

# National Education Association's 87th Representative Assembly.

**Thursday, July 3, 2008**

**Mary Kay Scheid, OMTA Delegate**

On July 3, **OMTA** delegates to the **2008 National Education Association Representative Assembly** joined almost 10,000 educators from across the country to celebrate at the opening ceremony for the 146<sup>th</sup> annual meeting. For President **Reg Weaver**, this will be his last year chairing the proceeding; so we all viewed photos and enjoyed video-clips from previous meetings.

The **California Caucus** met before the Representative Assembly began, gathering from 7:00 A.M. until 9:00 A.M. (that's 4-6 A.M. Pacific Time) to discuss whether California should support or oppose the issues at the national level. We heard from candidates for a number of NEA Board of Directors positions. As they were running unopposed, **Dennis Van Roekel** was named President Elect and **Lily Eskelsen** named Vice-President Elect. They will assume their duties at the close of this meeting. Other offices will be selected by delegate vote on July 5.

After discussing such issues as cyber lobbying and universal health care, we heard from North Carolina Governor **Michael Easley**. The NEA bestowed upon him the first Outstanding Education Governor Award. In addressing the delegates, Governor Easley commended us for what we do. "Teaching is your profession," he said, "but building the national workforce is what you do." Governor Easley shared some of his successes. North Carolina has implemented a "Learn and Earn" program allowing high school students to earn an Associates Degree in five years by taking high school and college classes concurrently. He was also instrumental in raising teacher salaries 18% over the last three years. Finally, he shared how he was able to be such a successful advocate for educators. Rather than perceive the union as a barrier to making effective change, he declared: "It is NEA that helped get our changes made in North Carolina."

**OMTA** delegates joined other **Service Center One** representatives for dinner. After more than eight hours of meetings, and a Subway sandwich lunch in our seats, it was a welcome break!