

Statement by Washington State PTA President Scott Allen

Thanks to all of you who have taken the time to share your thoughts regarding this year's awards process, particularly related to the Outstanding Local Unit. As you may be aware, there have been numerous conversations and debates on how to best address these issues – not only from the local unit perspective, but from all perspectives including committee and board members who are vested in this work. Despite our best efforts to improve the process of recognizing an outstanding local unit, we failed to consider the unintended consequences of changes that were made this year, most significantly requiring Gold Level status for consideration. For that, on behalf of the Board, I apologize.

In addition, any changes to the process, rules and scoring rubric mid-cycle and about which there was extensive prior communication would not have been an acceptable resolution. The flaw in this new judging process and the unintended consequences, unfortunately, only became apparent after the judging had been completed. For that, I also apologize. We are going to work to ensure that the problems encountered this year don't happen again.

I recognize that there are many local unit members who are unhappy with the outcome this year - yet if the decision had been reversed (disregarding the committee work), I know that I would then have had other members who would have been equally unhappy. I would have ignored what we teach in all of our classes - "don't redo committee work". WSPTA (both committees and Board) takes the work we do very seriously, and we understand the responsibility and desire to recognize the many PTA members and local units who are doing impressive work on behalf of children in our state. However, simply awarding an honor to "the next best" devalues the award and the history and esteem that it deserves. We can and should recognize that those units who move from bronze to gold level deserve the same evaluation as those who move, for example, from "nothing" to silver. Thus, one of the first changes will be to remove the criteria "must be Gold Level to qualify for OLU consideration".

Leadership, at times, is faced with choices that don't make everyone happy - and sometimes it leaves everyone feeling dissatisfied. And this is one of those cases. As a result of this and the associated problems, I'll be asking that all award applications, judging lists and scoring criteria be reviewed and updated to ensure consistency of terms and definitions and that these be clearly communicated. This will be the responsibility of the Program Director with oversight from the Executive Committee and ultimate approval by the Board.

We understand the questions that have arisen regarding the OLU funds that are collected every year. As this is a By-Laws issue, based upon consultation with our parliamentarian, we cannot arbitrarily decide which By-Laws we choose to abide by and those to ignore. Therefore, we're not in a position to suspend or refund the \$5.00 annual fee. By maintaining these funds in a designated account, we will assure that these funds will only be used to cover those costs. Because costs incurred by local units in traveling to National Convention may vary based on where it's held, having a balance in the account will enable us to make sure that the OLU in future years will have adequate support to send an appropriate representation,

notwithstanding higher than usual costs. The board will be paying particular attention to this issue to make sure that funds are spent appropriately on these Outstanding Local Unit travel expenses.

We acknowledge the frustration that exists among our local units regarding this year's process and are sorry for any confusion or discontent that it may have caused. As promised, all of this will be looked into - but a resolution that is satisfactory to all will not be able to be reached by us acting hastily or in reaction to a specific situation. I hope that the results of my work in response and in developing processes to preclude a recurrence of this situation will likewise be accepted even if it appears as being "outside the box". But we need some time to develop these alternatives so that these efforts won't have other unidentified and unintended impacts.

I'm hopeful that leaders and members will give me the latitude needed to successfully address these issues going forward in a manner that honors our local units, the process and our history as a respected association.

Scott Allen
President
Washington State PTA
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