



# Direct

Washington State School Directors' Association

JANUARY 2015

## Storm the hill this March

**H**undreds of school board members, superintendents and business officers have already signed up for the annual Legislative Conference on March 1 and 2. Don't miss this opportunity to hear from policy makers and talk with legislators about the hottest topics in education.

The conference kicks off Sunday afternoon with elected officials and policy makers from the Governor's office, OSPI, the Legislature and the Office of Financial Management. The program will focus on education funding pending legislation and burning issues.

Director Area caucuses will meet after the conference program on Sunday to plan for pre-arranged appointments with Legislators the next day. The Sunday program is capped with a hosted reception for conference attendees, elected officials and invited guests.

In addition to the legislative events, the second in a series of ethnic caucus meetings will be held Monday morning from 7:30 to 8:30. Statewide efforts to encourage community members of color to consider running for school board positions will be discussed. In addition, details will be provided about a May Equity in Education convening that will be co-sponsored by WSSDA and the Puget Sound Educational Service District.

After Monday morning meetings with legislators we'll have a brief closing ceremony in the Columbia Room of the Capitol Building and call it a day by noon.

Early March is the thick of the session, so this is a great time to hear from policy makers and storm the hill!

### OUR KIDS OUR FUTURE

## Wenatchee is GLAD to have new research-based model of teaching

**F**ifth graders gather around teacher Kathryn Anderson to discuss a book they had read together— *A Train to Somewhere*—a story of orphan trains of the early 20th century. The kids sit on the floor around Anderson and together they process the story using a chart covered in pictures and dialogue bubbles and vocabulary words like orphan, tenement, and locomotive from the book.

During the day Anderson writes more words on a chart where nouns are orange, verbs are green, and adverbs are blue. She asks a question and

instructs the students to “turn and talk” with partners.

The rich imagery, the vocabulary words, the color coding, the processing of story through talking with other students are all intentional teaching skills designed to engage students and help them learn. They are strategies of Project GLAD®, a research-based model of teaching strategies developed to promote English language acquisition, academic achievement and cross-cultural skills. GLAD® stands for Guided Language

GLAD, CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



Terri Goveia teaches fifth graders at Newbery Elementary using GLAD strategies. Students are working cooperatively in groups, and Terri has randomly selected a student to be spokesperson for her group. Notice the walls in the classroom are covered in charts created with the students and used as resources throughout the unit of study. Project GLAD is a model of professional development in the area of language acquisition and literacy.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

BURKE: Five great questions being asked in Olympia

NIEUWENHUIS: Great challenges and even greater opportunities

Media tips for school board members



# Five big questions being asked in Olympia

**W**ith the start of the 2015 legislative session, lots of speculation has been offered over what may occur between now and the end of April. Here are five questions that inside Olympia folks are asking:

1. Will there be a tax increase? Since Governor Inslee released his budget on December 18, many have been asking whether his suggested tax changes--including a capital gains tax and a carbon trade tax--have any chance of passing the legislature. The answer? Maybe.

Most around Olympia see no way around the need for revenue enhancements to pay for the necessary changes in K-12 education funding. Loophole closures are one way to get at the deficit, and the governor's budget proposal includes a few of them -- including a repeal of the sales tax exemption for bottled water. But each tax exemption has a strong contingent that will fight its repeal, with much of the rhetoric focusing on the loss of jobs that loophole closures can cause. Others will push for leaner government, cuts in programs such as prisons, higher education or health and social services. The churn will go on for most of the session, but it will be difficult to meet the McCleary requirements without finding new revenue streams, and equally hard to find the votes to raise taxes.

2. Will Initiative 1351 be funded? Most say there is no way to find the legislative votes to raise taxes an additional \$2B that would be necessary (according to the Office of Financial Management) to fund the initiative, let alone find the classroom space in schools necessary to house the at least 7,000 new teachers that would be hired. But the initiative passed, and that means for the next two years any override will require a 2/3 vote of the House and the Senate--which is a tall order. So, if the legislature doesn't fund I-1351, it will have to produce a go-home budget supported by 33 (of 49) Senators and 66 (of 98) Representatives. Tall order, indeed.

