





Our Fall Meeting in Lafayette was enormously successful as key politicos communicated with our membership on critical retirement issues. This year, we were privileged to have Governor John Bel Edwards and First Lady Donna Edwards speak at our conference. We were also honored to have Senator Barrow Peacock speak to our membership on retirement reform legislation.

These important conversations with our attendees highlighted our organization's need to build political alliances, network with state and federal legislators, and communicate clearly on retirement issues that focus on building consensus through group decision-making.

By definition consensus decision-making is a group decision-making process in which members develop and agree to support a decision in the best interest of the whole. Consensus may be defined professionally as an acceptable resolution, even if not the "favorite" of each individual.

Understanding both sides of the argument and the meaning of consensus is an important part of building political alliances between retirees and our legislators. It's true that many legislators don't believe our current defined benefit plan is sustainable because of huge debt, high employer costs, and benefits paid to retirees. It's also true the debt within our retirement system is a staggering 11 billion dollars. Maintaining a retirement plan with that

kind of debt is not sustainable. It is a logical premise to assume that without a plan to pay down the debt within one that can be supported, specific guidelines, the system is not financially stable. However, the state does have a plan to pay down the debt. Understanding both sides of this argument is critical when communicating with legislators the retirees' side of the argument.

> For instance, understanding that the debt is being paid down within a specific time frame is important. Understanding that once the debt is paid down, the employer cost will drop from 26% to 4%, less than Social Security, is important. Understanding that the debt is due to the state not

> > Continued on pg. 04

It's membership renewal A message from LRTA's time! Check out page 03 **Executive Director** for more details. page 05

A message from the LRTA President page 04

Missed the Fall Meeting? Check out page 08 to view snapshots of events.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR LRTA PRESIDENT



What a wonderful time was had by all who attended the Fall Meeting in Lafayette! Our time was filled with important information, great speakers, fun and fellowship. Thanks to all who made it possible!

All active LRTA members received a ballot with this newsletter. On the ballot you will be asked to vote for your representative on the Nominating Committee. Also, the Executive Board is asking you to vote on an annual increase in membership dues from \$25 to \$30 for active members, and an increase from \$10 to \$12 for associate members. This will be the first increase in dues in more than ten years. After meetings with the audit and budget committees, and after much discussion, the board felt this would help LRTA maintain a balanced budget and help continue a strong lobbying effort that protects our guaranteed monthly retirement benefit. If an increase in annual dues is implemented, the increase would not go into effect until 2018. Just a few points to remember:

- · We have a governor who supports a defined benefit plan.
- · We are enjoying a COLA (Cost of Living Increase)
- · We successfully lobbied the Task Force on Budget and Structural Tax Reform to maintain our state income tax exemption on retirement benefits.

I ask you to please remember that none of this would have happened without the lobbying efforts of our LRTA staff and membership. LRTA is the only organization to protect our retirement benefits. I ask you to vote YES for this increase in dues!

The LRTA Foundation met in late October in Lafayette concerning a disaster relief fund. This fund is set up for the relief of those retired teachers affected by the flood in August 2016 that devastated so much of our state. The relief fund, totaling more than \$30,000. was donated by Jerry Morgan at AMBA, and various donors throughout our state.

In order to be eligible for a disaster relief grant, one must have been a member of LRTA

as of August 12, 2016, and experienced flooding in their primary residence in a federally declared disaster area (Parishes included: Acadia, Ascension, Avoyelles, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Evangeline, Iberia, Iberville, Jefferson Davis, Lafayette, Livingston, Pt. Coupee, St. Helena, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Vermilion, West Feliciana and Washington).

Once all applications have been processed and approved, the LRTA disaster relief funds will be equally dispersed to all qualifying members, not to exceed \$1,000 per applicant. To apply, please visit our website at Irta.net or you can also call the LRTA office at (225) 927-8837 and request an application to be mailed to you. Deadline to apply for the grant is Tuesday, February 28, 2017.

LRTA not only protects our retirement benefits, but also provides resources to our membership in times of need. Thank you for being supportive of such a great organization!

