

LOUISIANA RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Spring 2019

SPOTLIGHTS

State Legislation and Elections: What's on the Horizon? By: Rodney R. Watson

This edition of the LRTA newsletter traditionally spotlights the interesting hobbies and volunteer efforts of several members across the state. Since the next newsletter will publish after the regular legislative session, it's important to stay up to date on important legislative events, proposed legislation and statewide elections now. (cont. on page 2)

Pictured: The Livingston RTA enjoys a demonstration at the Knock Knock Children's Museum during one of their meetings in 2018.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



(cont. from cover)

This year the regular legislative session will run from April 8 through June 6, 2019. This is a shorter session than last year and will primarily focus on fiscal matters. We will monitor all proposed retirement legislation and keep our members informed of bills that affect retirees.

Please note that LRTA supports legislation that reforms and maintains our current defined benefit structure. We oppose hybrid plans or defined contribution plans that would reduce current retirement benefits. Research continues to indicate that defined benefit plans are good retention tools and provide sustainable benefits to retirees. Those of you who were able to attend your local district meetings received this research in your packets. We also generally oppose any bill that calls for a Constitutional Convention that targets education and/or retirement. To date, we have been successful in support of these principles.

Also important to note is the 2019 Louisiana gubernatorial election to

elect the Governor of Louisiana. Incumbent Governor John Bel Edwards is running for re-election to a second term. Also running is Ralph Abraham, Representative from the 5th Congressional District, and Eddie Rispone, a Baton Rouge industrial contractor. *Additional candidates may announce their participation in the gubernatorial election after this newsletter is published. We will update our members through our website, Facebook page and Email Club.

At the 2018 LRTA Fall Meeting, our focus was 'Coming to the Middle: Vote on the Issue rather than the Party'. We want our members to focus on which candidate(s) will support our current defined benefit structure and pay down the UAL until we reach full funding. Currently, our state reforms are working and our funding level has increased by over 10 percent in 10 years.

The incumbent John Bel Edwards has shown a strong support of educators and retirees. LRTA will survey all of the gubernatorial candidates on their views on retirement and provide our membership with information as it becomes available. We want to ensure our members can make informed decisions on voting prior to the election. We will communicate this information through our newsletters and our LRTA website. Irta.net. We will also send updates through the LRTA Facebook page and Email Club, as well as, Unit and District Spring and Fall Meetings.

In Louisiana, all candidates appear on the same ballot, regardless of

party, and voters may vote for any candidate, regardless of party affiliation. If no person running for office receives a majority of the vote during the primary election on October 12, 2019, a runoff election will be held on November 16, 2019 between the top two candidates in the primary. It's important to elect a candidate that supports Louisiana's retirees. Many attempts to change defined benefit plans both at the state and federal levels continue to occur and we depend on our membership to make informed voting decisions that protect our current retirement plan for current and future generations of educators.

Rodney Watson LRTA Executive Director

Have you heard about H.B. 28?

Rep. Barry Ivey has filed a bill that proposes changing the current defined benefit plan to a hybrid plan.

LRTA opposes hybrid plans. Those of you who attended the spring district meetings should have received information about this legislation.

LRTA is launching a letter-writing campaign and encouraging members to contact members of the House and Senate Retirement Committees to oppose H.B. 28. To find their contact information, visit house.louisiana.gov or senate.legis.la.gov.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR LRTA PRESIDENT



Spring is on the way! March is here, and Rodney and I are traveling throughout the state attending district meetings. Looking forward to seeing and visiting with all of you. Our Spring Meeting is drawing near, April 30 – May 1 in Alexandria. This meeting is considered a business meeting. It's important that we stay informed on any issues that could impact our retirement so that we are ready to take action if necessary. LRTA will share more details about the Spring Meeting agenda in the next few weeks.

I am excited to introduce the Membership Spotlights edition of the LRTA newsletter. We're featuring four members who demonstrate the importance of volunteering and staying involved in this newsletter. Their stories begin on page 4. Our members are involved in various projects, political offices and, of course, LRTA activities. For example, Aretha Williams combines her passion for literacy with community initiatives for her unit. Dr. Wilma Arant uses her retirement years to explore new paths

to service and ministry. She's also involved in her local unit and other programs. And, Kathryn Vaughn has become an integral leader in every organization she's a part of. She goes above and beyond for her church and groups that she's involved with. Let's not forget Velma Hendrix. She was recently elected mayor of Melville, La. She shares her story with LRTA of how she got involved in a political office.