3. What policy bills will emerge for serious consideration? With McCleary, the paramount duty, ample funding, and taxes dominating Olympia this winter and spring, budget negotiations will be a front burner item all session. But, policy bills always emerge--often spilling over to the dreaded "unfunded mandate" category that drives the field crazy. We certainly expect the reintroduction of a bill that will revise TPEP to include using state test scores (for tested grades and subjects) in the student growth mix in teacher evaluations. We also are prepared to consider bills on a statewide special ed review, voting rights, dual crediting, financial literacy, assessment system reductions and teacher professional development. Others inevitably will be added to the mix--some of which will help schools and districts, others perhaps not.

4. Skipping to Washington DC, will ESEA finally, after an eight-year delay, get reauthorized? A "discussion" draft released by Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Chair of the Health, Education, Labor and Pension (HELP) committee, returns much of the responsibility for accountability measures to the states. Patty Murray (D-WA), our senior senator and the ranking member of the HELP Committee, has already signaled a willingness to work with Chair Alexander on a bill. Senator Murray has a history of working successfully in a bipartisan manner to get bills passed, and is highly motivated--largely because Washington's ESEA waiver has been removed--to get something done.

The Republican majority in the Senate, coupled with a strengthened GOP in the House, has improved the chances for reauthorization. However, agreement on a House/Senate compromise bill will depend on the outcome of negotiations with the Senate D's -- because the anti-filibuster "cloture" rule normally requires 60 votes.

5. Finally, and returning to Olympia, when will the legislature finish its work? The scheduled end of the 105-day session is April 27 which, in a normal year, would be the day that legislators would move out of their Olympia apartments and head home. But this is not a normal year. With work to do on McCleary, taxes, lean government, health and welfare, prisons, higher ed, early learning, business, trade, transportation, etc., there are many wishes and not enough resources to fill them. Consequently, most observers think one or more special sessions will be needed to find a budget that will get enough support for passage. The new fiscal year begins July 1 and many think that it will take that long, or longer, to reach a deal.

Indeed, it will be an interesting session. WSSDA has prepared position statements on most issues and our government relations team is hunkering down for the long haul. We will keep you informed, and from time to time we will ask for your support in contacting your local legislators. Stay tuned.



# TRS Plan 3 rate change window ends this year

January 2015 is the last time TRS Plan 3 members have the opportunity to change contribution rates without changing employers. Since 2004, TRS Plan 3 members could change their contribution rate each January. However, when the IRS re-qualified TRS Plan 3 in 2013, it was on the condition that the annual rate flexibility end in 2015.

Now is a good time to consider how much you're saving and whether you're on track to meet your retirement savings goals. If you are a TRS Plan 3 member and would like to take advantage of the final rate change flexibility period, you will need to complete a TRS Plan 3 Contribution Rate Change Form and turn it in to your employer before January 31, 2015.

If you contribute to the Deferred Compensation Program, keep in mind that you can change DCP contributions at any time — changes take approximately 30 days to go into effect. DCP is a voluntary retirement savings account that allows for contribution flexibility. Check with your employer to see if they offer DCP.

## Our Kids, Our Future website approaches first anniversary



Earlier this month, WSSDA contacted districts across the state to thank them for being a big part of a successful first year for the Our Kids, Our Future effort.

Since launching last February, districts from across the state, large and small, provided nearly 700 stories in text and video.

People viewed those stories more than 34,000 times.

"I'm not sure that any of us on the Our Kids team would have expected that much action when we opened the site nearly a year ago," said Michael Wilson, WSSDA's Communications Director. "In this case, we did build it and they did come."

Wilson said the Our Kids, Our Future partnership is hoping to broaden its audience in 2015 and add more contributing school districts.

The group is asking school directors and superintendents to visit the site to see the stories and determine whether their schools are contributing.

"It's a pretty easy thing to do," said Wilson. Just go to [www.ourkidswa.com](http://www.ourkidswa.com) and type the district name into the search box. While you're there, you can use the search box to find out what others in the state are doing in everything from kindergarten to STEM."

Partners in the effort include: AWSP, OSPI, WASA, WEA, WSSDA, Wa PTA, ASCD, and AESD.



PRESIDENT  
Chris Nieuwenhuis

## Great challenges and greater opportunities

Welcome to 2015!

