



Unity

Jan. 30, 2025

Candidate Information and Legal updates

Use Your Voice - VOTE

And soon it begins! FEA-Europe will be voting to elect members to the FEA Board of Directors, the ultimate decision making body of FEA and the NEA Representative Assembly, the body that determines NEA's priorities for the upcoming year. Use your power: **VOTE!**

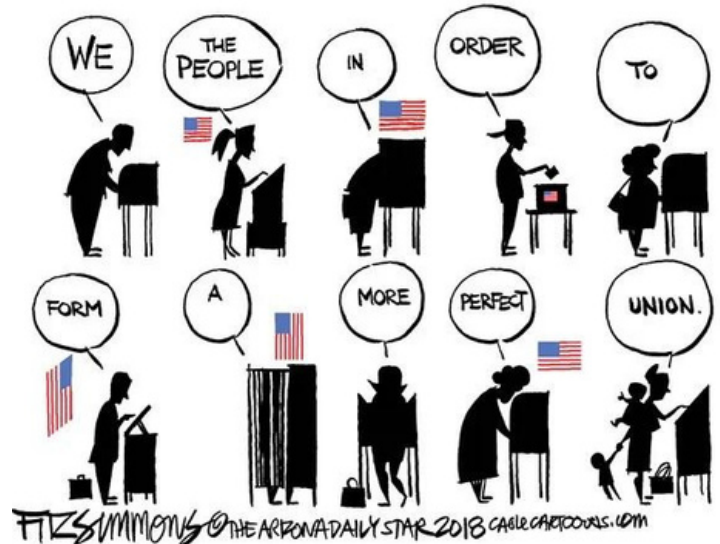
There will be TWO separate ballots coming to your personal USPS mailbox. The ballots for At-Large Officers, President, Vice-President/Secretary-Treasurer, NEA Director for FEA, Human & Civil Rights Coordinator, and ESP Coordinator. If you have ANY questions about these positions or those running, reach out to your FRS, District Representative, or Area Director for information so you can make an **informed** decision. For those in Europe East, please reach out to Dawn Park, FRS at Grafenwoehr ES for information about the election.

If any positions have more than two candidates, FEA utilizes preferential voting, where necessary, to determine the winning candidate. Preferential voting means you can rank you candidates in order of your preference for the role. In order to win, the candidate must get 50%+1 of the vote. When there are multiple candidates, this does not always happen. Without preferential voting, the vote will need to be repeated. Please see the article that follows regarding how preferential voting works.

In the election for Area Director, FEA Europe members had a return rate of only **EIGHTEEN PERCENT** of Europe's membership. We can, and must do better.

USE YOUR VOICE - VOTE!

Graphic of the Week



Follow the directions on each of the ballots and return them **SEPARATELY** in the envelopes provided. No postage is necessary. While we will never be a perfect union, we will be a stronger union with your input.

If you have not received your ballot by **February 15**, see your FRS, District Rep, or Area Director for a copy of the ballot so you can exercise your right to vote.

Ballots must be **RECEIVED** in Washington by March 25, 2025.



Europe's Candidate Information

General Disclaimer

The following candidate information is provided by the individual candidates running for the positions listed below. This material does not constitute endorsement or recommendation by FEA, any FEA local or area, or by the NEA.”

Delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly

(elect six for a one-year term)

Candidates listed in random order.

DiAnna Martinez

**Vogelweh Elementary School
AAPS-RT; K-5**

I currently serve as the Europe Human and Civil Rights Coordinator (HCRC). In my career, I have held various leadership roles, including District HCRC, FRS, FR, and FR-HCR. I have facilitated training sessions in the HCR domain and, in collaboration with Tricia Hannon, have successfully secured graduate credits for NEA micro-credentials, available to participating members. My unique perspective on member needs is informed by my experiences as a Native American, a disabled veteran, and a member of other protected groups. I am passionate about empowering members, particularly those in protected groups, to take on leadership roles. I believe that change requires action and the inclusion of all voices. I am committed to addressing issues earnestly and contributing to positive change for our members. Together, we can achieve great things—when we fight, we win!