Once you retire, it's important to stay active in your community during your retirement years. As Dr. Arant points out in her article, staying active and volunteering is good for the mind and the soul. Retirees have the experience and expertise that greatly benefits service organizations. Plus, it's important for members of our community and legislature to see retirees volunteering and staying active in worthy causes. We need to show that our retirement years allow us to participate in our community on another level. Our legislators also need to see how our retirement benefits enable us to contribute to the state.

We hope that you will think about becoming more involved in LRTA at the local, district and state levels. We need you to accept officer positions in your units and districts. A few people cannot do this important job by themselves. We need your expertise and leadership. Please think about accepting a position and help lead your unit or district. **WE NEED YOU!**

Please remember, if you are interested in attending the 2019 LRTA Spring Meeting, registration forms are on page 12 of this newsletter. If you have any questions about registration, please contact the LRTA staff. I hope to see you all in Alexandria in a few weeks. These meetings are a great way to learn more about LRTA, meet fellow retired teachers and make **OUR RETIREMENT YEARS GREAT!**

Hanry L. Juigley

Nancy L. Quigley LRTA President

Louisiana Retired Teachers Day

Governor John Bel Edwards declared March 21, 2019 as Louisiana Retired Teachers Day. We are most thankful and appreciative of his recognition of this day. This is a time for retired teachers to reflect on thier years of dedication and service to the community. On behalf of LRTA, thank you for educating our youth and for your tireless contribution to the state of Louisiana.

If you would like a photocopy of the proclamation, please call us at 225-927-8837 or email us at info@lrta.net.



MAKING THEIR RETIREMENT YEARS GREAT!

Congratulations! You've reached retirement. What are you going to do next? For some, going to Disney World is not always the answer (albeit it's a very fun one). Retirement doesn't have to be an end of one chapter; it can be the beginning of another. LRTA encourages members to make their retirement years great however they see fit. In this edition of the LRTA newsletter, we highlight members who continue to stay involved in their communities and go above and beyond the call of duty. These members demonstrate how they make their retirement years great and offer advice for how others can too.

Aretha Williams, District 2

The passion for teaching and for students doesn't diminish once retirement begins. **Aretha Williams'** continued passion for literacy has created opportunities for her to give back to her community during her retirement years.

Aretha began her career teaching Reading in the Jefferson Parish School System, eventually becoming principal. In the evenings, Aretha worked with adults on developing and refining their literacy skills. Literacy became an integral component of Aretha's career. She was a Title I Facilitator & Coordinator and worked with many of the early literacy overhaul initiatives. Through her work as a teacher, principal and Title I Coordinator. Aretha also became involved with the Jefferson, Louisiana and International Literary Associations. The Louisiana Reading Association (LRA) falls under a larger umbrella association, the International Literary Association (ILA). As a result of her efforts as principal and Title I Coordinator, ILA recognized her school as an Exemplary Reading School.

Since her retirement, Aretha has continued to help students who may have difficulty with literacy skills. In 2014, the National Title I Association



Aretha Williams, president of the Jefferson Retired Teachers Association

and the ILA collaborated to form the Read and Feed program. This summer program combines literacy instructional programs with child nutrition initiatives at Title I schools to improve student reading skills. Marcie Post, who supervises the East Coast associations, tapped Aretha (Chairperson of the LRA Parents and Reading Committee), to be a part of the program. "Louisiana became one of the first states to target schools due to its significant numbers of students from disadvantaged families," Aretha explains.

Soon after, Aretha began her presidency with the Jefferson Retired Teachers Association. She learned unit members were most interested in programs that gave back to their schools. That's when she noticed a potential connection between the Jefferson Parish Schools Literacy

Advancement Program (LAP) and the local unit. LAP is a three-week summer program that takes place before the school year begins. During the program, K-5 students can jump start their skills in reading and math. "Since I am the LRA District VI Representative... I was charged with seeing how a successful a Read and Feed pilot would be replicable in other areas of the country and especially in our state," Aretha explains.

One of the biggest challenges the pilot faced was a lack of resources. "There was no money connected to this," Aretha says. "So we solicited over 400 books to give to students from vendors I'd worked with from being an administrator." In 2017, with the help of others, Aretha secured Capstone's myON, eBooks program to pilot an e-book summer technology program. As a result, students read over 2,700 books online in a three week period. Now, the Jefferson RTA is involved in other community services, such as the Second Harvest Food Bank. In 2018, the unit raised over \$530 for the food bank. Aretha noted the ease of bringing along a dollar to donate versus a non-perishable food item. Plus, the food bank can stretch a dollar a lot farther. "Every dollar feeds three to five people," Aretha explains.