Bertha H. Breland **LRTA President**

2017 RETIRED **TEACHERS** DAY SET FOR **MARCH 16**

Louisiana Retired Teachers Day will be celebrated on Thursday, March 16. This is a time for the state and your local communities to show appreciation for the many years of dedication and service provided by Louisiana's retired educators.

LRTA will make a request to the Governor's office for an official proclamation. If you'd like to receive a copy of the Governor's official proclamation, contact the LRTA office with your request.

If you'd like a customized proclamation for use at your local event, the LRTA staff is ready to assist.

Please be sure to send us photos of your Retired Teachers Day celebrations!

STAY CONNECTED

If you would like to join LRTA's Email club, please visit www.lrta.net. Scroll to the bottom of the home page, type your email address in the space provided under the heading "Join Our Email Club" and click on "Subscribe." You will receive email updates regarding current events taking place in LRTA.

If you would like to stay informed via our Facebook page, please go to www.facebook.com/Irta1. Click on the "like" button to receive our updates and posts.

IT'S MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME!

It's membership renewal time for LRTA members. Members who renew their membership on an annual basis, as well as former members with lapsed dues, and non-members will receive membership invitations/renewal letters with this issue of the newsletter.

LRTA is the largest organization dedicated to the preservation of benefits and advocacy for the welfare of Louisiana's retired educators. Throughout the years, LRTA's members have worked togeth-

er to create a strong, viable and professional organization, and the association looks forward to carrying our message to all those who make decisions on our behalf.

We need your support to remain strong and to maintain a unified voice representing all retirees from Louisiana's educator community. Annual dues are \$25. Lifetime dues are \$500.

This mailing from LRTA includes several items in one package. This helps to econo-

mize on postage, to direct contents to appropriate recipients, to expedite delivery, and to help you in returning materials to the LRTA office. The table below shows the materials you received, based on your membership status in LRTA.

Ballots are sent to voting members of LRTA: those individuals include Lifetime Members, Annual Members who renew each year and Continuous Members who have authorized payment of their annual dues by automatic deduction from

their April retirement benefit.

Membership renewal forms are sent to all members who renew annually. Non-members receive a complimentary copy of the LRTA Newsletter and an invitation to join LRTA.

Ballots, membership forms and renewal checks may all be returned to LRTA in the enclosed postage paid envelope. Please return as soon as possible, but please note that ballots must be received by February 17 in order to be counted.

Member Class	Newsletter	Return Envelope	LRTA Ballot	Membership Form	Candidate Information
Lifetime Member	Х	X	Х		Х
Continuous Member	Х	Х	Х		X
Annual Renewal	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
Non-Member	Х	X		Х	
Associate Member	Х				

FOURTEEN GOOD REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN LRTA AND YOUR LOCAL LRTA UNIT

- . Represents the interests of Louisiana's retired education community on proposals considered by the TRSL Board of Trustees, by the Louisiana Legislature, and by the U.S. Congress.
- Supports Permanent Benefit Increases (PBIs) for eligible benefit recipients.
- Will continue to work with legislative leaders and commit-Otees to increase the level of benefits for oldest retirees and to review methods for granting future PBIs from the Employee **Experience Account.**
- $oldsymbol{4}$. Is working toward obtaining legislative appropriations to pay down the IUAL.
- . Supports appropriate levels of health insurance coverage Ofor retirees through the Office of Group Benefits and local school boards.
- Provides current information about LRTA on www.lrta.net.

- 7. Provides four newsletters mailed to all members each year.
- O. Supports repeal of Social Security Administration benefit Ooffsets known as GPO and WEP.
- Opposes changes in the current governance, administrative, and benefit structure of TRSL.
- Opposes mandatory Social Security coverage of Louisi-Uana's actively employed educators.
- . Maintains a staffed state office to coordinate state activi-
- Works with district and local units to provide programs Land information.
- 2. Provides a member benefits package through Associa-13. Provides a member 3. Stion Member Benefits Advisors.
- 1 4. There is no other association that works exclusively for Louisiana's retired education community.

