

UniServ Link

How to keep up with what's going on...



"It is important for legislators to hear from their constituents..."

Lisa Vipperman, OEA Board Member...

It's February. Fatigue is creeping in—we are more than half way through the school year but nowhere near spring. However, something even more draining is going on—the Utah State Legislature is in session. How can we keep up when there is so much to do at school? That is why it's great that we have 'Under the Dome'. If you don't know what this is, it's time to learn.

"Under the Dome" is a great place to find out what is going on during the legislative session. Even if you read the newspaper, or watch the news, you do not get enough information to find out what is going on in the legislature, and how that might affect those of us in education. Considering that legislation has been proposed that would make all teachers at will employees, I think keeping up on what is going on this session is crucial.

You can find "Under the Dome" by going to myuea.org and clicking on the link "Under the Dome".

While you are there, read up on what is going on in other school districts in Utah.

I took a look at myuea.org today, and I read up about the first "Educator on the Hill" day this year, which takes place every Friday during the regular legislative session. This is a chance for teachers to actually go to the state capitol and watch the legislature in session. I went last year; it is a long day, but it was very educational. You might get to meet your legislator in person. This year you will need to take personal leave to attend "Educator on the Hill".

On January 30th, Senator Aaron Osmond stopped by to chat with the first group of educators to participate this year. Senator Osmond, you may recall, has taken the place of Chris Buttars. Senator Osmond seems to listen to educators; he held an open meeting last fall at the Weber School District auditorium to hear our concerns.

If you do not know who your legislator is, follow the links on the UEA website to

a list of elected officials. If you would like to contact your legislator personally, there is contact information for all representatives available as well. Please just make sure that you use your own computer or phone and not during teaching hours. It is important for legislators to hear from their constituents; this is an election year, and of course, you vote, right? Of course, if you contact your legislator, be polite, as you represent all of us, but a lot of elections are coming up next fall, and it would not hurt to remind some politicians that!

We, who work in the Ogden District have been having a very challenging year, but the OEA continues to make progress working with the Superintendent and the Board, and soon, spring will be here, so keep your chin up, check the OEA blog regularly, and check the UEA website too.



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939 25th Street
Ogden, UT 84401
801.399.3746

Tina Cordero, Editor
tina@ogdenweber.org

Contact us at:
www.ogdenweber.org

Mid-year Director's Report

Rick Palmer, Ogden/Weber UniServ Executive Director...

Hard to believe we are half way through the year already. Someone told me that time goes past faster as we get older...well, I am almost 61 so I guess it is flying by. I am also half way through my 8th year in the job as director of this association. I felt this is as good as time as any to report on the status of our two local associations.

"Together, we are strong and we can continue to educate the students that are entrusted to you."

After a very eventful summer in Ogden, things are moving in a more positive direction, especially with the help of our new Superintendent, Brad Smith. There is no doubt that his appointment last year was controversial at least, and surprising in many ways. He has been responsive to OEA's concerns and requests. Our OEA President, Doug Stephens, has met with him on a regular basis and the Superinten-

dent's responses have been positive. Our negotiations team has had two joint trainings with the district team (including for the first time a member of the school board and the Superintendent) that have led to positive interactions and a movement to "Interest-Based or Mutual Gains Bargaining". This method is a much more collaborative process of identifying issues/concerns and working together to solve them rather than the traditional "positional" bargaining we are accustomed to. Also, having the stakeholders at the table is crucial. There has been a lot of movement of administrators in the district that always causes anxiety, but the OEA is working closely with the district to mitigate problems as they appear.

Weber District made a lot of changes in district office and local school administrators this year because of retirements. Our new president, Jo Egelund, has been extremely proactive working with our new Superintendent Jeff Stephens, meeting regularly to discuss issues. Superintendent Stephens has been very supportive of our efforts with the legislature. We have been able to work with the new secondary and

elementary directors, Reid Newey and Shirley Atkinson, to process concerns and issues as they arise. I believe it is because of the relationships that we have nurtured for years that we can work so closely to solve problems with the district.

Our membership has taken a big hit this year (we can only suppose that the Ogden Crisis along with economic woes are the major reasons) but we continue to sign up new members and look forward to better times.

The next few months will be critical as we watch the movement of the legislature and see the many changes coming from the state office on evaluations, the common core and many others.

Together, we are strong and we can continue to educate the students that are entrusted to you. That is our bottom line: A quality education for each student in Weber and Ogden Districts.

Thanks for your support and hard work.

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