Aretha's volunteer work coincides with her previous experiences as an educator, but she recommends that retirees get involved in something that they are interested in. "This is an opportunity to build a connection with the community," Aretha says. "Give back to something that's worthwhile. Get involved in something you're passionate about."



Aretha Williams reading to a group of elementary students.

Velma Hendrix, District 5

Velma Hendrix remains an active member of the St. Landry community after an extensive career in the classroom. Now, she serves as mayor for the town of Melville. How did Velma go from retired educator to local political official? Each time Velma received a call to serve her community, she didn't shy away.

Velma taught high school English and Adult Education in St. Landry Parish for 32 years. Upon her retirement, Velma immersed herself with various local organizations. She served at both the local and district levels with LRTA. Velma was the District V president from 2015-2017. She still remains involved with her local unit, the Retired Educators Association of St. Landry Parish. Velma continues to stay active with her alma mater through the Grambling State University Alumni Association. She also volunteers outside of the education community. Velma currently serves as the financial secretary and Adult Sunday School teacher at her church, where she is also a member of the Board of Trustees. Velma stuck to her education and community roots for a while, until it was time to branch out into different avenues.

Velma's journey to becoming the mayor of her town begins with her

position on the town council. After serving on the council for some time, Velma accepted the invitation to represent the town on several boards in the community and St. Landry parish. Her involvement with these civic organizations led her to join the St. Landry Federation of Democratic Women. This organization unites women and encourages the participation of women in every level of government. Soon, the opportunity to run for mayor of Melville became available. With encouragement from her family and several community members, Velma entered the political arena. "As a lifelong resident and a council member of the town of Melville, I felt compelled to devote some of my time to restoring some of the things that made my community an interesting place to live," Velma says.

Now, Velma is tasked with running the daily operations of the town. She is also charged with seeking solutions to fulfill the town's need of new infrastructure and economic development. She is constantly looking for new avenues to bring business and revenue into her town and improve the community overall.

Through her experiences as a volunteer, Velma understands the impact



Velma Hendrix at her inauguration as mayor of the town of Melville.

community members have when they come together for the common good. Through her experiences as a retired educator, Velma also understands the impact youth can have on the community. Velma encourages citizens of all ages to come together to preserve the history of their community and contribute to future development of their own towns. "Take a serious look at your community as it is now, compare it to what it was years ago, and determine what potentials are possible for the future." Velma advises.

Retirement can open the door to new experiences and opportunities. Velma's ambition to explore all of the opportunities life presented led her to the leadership roles she serves in today. Velma encourages new retirees to take the time to travel and experience what other states and countries have to offer. And, once they return home, participate in as many community activities as possible.

"Everyone benefits from the expertise of those who have a wealth of knowledge in various areas and want to share it."



Left: Velma Hendrix at her inauguration as mayor of the town of Melville with her daughter Sheila Hendrix (middle) and Charles Jagneaux, Clerk of Court for St. Landry Parish (right).

Kathryn Vaughn, District 8

When Kathryn Vaughn moved to Sabine Parish after spending over 30 years in Baton Rouge, she received an invitation from a local group of retired teachers. "For the first time I became aware of the importance of this organization," Kathryn says. And, from that initial invitation, Kathryn quickly became immersed with LRTA and the Sabine community as a whole.

Kathryn began her teaching career in Texas but returned to Louisiana after two years. After a brief stint teaching science, Kathryn went on to teach math for 21 years in East Baton Rouge Parish Schools. When she retired from teaching, Kathryn worked for 12 ½ years at the computer center at the Department of Transportation and Development. Given her teaching experience, she was assigned to teach each district office how to use personal computers.

Soon after, Kathryn relocated to Zwolle. That's when the secretary of the local Retired Teachers Association called her and invited her to a meeting. That call was from Lois Salter. "She soon had me selling hot tamales at the Fiesta, agreeing to be the secretary of the parish Retired Teachers Association (for the next 20 years), meeting for coffee with other retired ladies and being a member of a Sunday School class," Kathryn says.

Since that first phone call, Kathryn has become involved with LRTA at both the local and district level. She joined the Sabine Retired Teachers Association and served as its treasurer until 2018. Kathryn also previously served on the district level as the District 8 secretary. Kathryn is involved in other teacher and education-driven groups. She is a member of Delta Kappa Gamma, a professional society of women

educators, and served as the treasurer for the Beta Nu chapter from 1987-1993. In 1995, she transferred to the Psi chapter for which she's served on several committees.