2017

BUILDING POLITICAL ALLIANCES continued...

paying the employer's share in previous years, a state obligation, is important.

Hopefully, communicating both sides of the argument helps to build and sustain political consensus. This was evidenced through the very articulate presentations by both Governor John Bel Edwards and Senator Barrow Peacock, the chair of the Senate Retirement Committee.

Governor Edwards supports our current Defined Benefit Structure because he understands both sides of the argument and is willing to negotiate and build consensus. He clearly states that he's open to a different type of retirement plan, but only if it is equal to or better than our current plan and honors paying down the debt incurred by the state. He stated that any modifications to the retirement system would have to be less expensive than the current system, be beneficial to retirement recipients, meet all IRS and Social Security requirements and apply only to new members because of constitutional protections for current retirees.

This willingness to look at a different type of plan strongly supports consensus building. However, he stated that he has not seen a better plan presented to the state legislature, to date, and supports our current defined benefit plan.

Senator Barrow Peacock put a fine point on that discussion by talking about ways to continue retirement reform that control for employer costs, pay down the debt, and at the same time, provide the benefits established by our current plan.

Senator Peacock successfully sponsored three pieces of legislation that continued to reform our current plan and provide a COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) to qualifying retirees. Governor Edwards signed all three pieces of legislation into law during the 2016 Legislative Session.

Our organization is proud of our legislature for their bipartisan efforts to unanimously sign these three bills into law. You can learn more about these important laws by visiting the LRTA website at Irta.net. Click on LRTA and the Legislature, then LRTA 2016 Regular Legislative Update, then 2016 Final Presentation Legislative Update. This document contains information about all retirement bills introduced during the 2016 Legislative Session(s). Specifically, you can read about Acts 93, 94, and 95.

As we continue to exert activism among our membership, let's focus on building 'consensus' and establishing political alliances between retirees and our state and federal legislators.

Our organization showed their support of both presenters with standing ovations at each of their sessions. The Louisiana Retired Teachers Association thanks both Governor John Bel Edwards and Senator Barrow Peacock for their knowledge, understanding, and support of the Louisiana Teachers' Retirement System of Louisiana.

Rodney Watson

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

2017 Spring Meeting Holiday Inn Downtown, Alexandria, La. April 25 & 26

*Check www.lrta.net for the latest details and schedule of events.

LRTA Past President passed away on December 12, 2016. Before his death, he asked that the following statement would be included in the newsletter:

I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to our LRTA members. As many of you know, I have been battling a serious illness for several months. Knowing you have all been praying for me and my family has made this difficult time easier. Our mailbox has been full of beautiful cards and well wishes. Each and every one brightens my day and puts a smile on my face. Again, thank you all, continue your work for LRTA, and have a prosperous and blessed 2017.

> Sincerely, James T. Stewart Past President of LRTA December 27, 1939 - December 12, 2016

LRTA EXECUTIVE BOARD

PRESIDENT Bertha H. Breland rupbert@bellsouth.net

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT James T. Stewart itstewart1939@bellsouth. net

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Dr. James A. Taylor, Sr. edleaders@bellsouth.net

Group Benefits Policy & **Planning Board** VACANT

AARP State President Dr. Brenda Hatfield bhatfield@aarp.org

> LASS-R Donald A. Songv lass@eatel.net

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The LRTA Executive Board voted to place a membership dues increase on the January 2017 election ballot. LRTA has not increased dues in more than ten years. Due to inflation and an increase in lobbying activities, the Board is endorsing this proposed increase to provide for a balanced budget annually. Additionally, this modest increase will assure that LRTA can maintain its strong lobbying efforts that protect your guaranteed monthly retirement benefit.

Why should you vote for this increase? In addition to the 14 reasons to join LRTA. during the last 18 months our organization:

- · Surveyed gubernatorial candidates and informed membership of which candidate supported Defined Benefits
- · Received support from a governor who supports our current retirement benefits system. Governor John Bel Edwards recently spoke at the LRTA Fall Meeting stating his continued

support for our current Defined Benefit plan.