I want to open my first column as WSSDA President by thanking you for all of your hard work and service in making your schools the best possible for each of your students. It is a common refrain, but so very true: It's all about the kids.

I also want to give a shout out to your amazing Executive Team from 2014. It was an honor to work with Mari Taylor, Chris Nation and Debbie Long this past year and I can honestly say I am proud to call them my friends. No one could have predicted the year that we would experience, but I am so grateful that this team was in place. We made some mistakes along the way, but we were able to work through them and keep the work of WSSDA at the forefront.

We are just starting to review the information from our recent member survey, but I've had a preview and was not surprised to see that two-thirds of directors devote more than 11 hours a month to school board business, many more than 25. Why do we do it? The overwhelming answer was simple, to help their communities and kids.

If the opening days of the legislature are any indication, it is going to be quite a year. We will need to keep our eye on so many big items. Education funding, the continuing class-size debate, taxes, testing and a host of other issues will keep us busy. We have a strong team with Alan Burke as executive director and Deb Merle as our government relations director, not to mention the hard working and very committed legislative committee.

The policy decisions won't be confined to our state. At the national level, reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known most recently as No Child Left Behind, has finally moved toward the top of the education agenda.

Our very own Senator Murray is helping lead the effort. This gives each of us the opportunity to have a direct line of communication with her staff to help push this legislation forward. Please make sure to stay on top of this and send your thoughts on to her office. Comments can be submitted through her website at [www.murray.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/contactme](http://www.murray.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/contactme)

The challenges are daunting, but I believe the opportunities are even greater. If we work together, I am convinced that we will look back on this year as an important milestone in the successful education of our kids.

Acquisition Design, and it's tied to the Common Core State Standards and State Standards.

Cynthia Valdez, Kathy Anderson, and Terri Goveia are all becoming certified as GLAD® trainers so they can bring the tools throughout the district at a more economical cost than sending teachers to the extensive GLAD® trainings.

"The pictorial chart is content presented in pictures and developed in front of the kids. It's all based on brain research and imprinting," explains Cynthia Valdez. Valdez has been a teacher, principal, district administrator, and is now a Special Programs Coordinator who is bringing Project GLAD® classrooms throughout the district.

"I was trained in GLAD® two years ago," says Terri Goveia, a teacher with over thirty years of experience. "It really transformed me as a teacher. I saw what it did for the kids in my classroom. I saw some of my students who were shy or not confident absolutely bloom. They felt safe; they felt part of a team. Learning really became more of a team sport than an individual activity."

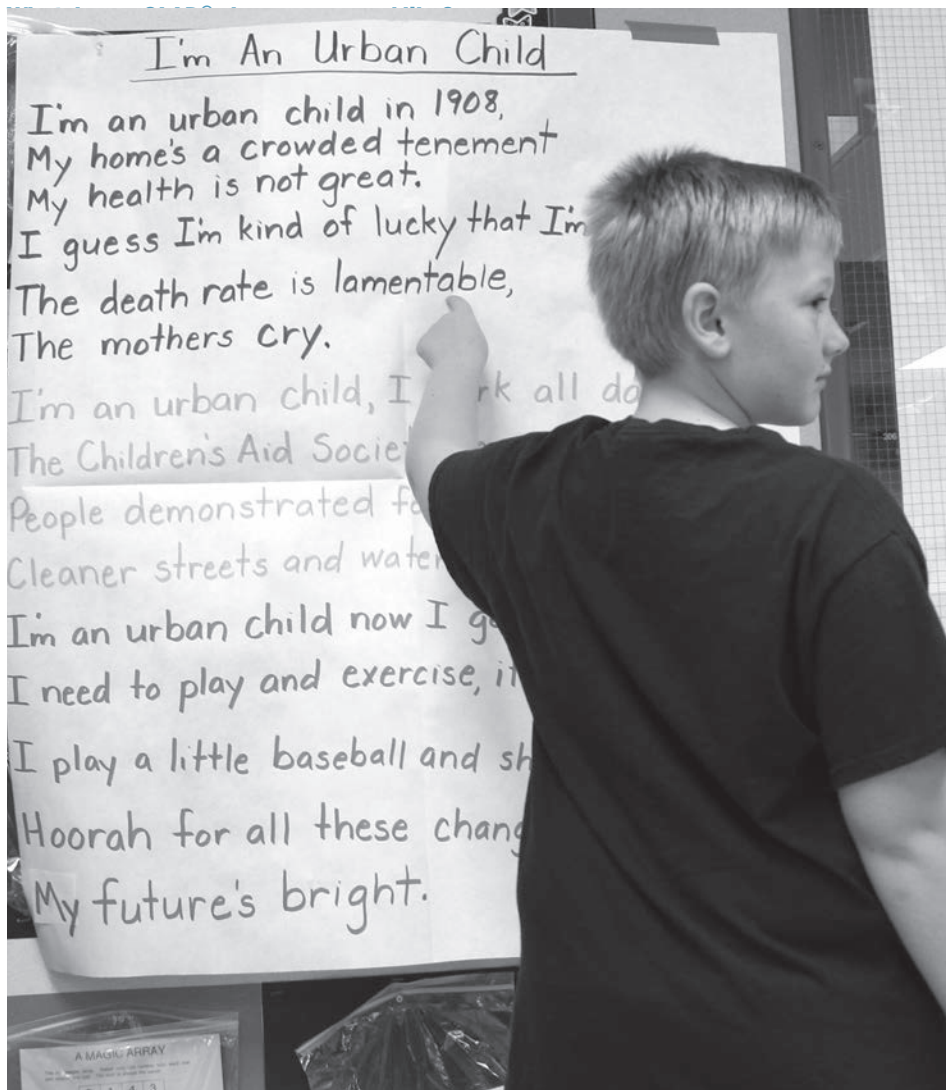
"I really love how the students are engaged," says Kathy Anderson, former third grade teacher and literacy coach. "Everybody—your English Language Learners to your high level students—are participating, and everybody is excited about learning."