Not only is Kathryn involved in groups with retired and active educators, she's also involved in several community projects. One of Kathryn's neighbors introduced her to the Wildflowers group and she's held several positions with this group. She's a member of the First Baptist Church of Zwolle and its weekly quilting and sewing group. Through her fellowship, Kathryn volunteers with many projects with the church. One of her largest projects includes



Kathryn Vaughn (middle) with fellow Sabine RTA members Helen Tatum and Gail Thomas.

Operation Christmas Child, a ministry project affiliated with Samaritan's Purse. In 2018, Kathryn made over four dozen articles of clothing for the Operation Christmas Child boxes.

For retirees looking to get involved in their communities, Kathryn recommends reaching out to local churches and groups for volunteer opportunities. "Most churches need people to take charge of projects. The Council on Aging can provide many opportunities. If nothing else, it is a place for groups to meet," Kathryn says.

Kathryn's experiences as an educator have led her to new opportunities in her retirement years. She feels that retired teachers have acquired unique abilities throughout their careers, including the ability to spot worthwhile and not-so-worthwhile

ideas. For Kathryn, this unique ability is invaluable to many community organizations. That's why Kathryn advises retirees not to sit at home but to try something new.

"I realize I cannot wait for good things to find me- I must actively go out and find them."

Dr. Wilma Arant, District 10

Dr. Wilma Arant has always had a heart for service. Through her retirement years, Dr. Arant has had the opportunity to travel down new paths of service. And, we mean that quite literally.

Early in her career, Dr. Arant worked in the Morehouse Adult Education Program, preparing students for GED Testing. Later, her emphasis shifted to teaching remedial Developmental Studies courses for the Louisiana Technical College System. Before she retired, Dr. Arant was the campus coordinator for the Strategies To Empower People Program. STEP is a financial aid program for those receiving public assistance and in need of workforce training. Dr. Arant retired after a 30-year career, but she was not quite ready to leave academia. Two months after she retired, Dr. Arant earned her Doctor of Worship Studies degree from the Institute of Worship Studies. With her degree complete and her retirement years ahead of her, Dr. Arant embarked on a journey of ministry and volunteerism.

Since completing her graduate stud ies, Dr. Arant has explored various types of ministries. She became



Dr. Wilma Arant at her graduation for her doctorate degree.

a church musician at 13 years old, so music ministry has always held great significance to Dr. Arant. She has experience singing and playing piano in a variety of churches. Dr. Arant has even performed in prison ministries. "I currently have a unique Worship Leader ministry at a small non-denominational church in Bastrop where the entire format utilizes downloaded videos," Dr. Arant says. But, music ministry isn't the only ministry that's captured her heart. Bikers for Christ-Bayou Country, a motorcycle ministry, brings bikers and other individuals together to minister to anyone and everyone. Along with serving a benevolent mission, Bikers for Christ holds group rides, fundraisers and cookouts. She and her husband are charter members of the ministry. "He is the biker; I function as the group's secretary/treasurer," Dr. Arant explains.

Dr. Arant has also become involved with her local unit, the Ouachita Retired Teachers Association. Through her fellow unit members, she learned of more opportunities to explore in her retirement years. She joined book clubs like the DeNova Book Club (where she serves as president) and SeniorReaders. Through her interest in essential oils, she even discovered an online book community. Dr. Arant highly recommends retirees try new activities, like attending a local painting class. "Do not put boundaries on what you are too old to accomplish or do," Dr. Arant says.

When Dr. Arant retired, she immediately embarked on a new lifestyle. She recommends retirees stay active during their retirement years due to the health and social benefits of getting involved in the community. Though, she understands this is not the case for everyone. Dr. Arant suggests retirees give themselves some time to adapt to retirement. "Do not be surprised if your retirement plans

detour off your projected path," Dr. Arant says. "Life happens and we roll with it." But, make sure to have some fun with it, too.

"Make it a point to enjoy your retirement! You earned it!"

Right: Dr. Arant and her husband at a biker event.



Stay Connected with Teachers' Retirement System of Louisiana

TRSL loves staying connected to our retirees. You can always contact us in person, by phone, or through email during regular business hours. But we also offer a lot of online resources for retirees... check out these tools today!