- · During the 2016 Legislative Sessions, LRTA successfully lobbied to block more than a dozen Bills focused on modifying or changing our current benefit plan from Defined Benefit to a hybrid Defined Contribution (401k) plan.
- · Worked in tangent with Senator Barrow Peacock to successfully pass retirement Legislation that continues to reform our retirement system, making it more effective and able to meet its benefit obligations and reducing long term debt.
- · Worked in tangent with Senator Peacock and Representative Jones to pass COLA bills in a year when retirees were not legally slated for a permanent benefit increase.
- · Successfully lobbied the Task Force on Budget and Tax Reform to maintain our state income tax exemption on retirement benefits.
- · Successfully researched and supported passage of Consti-

tutional Amendment #5 to establish a revenue source to pay down the UAL, and to

Oppose Constitutional Amendment #6 that could diminish designated state education funding needed to maintain our retirement benefits.

This is a nominal dues increase of \$5 for active members and \$2 for associate members. If passed, this will be the first dues increase in 11 years and will not go into effect until January 2018.

LRTA is the only organization whose sole purpose is to protect retirement benefits. We have been successful in protecting your retirement benefit plan. A national push by external organizations such as ALEC, the Reason Foundation. and Pew Research Center will continue to introduce state legislation to reduce or eliminate public retirement plans.

Remember, Louisiana educators do not qualify for Social Security. Changing our Defined Benefit Plan to a hybrid or De-



fined Contribution Plan could eliminate or reduce your guaranteed monthly benefit.

OUR ORGANIZATION IS BOTH POWERFUL AND IN-FLUENTIAL!

Our retirement benefits will always be under attack by the legislature. Please vote 'yes' for a modest annual yearly increase of \$25 to \$30 for active members, and \$10 to \$12 for associate members.

Rodney Watson **Executive Director**

FOUNDATION DONATIONS

ST. JAMES RTA IN MEMORY OF ALL DECEASED MEMBERS OF THE ST. JAMES RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION MR. & MRS. GENE VEILLON

MR. & MRS. LLOYD EDWARDS IN MEMORY OF MRS. GRACE S. GRAUGNARD

FLOOD RELIEF DONATIONS TO LRTA FOUNDATION

SHERON G. ALLEMAND MARY H. BAKER **CAMILLE FRANCE** WILMA C. LEBLANC PATRICIA PICKETT PHIL & RENEE SICCONE RODNEY WATSON SIDNEY & CAROLYN SEEGERS ANONYMOUS DONOR ASSUMPTION PARISH RTA CADDO-BOSSIER RTA CALCASIEU-CAMERON RTA LAFAYETTE PARISH RTA LAFOURCHE PARISH RTA TERREBONNE RTA

ALABAMA EDUCATION RETIREES ASSOCIATION

N MEMORIAM

Deceased Retired Teachers September 1 to November 15, 2016

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"...THESE IMMORTAL DEAD WHO LIVE AGAIN IN MINDS I

Norma McMichael - Amite Jacqueline M. Murphy - Sun Kay P. Narcisse - Lacombe Richard Gayle Neal - Hammond Martha Z. O'Dowd - Slidell Alice K. Rhoden - Bogalusa John I. Rogers - Denham Springs Helen Rownd - Hammond Hannah D. Rucker - Slidell Dorothy B. Sierveld - Mandeville Edith M. Sims - Denham Springs L. Brooks Tisdale - Mandeville Paul Walsworth - Albany Jerry Wascom - Franklinton Irene B. Williams - Greensburg John W. Williams - Hammond

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Beverly A. Williams - Maringouin Christie L. Williams - Baton Rouge Pearlie T. Williams - Baton Rouge Carolyn M. Wilson - Gonzales

