


**West Virginia Education Association – PAC
2022 Primary Election Questionnaire
Office of State Legislator**

Completed Questionnaires due February 21, 2022

Name: Scott Nale

Office Sought and District: House of Delegates - District 78

Address: 

City, State, Zip: Morgantown, WV 26508

Phone: _____

E-mail: Nale4House@gmail.com

Campaign Committee Name: Friends of Scott Nale

Campaign Contact Information: _____

Occupation: Civil Engineer

Professional and Social Organizations: American Society of Highway Engineers (ASHE), American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC), Knights of Columbus

Candidate Signature: _____ Date: _____

Included in this questionnaire are my official positions in regard to education policy.

Return to: WVEA-PAC
1558 Quarrier Street
Charleston, WV 25311

You may also scan or email your questionnaire to Dale Lee at dlee@wvea.org or fax (304) 346-4325.

The completed questionnaire must be returned no later than February 21, 2022.



PEIA

PEIA remains an area of concern for education employees. The PEIA Task Force developed recommendations for a long-term fix to the plan. We all know one of the main components to any fix is proper funding. In the past, lack of funding for the plan has led to increased premiums and costs being passed on to plan participants. Too much of the participants personal income is spent for costlier drugs, higher deductibles, and increased out-of-pocket costs. The problems with PEIA contribute to the state's inability to recruit and retain employees in our school system. Continuing to finance PEIA through the rainy-day fund and political promises does not create stability or confidence in the plan. WVEA supports legislation going forward that would require the state to contribute no less than 80% of all costs of PEIA and the employees no more than 20%. This money would come from the general revenue fund and provide a more secure funding source for the future.

Do you support funding PEIA in the manner described in the paragraph above? Yes No

Comments on PEIA: _____

I agree that PEIA funding is an issue for all state employees and is an issue we need to correct. All of our State Agencies are losing talent to the private sector and other Government organizations due to pay gaps and lower quality of benefits provided. West Virginia must invest in the future, which means focusing on the education of our youth and providing them quality career opportunities to stay in the State after graduation. Providing for comparable pay and benefits will take some serious coordination in Charleston, but is essential for the West Virginia going forward.

SALARY

The salaries of our education employees remain uncompetitive. Even with a proposed 5% pay increase and a 2.5% bonus, our salaries will be far short of our surrounding states. The latest rankings show that teachers in Maryland earn an average \$74,514, Pennsylvania teachers \$71,281, Ohio teachers \$61,687, Kentucky teachers \$54,384, and Virginia at \$59,267. However, West Virginia falls behind each of our neighbors at \$50,261.

In addition, during the 2020 school year there were 540 positions filled by uncertified professionals. Now the total is nearly 1,000 vacancies that are currently unfilled. West Virginia must make a commitment to preparing our students to succeed in the world. A key component of that plan is highly qualified employees. Without adequate pay, college students will not pursue a career in education, nor will educators stay in the profession long term. West Virginia must make a multi-year commitment to make salaries competitive with surrounding states.



Do you believe that the pay of our education employees must be increased to a level competitive with our surrounding states? Yes No

If elected, what are you willing to do to ensure a multi-year salary increase for educators passes into law?

- Sponsor a bill
- Talk about the importance of a salary increase to other legislators
- Push the salary increase in caucus meetings and in meetings with the governor/leadership
- Push leadership/committee chairs to place salary increase bills on a committee agenda
- Help find sources of revenue to fund the increase, including raising taxes if necessary

Comments on salary increases: _____

As noted above, the salaries and benefits of West Virginia State Employees must be adjusted to fair market value if we are going to keep the best people and grow for the future. I see this as an issue in many facets of the State government, including our teachers. I see the biggest problem facing our State as the year to year loss of people, we are in a situation with our youth and trained professionals feel it is necessary to leave to achieve success. The reason I am running for the House of Delegates is to avoid having to tell my children they must leave West Virginia to be successful and this begins with providing quality education and opportunities. I will be honest on your last bullet, I would not push for raising taxes, but instead look for something that could be cut or redirected in the State Budget to provide this funding.