MEMBER ACCESS

Log in to your TRSL account anytime for secure, online access to the following information and self-service functions:

- View your benefit payment history and check stubs
- Print your 1099-R tax forms
- Change your federal income tax withholding

ENEWS

With TRSL's eNews, you'll receive timely news and information about legislation, benefits, and other issues affecting TRSL, delivered right to your inbox. To ensure that TRSL emails don't get caught in your spam or junk folder, just add web.master@trsl.org to your safe senders/contact list.

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ONLINE WEBINARS

TRSL also offers online webinars on a variety of topics throughout the year, and we've recently added a new session just for retirees.

TRSL's Guide for Retirees | Thursday, May 9 @ 2:00 p.m.
 A 30-minute presentation covering the following topics: direct deposit, income tax withholding & Form 1099-R, permanent benefit increases, beneficiary payments, returning to work after retirement, and DROP interest rates. View more dates and register at www.TRSL.org.









2019 LRTA Spring Meeting

Up, up and away! Louisiana retired educators are invited to attend the LRTA Spring Meeting from April 30- May 1. The meeting will take place at the Holiday Inn at 701 Fourth Street in Alexandria, La. The theme is "Up, up and away LRTA!"

The LRTA Executive Board will meet at 1:30 p.m. on April 30 with the pre-covention dinner following at 6:30 p.m. The General Session begins at 9 a.m. on May 1. Dana Vicknair, director of the Teachers' Retirement System of Louisiana, will present at this session. For a complete list of agenda items, vist Irta.net.

Use the form on page 12 of this newsletter to register for the Spring Meeting. Attendees must pre-register for the pre-convention banquet by April 18. Although on-site registration is available, pre-registration will ensure that you will receive a packet containing your name tag and other meeting materials upon arrival.

The Holiday Inn is offering a special hotel room rate. The rate is \$96 per night, plus tax. The cut-off date for this special rate is April 15, unless the hotel sells out prior to this date. To reserve a room, call the Holiday Inn at (318) 541- 8333 and ask for the Louisiana Retired Teachers group rate. You may also make a reservation online at alexandriaholidayinn.com with the code LRT. We hope to see you there!

IN MEMORIAM

Deceased Retired Teachers November 21, 2018- February 28, 2019

Marvin H. Bragg – New Orleans Barbara A. Day – New Orleans Louis E. Garcia – New Orleans Bradley D. Gowland, Sr., - Chalmette Anna S. Gillaume – New Orleans Lucille W. Harden – New Orleans Carolyn R. Jackson – New Orleans Willie M. Jefferson – New Orleans Ceola M. Lacroix – New Orleans Alice H. Lewis - New Orleans Jeraldine S. Napoleon – New Orleans Christel R. Robbins – New Orleans Mildred V. Roby - New Orleans Elnora R. Scott – New Orleans Rose Mary Simms-Hernandez - New Orleans Marjorie D. Taplin – Violet Mary GF. Terluin – Violet Betty T. Townsend – New Orleans Ezekiel Tyson – New Orleans Gertrude Waguespack – New Orleans Muriel C. Williams - New Orleans

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PSST... the 2019 LRTA Spring Meeting Registration Form is on the back of this page

LRTA NEWSLETTER

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Office of Group Benefits	225.925.6625
Toll-free (outside of Baton Rouge area)	800.272.8451
Association Member Benefits Advisors (AMBA)	
LRTA Office	225.927.8837
Toll-free (outside of Baton Rouge area)	888.531.1992
Fax	

Total Enclosed = \$____

2019 SPRING MEETING PRE-REGISTRATION / MEAL RESERVATION FORM

Please use this form to pre-register for the 2019 Spring Meeting in order to expedite registration in Alexandria. To make a reservation for the pre-convention banquet on Tuesday, April 30, please indicate in the space provided and send a check for the appropriate amount. **Each person pre-registering and/or reserving a meal ticket should return a separate form** in order to receive a registration packet. Guests may use the form in order to receive a registration packet (photocopies accepted).

Name:		
Address:		
City, State, Zip:		
Telephone: ()	Email	
Attendance only (free)		
Number of tickets for Tuesday night Pre-Convention [(pork tenderloin)	Dinner (\$35 per person) =	\$

Note: Pre-registration/meal reservations must be received in the LRTA office by **April 18.** Registration will be available at the meeting; however, meal function tickets are sold by pre-reservation only. **No meal reservations will be taken by phone. NO REFUNDS AFTER APRIL 24.** Mail forms and checks to LRTA, 9412 Common St., Suite 5, Baton Rouge, LA 70809.