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Shirley F. Auzenne – Opelousas Howard Bruggers - Lafayette Jeanette C. Cessac - Kaplan Theresa V. Davis - Lafavette John D. Devillier - Cecilia Gloria G. Donohoe - Lafayette Joseph D. Doucet - Washington Harvey J. Firestone - Lafayette Kathleen M. Fowler - New Iberia Porfirio G. Garciá - Youngsville Leo A. Hargroder - Lafayette Nelwyn D. Hebert - Sunset Mary Lauchner - Lafayette Melba Maraist - St. Martinville Dolores McGee - Parks Margaret M. McMillan - Milton Mereline Moresi - Broussard Harris Morvant - Youngsville Delores P. Owens - Eunice Shirley L. Richard - Opelousas Corine C. Romero – Abbeville Robert D. Sidman - Lafayette Charlene Sittig - Eunice Leroy Stark - Eunice Lucy A. Tabor - Morgan City Laura M. Thibeaux - Erath Pemella Ann Williams - Sunset Janis M. Wilson - New Iberia Shirley Winchester - Abbeville Claudia C. Wood - Eunice

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)E BETTER BY THEIR PRESENCE"

Connie H. Thrasher - Lake Charles Louise S. Tutt - DeRidder

District VII

Betty J. Armstrong - Deville Dianne S. Beaubouef - Deville Helen M. Bennett - Alexandria Cathleen T. Dale - Sicily Island Rúth J. Elliott - Leesville Carole S. Ford - Alexandria Marie Louise Gagnard - Woodworth Bernice Golmon - Sicily Island Dorothy Goux - Marksville Philip W. Horn - Pineville Carole L. Johnson - Rosepine Mildred T. Johnson - Dry Prong Lydia Ross McKee - Leesville Lisa A. McKinney - Pineville Mildred M. J. Moses - Alexandria Betty J. Mott - Alexandria Mary M. Price - Bentley William J. Ryan - Jonesville Allegra Noelle Smith - Ball John E. Stagg - Pineville Jane Thiels - Alexandria Willola J. Thomas - Alexandria Emma M. Walker - Alexandria

District VIII

Stephanie B. Barnhill - Many Rita Brockbank - Natchitoches Thomas A. Burns - Natchitoches Etah Idell Delton – Mansfield Marie B. Gahagan - Natchitoches 3rady Harper - Natchitoches Eliza Jones - Natchitoches 3arbara R. McGinty - Pleasant Hill Sarah Owers - Many 3en B. Rice - Zwolle Andrea H. Shoalmire - Converse Vyrtha S. Thomas - Mansfield Alfra Wade - Natchitoches

District IX

Jonna Carroll - Kilbourne 3obby R. Cockerham - Oak Grove vy G. Johnson - Gilbert (eith R. Pruitt - Mangham Evetta R. Stubblefield - Tallulah Suzanna R. Walters - Winnsboro Vila Fave Williams - Winnsboro

)istrict X

Charlene J. Adkins - Farmerville /lary T. Ashford - Grambling Iotie B. Belton - Jonesboro ane C. Bryan - West Monroe letty E. Carroll - Monroe

Bettye S. Dixon - Bastrop Jessie L. Foster - Downsville Carrie Mae Gibson - Ruston Hersey Goodwin - Bastrop Marion P. Henderson - Monroe Addie B. Humble - Monroe Martha Jackson - Monroe Carl David Jordan - Ruston Doris P. McCall - Grambling Christine W. McKinstry - Quitman Lenora M. Miller - Ruston Donald R. Nelson - Ruston George H. Nichols - Melville Gary Parker - Collinston Janice C. Pierot - West Monroe Clyde Lee Posey - Ruston Leonard L. Roebuck - Ruston Edna Q. Rogers - Marion Shirley G. Scott - Bastrop Berdiana Smelley - Monroe Huey P. Sonnier - Hodge Larry Stegall - West Monroe Terrie P. Sugg - Calhoun Elaine F. Thornhill - West Monroe Brittie L. Washington - Bastrop Howard E. Willis - Grambling Gloria Wines - Spearsville

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Ann B. Oakes - Shreveport Barbara H. Petteway - Shreveport Kathryn M. Rogers - Homer Gussie M. Siglar - Shreveport Sharon P. Stanfield - Heflin Deloise H. Thompson - Shreveport Mary H. Tidwell - Shreveport Myrtle S. Veal - Cullen Otis Viers - Shreveport Billie Westbrook - Bossier City

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2016 FALL MEETING RECAP LAFAYETTE, LA



