Gretchen Lynch

**Netzaberg Elementary School
K-5 Music**

Gretchen, a K-5 Music Teacher at Netzaberg Elementary, is in her 25th year teaching and her 8th year in DoDEA. She joined NEA in 2000 and was the building representative at Freedom Hill Elementary (Vienna, VA) from 2006-2015. She has been the FR-HCR at Netzaberg Elementary School since 2021. Gretchen is the Vice President of the Grafenwoehr Education Association and was a delegate for the NEA assembly this past summer in Philadelphia. Gretchen believes in public education funding, fairness and equity in the workplace, and supporting school faculty and staff. She believes students are more than test scores and is not afraid to use her voice to advocate for a whole, inclusive education system.



Nancy Almendras

**Wiesbaden High School
ELA12, AP Literature and Composition, AVID**

My background as District Representative in the Okinawa and Heidelberg Districts, my frontline position for years as FRS, my participation as an FEA delegate to the NEA-RA and as a member of NEA Diversity Cadre gives me the experience to successfully represent members. I am a founding member of NEA Arab-American Caucus and Educators for Palestine. I would appreciate your vote for FEA delegate to the NEA-RA.



Europe-West Candidate Information



Jessica Yucel

**Spangdahlem High School
AVID, US History, AP US History**

Jessica Yucel has served as the District Representative for Europe West for the past two years. Prior to that, she was a Faculty Representative Spokesperson for three years and Faculty Representative for one year. In 2024, she was honored to attend the NEA Leadership Summit, as well as to serve as a delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly.

Doug Lechner

**SHAPE Elementary School
4th Grade Multilingual Learner Program Teacher**

With nearly a decade of diverse leadership experience at SHAPE ES, Doug has held numerous, important roles within his school and FEA, including the Instructional Leadership Team during the 2019-2020 accreditation, CSI Co-Chair, eight years as Department Chair, and four years as FR-HCR at his school. Recently, he was elected to a two-year term as the Human & Civil Rights Coordinator for the Europe West District.



Doug's leadership has positively impacted the SHAPE community, the diversity of which he cherishes immensely. Doug exemplifies what it means to live a truthful and joyful life, showing students and colleagues alike the transformative power of leading with love and kindness. As a candidate for the NEA Representative Assembly, his commitment to fostering a supportive and inclusive environment stands as a testament to his belief in the power of education to build community and human connection and foster diversity and understanding.

William Dawson

**Lakenheath High School
Street Law, US Government, AP US Government, AP US History,
Model United Nations**

Bill has served as Lakenheath HS's FRS for many years. He grew up in a strong union family and recognizes the union's part in his upbringing. His father frequently reminded him of all the security, protections, and benefits his union provided, giving them the life they had. He is actively engages in the Association at various levels and as a social studies teacher, recognizes the importance of the democratic process. He has previously attended several Representative Assemblies in the past and he hopes to get your vote to support FEA-Europe and provide input to NEA moving forward this year.



There will also be the option to write in a candidate should you wish to do so.

Please exercise your right to vote.

Pay/Debt Update

Pay Update

by Bill Freeman, FEA General Counsel

At least 90 percent of alleged debts are invalid in some way.



Even **if** you owe money, the question is always how much. The DoDEA Pay System is among the most complicated there is. For example, the entitlement to Post Allowance is based on SF 1190 submissions which DoDEA frequently loses. Post Allowance can change as often as every two weeks, depending on the legal interpretation of the Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR's). LQA is also based on SF 1190 submissions which DoDEA frequently loses. LQA does change every two weeks in accordance with the legal interpretation of the DSSR's. The least complicated is Regular Pay. But it is increased retroactively every spring with a retro payment that FEA won for you. A debt collection for Regular Pay is the simplest of all. But Federal Law prohibits DoDEA from adjusting for the taxes you paid on even a "valid" overpayment if they do not discover it soon enough. I have seen countless cases where DoDEA demands and collects the full amount even though the educator previously paid taxes of up to 33 percent.