EMPLOYEE RIGHTS

WVEA supports fair and understandable hiring procedures for public school employees. This includes having hiring criteria that assures the most highly qualified and most senior candidates are selected for open positions. We want laws about hiring to be predictable, equitable, and assure that employees are treated fairly and with dignity. The legislature must safeguard a fair, rational, and dependable employee grievance procedure. In addition, laws protecting duty-free lunches, class-size limitations, and planning periods should be defended and enhanced at every opportunity.

Do you agree to protect the employee rights outlined in WV Code 18-18A? Yes No

There are individuals who want to open sections of 18-18A in order to remove outdated code. Those outdated sections of code are not causing problems. Many people believe the discussion regarding updating code is just an excuse to open up those sections of code and diminish the rights of education employees. Based on past experience, WVEA's position is to oppose the clean-up language in 18-18A.

Will you agree not to open sections of 18-18A to clean up the antiquated language? Yes No



Comments on employee rights: _____

I would support employees rights and advancement in line with industry standards. I agree that students learn best in a small focused class which would support class size limitation.

Regarding the subject of 18-18A as long as the old code is in fact causing no issue, I would not be interested in addressing clean-up language. Too many times our legislatures waste time chasing the "fancy topic" of the day and not addressing the real problems facing their constituency. West Virginia has many more issues to address than wasting time messing with outdated language that isn't creating problems .

TAX REFORM AND EDUCATION FUNDING

WVEA opposes any tax reform effort that would benefit business interests while increasing the tax burden on working people and retirees. We want a fairer, simpler tax system, but we strongly oppose any attempts to reduce the state's investment in public education, teachers, or education support professionals. Spending money on education (both pre-k to 12 and higher education) will improve West Virginia's workforce and get more people working in the state. More education funding will also entice businesses to set up shop in the state. Now is not the time to look to tax cuts to spur economic growth.

1. **Would you vote for tax cuts?** Yes No

2. **Would you make it a priority to increase revenue during the next two legislative sessions?**

Yes No

If so, what measures would you support to increase needed revenue for public education?

I propose an investment in infrastructure (including education) that would make it more desirable for companies to relocate to West Virginia. This investment would drive an increase in population (and revenue) while reducing the individual tax rate.

3. **Do you support a reduction in the state income tax?** Yes No

4. **Do you support the constitutional amendment to lower the tax on manufacturing inventory and machinery?** Yes No

Comments on tax reform: _____

Studies have found that reducing taxes leads to an increase in GDP and a reduction in unemployment. This change drives increased revenues for the Government, allowing for more infrastructure investment. It is important to note that that these investments need to be both hard infrastructure (roads and bridges) and soft infrastructure (which includes education).

On the subject of question 4, I am not currently versed on this issue and can not provide an opinion at this time.



RETIREMENT

Retirees in West Virginia are not granted automatic cost of living benefit increases. PEIA benefit cuts worsen the problem. Many retirees are hurting financially. We cannot neglect our retirees.

Do you support the following?

1. **Continue to follow the funding requirements to fully fund the Teachers Retirement System (TRS)**
 Yes No
2. **COLA (cost of living adjustment) for all retirees** Yes No
3. **Increase the state income tax exemption for retired school employees to \$20,000 (currently \$2,000)**
 Yes No
4. **Work to control PEIA prescription drug and health care costs** Yes No

If elected, what are you willing to do to ensure a secure/stable retirement for employees?

- Sponsor a bill**
- Talk about the importance of adequate/secure retirement for educators to other legislators**
- Push retiree legislation in caucus meetings and in meetings with the governor/leadership**
- Push leadership/committee chairs to place retirement bills on a committee agenda**
- Help find sources of revenue to fund COLA/PEIA, including raising taxes if necessary**

Comments on retirement issues: _____

As noted above, the salaries and benefits of West Virginia State Employees must be adjusted to fair market value if we are going to

keep the best people and grow for the future. I see this as an issue in many facets of the State government, including our teachers.

I see the biggest problem facing our State as the year to year loss of people, we are in a situation with our youth and trained

professionals feel it is necessary to leave to achieve success. The reason I am running for the House of Delegates is to avoid having

to tell my children they must leave West Virginia to be successful and this begins with providing quality education and opportunities. I

will be honest on your last bullet, I would not push for raising taxes, but instead look for something that could be cut or redirected in the

State Budget to provide this funding.