### What does a GLAD® classroom look like?

"At the beginning of a unit the walls will be blank and everything will emerge with the students, created with and for the students," says Valdez. "The walls will be dripping with language everywhere. You'll see color-coding for brain imprinting. You'll see pictures, the scaffolding of sketches."

The wall charts and pictures are produced, processed and reviewed with students. "They have ownership of all of the charts so they actually use them as resources," says Anderson.

The GLAD® classroom also has students gathering together close to the teacher for instruction. "When you're doing your key instruction the kids are always up close," explains Goveia, who says our brains are hardwired to pay closer attention when someone asks us to move close.



Connor Rounds points out an interesting vocabulary word from a chart that is color-coded by stanza. The color coding provides a scaffold for all students, but especially those who have difficulty reading or are second language learners. Like scaffolding used in building a house, GLAD® scaffolding strategies provides support for students until they master the material.

You may hear discussions between students because a GLAD® classroom includes cooperative learning, where students work in teams. There are also the ten-two lectures, where teachers talk for ten minutes followed by two minutes of students talking to each other about the material. "We really want to make sure kids get that time for oral processing," says Valdez.

You will also hear students sing chants written by teachers that include key vocabulary, and then set to a tune. Music is stored in a different part of the brain and helps students learn and access information. "Last year I was giving an end of unit test in science to name the three parts of a seed," says Goveia. "I saw one of my second language learners at his desk sing the

him access the information."

There are more than 70 strategies in GLAD®. "It's a model of effective strategies that have been pulled together from research from experts in brain compatibility learning," says Cynthia Valdez. "It's put together into a bundle which is like a gift for teachers. It has high levels of student engagement. It works on refining your teaching skills. It pushes teachers to be the best teacher they can be."

This story and many more can be found at [www.ourkidswa.org](http://www.ourkidswa.org). Be part of Our Kids, Our Future's first anniversary. Send stories of your school district's successes to [M.Wilson@wssda.org](mailto:M.Wilson@wssda.org).

## Dues remain steady for fourth straight year

**W**SSDA continued to hold the line on expenditures in 2014, allowing it to hold dues flat for the fourth straight year in 2015.

Revenue of about \$3.10 million covered expenses of about \$2.65 million, based on preliminary budget numbers. The association will have a firmer hand on expenses in the next month or so as the books are closed on 2014.

“We’ve worked closely with the WSSDA Board of Directors to keep expenses and dues down,” said Executive Director Alan Burke. “We know that districts have their own tight budgets. It’s our goal to keep improving our services, but always keep one eye on the price tag.”

