QEC) and individual workgroups on issues such as educator compensation. WEA believes the QEC and related workgroups should solicit the professional input and judgment of public education employees. Any final recommendations should be based on sound research and the expertise of Washington educators. Do you support WEA's position?

Yes

22) Please explain your position:

Education professionals are one of the most important stakeholders in our state's educational system and their input is essential in any discussion about new recommendations for our education system.

23) WEA strongly supports the right of public education employees to organize, bargain collectively and engage in the political and legislative processes. WEA believes commonsense education reform can be developed effectively and collaboratively at the local level through the collective bargaining process. WEA supports legal protections against discrimination or intimidation for workers who exercise their right to organize. WEA supports workers' rights to due process. Do you support WEA's position?

Yes

24) Please explain your position:

I support the right for all employees, public and private, to have the opportunity to organize and to be free of discrimination and intimidation as they exercise that right.

25) WEA supports the right of public school employees to engage in the political process, both individually and collectively. Do you support WEA's position?

Yes

26) Please explain your position:

I would like to learn more about this topic as I did not know that it was an issue of concern.

27) WEA supports giving community and technical college faculty the right to bargain salaries at the local level, a right enjoyed by all other education union members in the state. Do you support WEA's position?

Yes

- 28) Please explain your position:

Community and technical college faculty should have the same rights as other education union members in our state.

- 29) WEA supports a minimum starting salary of \$45,000 for teachers and other certificated education employees. We also believe education support professionals deserve at least a living wage as starting pay, and we support salary increases that exceed the cost of living for higher education faculty and staff. Do you support WEA's position?

Yes

- 30) Please explain your position:

I would love to see teachers salaries rise and for the starting salary to be \$45,000. However, that would represent a 29% increase in the starting salary from the current level of \$34,400. I don't believe it is politically or economically feasible to achieve this kind of increase in the short-term. If this question is looking further into the future, the I feel comfortable answering, "yes."

- 31) WEA opposes linking the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE) to student graduation. (Passing the HSPE is currently a graduation requirement.) Do you support WEA's position?

Yes

- 32) Please explain your position:

I needed a "Maybe" answer option on this question. Since HSPE is so new, I do not believe there is adequate data to make definitive judgements about it. However, I respect that educators would have excellent inside knowledge so I am eager to hear more about WEA's position regarding HPSE. As a candidate and legislator, I will value WEA's opinions on standardized tests and on all educational matters.

- 33) WEA opposes linking teacher evaluations to student test scores. Do you support WEA's position?

Yes

- 34) Please explain your position:

See my answer to question #2 above.

35) Who was the most influential teacher you had in school and why?

Mrs. Sulek, my 6th grade teacher. She taught me how to write and do research effectively, which are skills that I have used throughout my educational and professional career. I remember that she had incredibly high standards, but she was there to help me achieve those high levels.

36) Please describe your campaign plan for fundraising and doorbelling.

I started door-belling in mid-February and have hit over 1800 doors so far. I will continue to door-bell four to five days a week through the general election.

Our fund-raising plan includes a mix of low cost and high end fund-raisers. The goal on the low cost fund-raisers is to bring a large number of new people onto our team and have them feel ownership in the campaign.

So far, the fund-raising results have been positive as we have raised \$37,000 from over 300 individual donors. This number of individual donors is among the highest in the state among all House races (including incumbents), which reflects the broad, grass-roots nature of our campaign.

37) Please list endorsements by noteworthy elected officials.

Senator Chris Marr

Senator Lisa Brown

Mayor Mary Verner

Councilmen Jon Snyder, Richard Rush and Amber Waldref

I have also been endorsed by the Washington State Labor Council and I was recently elected the Democratic Nominee for 3rd District State Representative (position 1) by the district's precinct committee officers.

38) Tell us about your plan for getting your message out to voters.

Door-belling as mentioned above. Also, our campaign volunteers have dropped literature at 6,200 additional doors. We'll continue to door-bell and lit drop the entire district.

We have distributed over 300 yard signs.

We'll also use direct mail, newspaper, radio and TV.

I have a series of House Parties which I use to meet voters on an informal basis and I speak to community groups as often as possible.

In addition, I have been active in having a campaign presence at community events (Earth Day, Bloomsday, et).

39) Please list four family members and their relationship to you. If school age, what school do they attend?

My daughter, Bella, is a fourth grader at Roosevelt Elementary school and having a wonderful experience there.

My brother, Peter, lives in Boulder, Colorado and owns a small business there.

My little sister, Erica, is graduating from Cornell University next weekend.

My ex-wife, Kendra, (does she count as a family member? Well, I'll just go with it since we get along well :) is a counselor at Stevens and Holmes Elementary and through her I have many close friends who are SEA members.

- 40) Please list name of campaign manager, campaign Web site address, campaign mailing address, campaign e-mail, office phone number, campaign manager cell phone

Campaign Manager: Erika Prins
Friends of Andy Billig
P.O. Box 145 Spokane, WA 99210
www.andybillig.com
vote@andybillig.com
509-990-9219

- 41) Organizational memberships (church, community, service, social, union, professional, etc.):

Current:
City of Spokane Human Services Advisory Board
Citizen's Financial Advisory Board to the Mayor
YMCA Board
Bike To Work Spokane - volunteer
Volunteer Youth Sports Coach

- 42) Education:

Public School Education through High School.
Graduated Cum Laude from Georgetown University with a degree in Government.

- 43) Brief employment history:

I am President of the Spokane Indians Baseball Club and have worked for the Indians for the past 18 years.