AUTHORITY OF THE STATE BOARD

The WV Constitution is very clear in the authority of the State Board of Education as it relates to their power over our public schools. Many legislators are unhappy that the WVBE is not under the authority of the Legislature. The House has proposed HJR 102 as an amendment to the State's Constitution. HJR 102 would give the Legislature the power to review, approve, amend, or reject the policy-making and rule-making authority of the State Board of Education. WVEA believes this is unnecessary and opposes such a change.

If elected, would you support legislation similar to HJR 102 that erodes the authority of the WVBE over education matters? Yes No

Comments on the authority of the State Board: _____

I see no reason the legislature would need to govern over the State Board of Education. Decisions regarding education should remain in the control of the experts in the field. In my profession we often see Public Officials providing direction that doesn't align with the research and accepted practices of the industry. I see this as a pervasive problem in our Government and would hope to make a positive impact on it.

EDUCATION REFORM

We are in an era of education reform. **Of the entities listed below, who do you believe possesses the most knowledge to shape education reform?** (Please rank from 1 to 9, or 1 to 10 if "Other" is chosen, with 1 being the most knowledgeable.)

- 2 Parents
- 6 Citizens
- 3 County Boards of Education
- 4 County Superintendents
- 1 Educators
- 9 Business Community/Chamber of Commerce
- 8 The Governor
- 7 The Legislature
- 5 The State Board of Education
- Other: _____



What are your opinions on charter schools?

I support education choice. As such I would welcome a mix of Public, Private, and Charter Schools as well as Home School options. It is my experience that students learn in very different ways and it is incumbent on us to provide them with the tools each child needs to thrive. I would however note that stories from other States regarding the operation of Charter Schools is concerning. West Virginia should be mindful of some of these inequitable situations that have been setup to ensure that the Charter Schools receive no more than a fair share of the funding.

How will you seek to secure adequate mental and healthcare professionals in every school?

I have first hand knowledge of some of the issues regarding counseling and health care professionals in the schools. Many times these staff members are relegated to duties that do not fall into their experience while their actual purposes are left unresolved. I do not have an immediate solution but recognize that it is a problem. It is essential to the success of our children that we provide these important services to facilitate thier growth and to allow the teachers to focus on their job and not get wrapped up in these other needs.



How do you plan to include educators in the business of crafting education legislation?

I would welcome the input of those I represent on the subjects about which they are knowledgeable. As noted above, I feel that often experts in their fields are not consulted on the legislation that effects their work. In my opinion the best politicians surround themselves with advisors from various fields to help guide their decisions and I would look for advisors on such topics as they arise.

OPIOID CRISIS

What is your plan to address the opioid crisis and the negative impacts it has on our students and school systems?

In consulting with experts in the field, the best way to combat the opioid epidemic is with community. I would seek to build community experiences to help those on the path to recovery to stay the course. Regarding the impacts of this crisis on our youth, it is necessary that trained counselors be available in our schools to help the students overcome the troubles they are facing in their home lives. Many times the only stability these students have is during the school day and we need to provide them with the help they need during these times, while not disrupting the learning experience of other students.



PRIORITIES FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

Please describe your top three priorities for public education, how they contribute to ensuring all students receive a high-quality education and how you plan to make them a reality.

1. Encourage steps to improve State Employees compensation to match industry standards. As in all facets of business, employees who feel appreciated and fairly compensated will strive for excellence in their fields. Additionally, new talent will be drawn to teaching. This can also be achieved through support of employee incentive programs such as loan assistance for service. Both results will provide for a better educational experience for our youth.

2. Encourage educational choices to be made locally and in line with industry standards. I see a reduction in government involvement in education as a positive step. The increase in flexibility will allow for the students to be learn in the way that is best for them.

3. Encourage educational choice via Public, Charter, Private, and Home school options. The increase in flexibility will allow for the students to be learn in the way that is best for them. Additionally, competition will increase quality and compensation for out State's teachers.