Overall, spending in 2014 was about the same as in 2009, despite inflation.

“Our fund reserves should help us keep dues down for the reasonable future,” said Harry Frost, WSSDA’s Director of Finances and Human Resources.

Frost pointed to growth in subscriptions for improved policy services and publications as one of the highlights on the revenue end.

## Gov. Inslee proclaims January as School Board Recognition Month

**G**overnor Jay Inslee has proclaimed the month of January as School Board Recognition Month. This marks the 20th year of the annual observance initiated by the National School Boards Association in 1995.

The Washington State School Directors’ Association, along with fellow educators and the broader community, take time in January to honor the 1,477 elected school board members from Washington’s 295 school districts.

“Washington’s school board members put in hundreds of thousands of hours of service each year to guide public education in their communities,” said WSSDA President Chris Nieuwenhuis. “This recognition is well deserved.”


All told, school directors in Washington state govern districts with more than one million students, a combined annual budget of nearly \$12 billion, and employ well over 100,000 employees.

School board members play a crucial role in developing policies and making tough decisions on complex educational and social issues. These issues affect the entire state. They are also directly accountable to the citizens in their districts, serving as a vital link between members of the community and their schools.

During January, school districts across the state will honor their local school boards and publicly thank board members for their hard work. They are tapping into local media outlets and social media to get the message across.

The proclamation has been posted online at [www.wssda.org](http://www.wssda.org).



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**FUTURES**  
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# Top five media tips for school board members

School board members walk a balance beam when it comes to communicating about district operations and issues. Constituents and the media expect elected officials to hold the district accountable and the administration expects them to be allies and advocates. So, how can a board member be tough, fair and supportive all at the same time in public meetings and media interviews?

## Tough and respectful

In this era of radio shock jocks and TV talk show hosts yelling at each other, it may seem that respectful debate conduct equals officials who are soft on the issues. Talk show fans give kudos to their favorite hosts and guests for calling it like they see it. It could be tempting for a board member to follow suit and prove their mettle by taking off the kid gloves and taking the district down a peg. A misguided board member might think that taking a verbally rougher approach will prove they do not rubber-stamp everything the district staff recommends.

Name calling and questioning of your opponent's motives may be entertaining on the radio, but they are not helpful for the students, staff or patrons in your district. Tonight's zinger is tomorrow's newspaper quote or TV sound bite. It may feel good to say, but it will make you look pretty small in print. Board members set the tone for how the media and the community talk about the district. The whole community will benefit if the district is held in high regard during even the hardest debates. The goal for board members should be to remain respectful while still fulfilling their role in supervising the administration.

The key is to question data, decisions and processes. Those are fair game. But board members should avoid questioning the integrity or competence of their colleagues and district staff unless they are truly addressing a crisis of trust. Integrity and competence should not be questioned casually during other business. Those traits should only be questioned as part of a purposeful process and, likely, only in executive session. Ongoing, unofficial public questioning of integrity and competence only undermines the effectiveness of everyone involved with the district.

Even the toughest board members are generally very supportive of the district. But too often, the wrong choice of words can unintentionally convey a lack of trust in the motives or effectiveness of staff. A careful board member can be tough as nails without ever making staff or other board members feel defensive or insulted.

## Attack issues, not people

When ideas are attacked — or questioned — decisions are stronger. When people are attacked, good decisions become almost impossible and support for the district is eroded. The benefit of a healthy debate is in airing a variety of perspectives. Decisions are better when board members consider input from many sources.

Diversity of opinion cannot be punished when it occurs, or it will go underground. Board members who feel unsafe sharing their opinions in public may start sharing them in the parking lot, the grocery check-out line or letters to the editor. And when the staff feel attacked, employees will withhold valuable input just to avoid being embarrassed.

Ask the tough questions. But do not insult or intimidate the people to whom you are asking the questions. It is too easy to criticize someone by pure accident or frustration. The good news is that with a little forethought, it is equally easy to preserve everyone's dignity and go hard at the issues.

## It's not you, it's me

The best way to keep the focus on the issues is for board members to communicate about themselves, not their colleagues or staff. For instance, one should say, "I am not sure I understand" rather than "you are not making sense." Or, "I need a little more data before I can decide" rather than "You did not provide us with enough information."