Technically, the validity of any illegally collected debt is irrelevant. Federal Law requires DoDEA to prove a debt before they can collect. And a recent Arbitration vividly illustrated just how important these Laws are. The most experienced member of the CHRA GREAT Team reviewed the alleged debts of 6 of the named Grievants. **Incredibly, she found all six debts to be invalid.** And her analysis was not based on "Full Audits." It was based on the very limited records she had available. One can only imagine what "Full Audits" would have revealed. One can only question how the less experienced witnesses testifying from CHRA got their analyses correct...especially since those analyses were based for the most part on hearsay from DFAS. One can only imagine how inaccurate debts letters are when they have not been reviewed by the CHRA *GREAT* (Grievance Review Evaluation & Adjudication Team) Team.

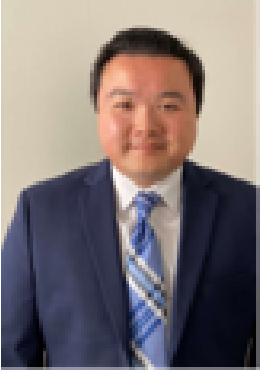
Goodbye Grievances are critical.

All of these six had followed our advice to file and elevate Goodbye Grievances. **That is the only reason FEA could address their problems.** Keep the Pay Problem Package in your personal email account. Use only the updated 24-25 version. Discard the older ones. It contains all the information anyone needs to deal with a pay problem. Make sure you file and elevate a GOODBYE GRIEVANCE before you retire, separate, transfer to DDESS or Europe South. There is no statute of limitations on collecting debts. I have seen them go back more than 20 years and for more than \$100,000.

More Legal Information

Adjusting To Changes In A New Administration

by Alex Nguyen, FEA-Europe General Counsel



On January 20th, Donald Trump was inaugurated and once again took office as President of the United States. Any time a new president takes office, there is uncertainty regarding how the new administration's policies will impact DoDEA educators and their employment. Though President Trump's second term is only a few days old, he has already signed several Executive Orders that impact federal employees and agencies, though some of the changes do not yet directly impact DoDEA employees.

President Trump has signed an Executive Order instituting a hiring freeze on federal civilian employees. FEA has been notified by DoDEA that the Department of Defense has been granted a blanket exemption from this hiring freeze. The exemption from the hiring freeze includes DoDEA, and all DoDEA hiring recruitments have resumed. The president also signed an Executive Order prohibiting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility offices in the federal government. The Office of Personnel Management has already issued guidance to the agencies regarding the closure of their DEIA offices, and we are waiting to see exactly what this will look like once fully implemented at DoDEA and how it might impact our Human and Civil Rights coordinators and programs. President Trump has also signed an Executive Order requiring federal agencies to take steps to terminate remote work arrangements and require employees to return to work in-person on a full-time basis. Though this largely does not impact DoDEA educators, it likely does impact other DoDEA employees who did have remote work arrangements.

We expect that in the coming days, weeks, and months, President Trump will sign other Executive Orders that may directly impact DoDEA educators. It is entirely possible that some may be issued in the time that elapses between when I write this and when you read it. We cannot say for certain exactly what these Executive Orders will require or how they will be implemented, though there has been much speculation and reporting from news outlets that these could include the elimination of payroll dues deductions for association dues for federal employees.

Regardless of what Executive Orders are issued, FEA, its elected leaders, and our attorneys will continue to serve our members. In Europe, we will continue to provide guidance and legal services on the issues and matters critical to our membership. In Washington, FEA will continue to work closely with and receive support from NEA on combating policies that are detrimental to our members through the legislative and judicial processes. As more policies and Executive Orders are issued, we will provide updated information to our members on what those orders entail and how we expect they might impact your employment. At this point, much is still unknown about how federal government employment will be affected by this new administration, but please know that FEA will continue to advocate and fight for our members.