Pointing out someone else's deficiency or misstep creates an atmosphere of defensiveness and hostility. Pointing out one's own deficiencies invites others to help. Which fosters a better atmosphere? "I still cannot see why this is the best way to go" versus "You still have not made your case to my satisfaction."

If a board member has not had enough time to review his packet of materials

he could say, "I was not able to read my materials until just this afternoon, and I need more time on this issue." But if he were to communicate carelessly about it, he could convey the impression that he is accusing district staff of incompetence or lack of integrity. If he says, "Staff didn't send out the materials until just before the meeting," it could indicate that district staff was either too inefficient to get the materials prepared or, worse, that the staff purposely withheld information to sway the vote. Now, there may need to be a private discussion with staff about getting materials out earlier, but that does not need to happen in a public forum which could undermine the reputation of district staff.

## Avoiding media traps

The news media are under no obligation to make sure you do not impugn staff or other board members. In fact, it makes a more compelling headline if you are heard blasting someone you are supposed to be teammates with. Media thrive on conflict, and that is fine as long as the conflict is between ideas, not between the board and staff.

A common media tactic is to quote someone on the other side of the issue and ask you to comment by offering a question with a personal angle, such as, "Don't you think the superintendent is being a little short-sighted by suggesting this?" or "Does it seem like the people on the other side of this issue are being a bit selfish?" Of course, the reporter is hoping you will answer in a way that emphasizes interpersonal conflict, but the best course is to stay focused on the issues, not the opponents. In fact, a good reminder to yourself can be part of the quote: "I like to stay focused on issues, not personalities, so I will say this..."

Another reporter tactic is to set up a virtual confrontation by asking "What would you say to the people who are critical of your position?" or "What would you say to someone who claims you are simply serving your own interests?" This approach simulates a confrontation with someone who isn't even there. But if you take the bait, it allows the media to edit your remarks to amplify the conflict

and minimize the cooperation that exists. A good way to avoid the “What would you say to someone who said...” trap is to begin with “I would tell anybody the same thing: I favor this idea because...” By so doing, you redirect back to your position and away from a conflict.

**Take your time and get the information**

Most board members are volunteers, so they have jobs and lives outside of the board room. And chances are, sooner or later most of them will get a media call at home or work.

Reporters have deadlines, but you have rights. So, when you are surprised by a media call, take a breath, ask what they need to discuss with you and offer to call them back within 30 minutes. Reporters cannot expect you to be ready immediately to discuss board issues when you are in work or family mode. Before calling back, talk to the district administration and other board members to see if they have gotten similar questions. It is good to have a unified message or at least a coordinated approach to offering separate opinions.

Board members are in a unique position as guardians of taxpayer investment and advocates for students and educators. By keeping the debate focused on the issues and not individuals, board members fulfill those roles and set the tone for the community.

This article was written by Jay Remy, communications director of Salem-Keizer Public Schools. It was previously printed in On Call, a school public relations resource produced by WSSDA for subscribing districts. If you are interested in subscribing to On Call, or receiving a complimentary copy, contact m.wilson@wssda.org.



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**WSSDA BOARD SELF-ASSESSMENT**

**Setting goals for board improvement**

**S**chool Districts across our state use data to set goals for improvement and so can the school board.

The WSSDA Board Self-Assessment is a research-based tool available electronically to help identify the extent to which your board uses practices that support improved student achievement. One click on the link gets you started on the survey, which takes about 20 minutes to complete.

Once each member of your board has completed the survey, WSSDA provides a report of the responses presented with easy-to-understand graphs and charts,

plus a suggested process for boards to analyze their own data.

Past participants report that the discussion of the results provides rich dialogue and opportunities for meaningful goal setting.

The link to your board’s self-assessment will be sent to your superintendent and board chair during the week of January 26, so be sure to ask about it to get your board started. This is a dues-based service with no additional cost to your board. Your responses are confidential and provided only to your board and superintendent.



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**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**January**

- 9** Legislative Committee Meeting
- 23-24** Board of Directors' Meeting

**March**

- 1-2** Legislative Conference
- 7** Resolutions Committee Meeting

**April**

- 24-25** Board of Directors' Meeting