Information from FEA-Europe Legal

Americans with Disabilities Act & Rehabilitation Act by Jan Freeman, FEA-Europe General Counsel



- The Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 USC 12112 (d)(3)(B) and 12112(d)(4) (c), requires DoDEA to maintain information regarding the medical condition and history of individuals with disabilities in separate medical files and to treat such information as confidential except in specified situations. See 29 CFR 1630.14 (b)(1), (c)(1), and (d)(1).
- Individuals who have access to information necessary to make a decision about whether to grant a requested accommodation may not disclose this information except under specific circumstances.

When you are involved in a leave request, Workman's compensation claim, requesting accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act(ADA) or fitness for duty request, DoDEA may ask you for "medical documentation." The question then becomes, "what is sufficient medical documentation?" The request must be reasonable and sufficient. In other words, the request must balance an individual's right to privacy with DoDEA's need for sufficient documentation to support the request. For example, you should not be asked for broad inclusive medical documentation for the sole purpose of establishing a person's condition as a disability under ADA. Instead, medical documentation requests should focus on the limitations caused by the disability.

DoDEA must also make certain that any request for medical information does not violate the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act.(GINA) GINA prohibits DoDEA from requesting, requiring or purchasing an employee's genetic information including family history. This means, when requesting medical information, DoDEA should advise the medical professional NOT to provide any genetic information.

DoDEA may not have to accept a note from a medical professional merely stating, "employee is unable to return to work." DoDEA may ask for more specific information. However, DoDEA should make considerable effort not to infringe on an educator's privacy. The request for medical information should be the least amount as is sufficient to make the determination in question. For example, DoDEA should avoid unnecessary multiple requests. Once the employee has submitted medical information, DoDEA should ask itself, "what is it about this document that is insufficient?"

If you feel you are being asked for unnecessary or over-reaching medical information, contact your FEA Attorney for advice/guidance.

Constitutional Amendments

Changes to the FEA Constitution will be voted on with the At-Large Officer elections but separately from the Representative Assembly elections. A majority from those who exercise their right to vote is needed for each group of amendments to pass. Details can be found in your [FEA Journal](#) or online at feonline.org. Search for Journal. You will be required to log in with your membership number. The current FEA Constitution is available [here](#).

You will receive TWO ballots in your USPS mailbox.

Amendment Group A

- **Article 2, Section 5** adds language to identify potential consequences to membership if dues are not paid in a timely fashion.
- **Article 12** adds a Bargaining Committee to the list of Standing committees.
- **Article 15** removes language which allows for election by affirmation. This means if there is one vacancy, and one person is nominated, they are elected and an election does not need to be held.

Amendment Group B

Creates a position called “Alternate NEA Director.” Currently, if the NEA Director for FEA is not available, the President serves as the interim director.

- **Article 5, Section 4** changes the language to identify the FEA President as alternate NEA Director if necessary.
- **Article 6, Section 1.e.** creates language to allow the alternate NEA director to assume the role of NEA Director if the need arises.
- **Article 15, Section 7** adds an Alternate NEA Director position to the At-Large officers for election purposes.

Amendment Group C

Clarifies the practices regarding Article 3 - Charges and Trials of Members

- **Section 3** changes the language regarding initial consideration of the charges.
- **Section 4** amends the language for hearings to take place
- **Section 5** modifies the language concerning potential penalties.

This is NOT intended to be a complete review of the amendments.

Please see the journal and/or your ballot for specifics.

At-Large Officers

In this election, you will elect the **majority** of the FEA Board of Directors. **YOU** will elect a President, Vice President/Secretary/Treasurer, NEA Director for FEA, Human & Civil Rights Coordinator, and ESP Coordinator. Only the three Area Director positions are not up for election. Please choose wisely! If you have any questions, please contact your FRS or these members of your Europe Area Council for information: Jessica Yucl: FEA.Europe.West@gmail.com, Chris Bradeen: FEA.Europe.Central.DR@gmail.com or Anita Lang: FEA.Europe.AD@gmail.com. Ballots should be arriving in your USPS mailboxes soon.

Make INFORMED decisions for FEA’s future!