



LOUISIANA RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Winter 2021

*We may be apart, but
we're always together*



Pictured: The LRTA Legislative
Committee and Executive
Committee meeting on November
17, 2020 through Zoom.



A Message from Our Executive Director

By: Rodney R. Watson

As we enter the new year, we look ahead with a sense of cautious optimism. Even with the promise of a vaccine in the future, we will continue to maintain social distancing, wearing masks, and washing our hands frequently. We are not yet out of the woods. It may be a while before a vaccine is available for the elderly and individuals with pre-existing conditions. While we hope the spring will provide an opportunity for us to stay connected as a retirement community, we will operate with your health and safety as our first priority.

It's important that we continue to grow our membership as there's power in numbers.

NEW!

Get the LRTA newsletter right on your mobile device or computer! Instead of receiving the newsletter in the mail, members can now choose to receive the LRTA E-Newsletter through email. Interested members can sign up on the LRTA website, or send an email to info@lrta.net with the subject "E-Newsletter." Members can "opt out" of the E-Newsletter and receive the printed newsletter at any time.

MESSAGES FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND LRTA PRESIDENT



(cont. from cover)

Our focus is planning for contingencies; whether we continue with virtual meetings, face-to-face meetings, or even a combination of both. We have set our Spring District Meeting schedule and will notify Districts later this month on whether

meeting will be face to face or virtual. The Spring State meeting in April will also be decided based on state guidelines.

While we plan for contingencies, our focus is also on the state legislature. The Regular Session is slated to begin April 12 and end June 10, 2021. Our Legislative Committee and staff will evaluate all pre-filed legislation and take positions according to our legislative priorities.

We will call on our members to be "virtual activists" this legislative session! Through our **Becoming a Virtual Activist** series, LRTA will send out timely, informative emails with links to materials such as:

- Talking points and research explaining the benefits of our Defined Benefit plan and why

Hybrid Plans and Constitutional Conventions put our plan at risk

- Instructions for how to reach out to legislators and write letters and emails

At a time when our members can't meet or attend meetings in person due to health risks, attacks to our retirement plan will continue with greater frequency. Please continue to stay involved, use our online resources and respond to our calls for action. Make sure to like us on Facebook and join the Email Club (if you haven't done so already).

For now, stay safe, stay prepared, and stay tuned!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rodney R. Watson".

Rodney R. Watson
LRTA Executive Director



There is one constant every year when the legislature goes into session: attacks on our retirement. And since we are the only organization working solely to protect our benefits, I realize the importance of making this a priority during my term in office.

The Executive Committee agreed that we should focus our combined

efforts on strengthening our relationship with Representatives and Senators. We will encourage local Units and Districts to conduct regular meetings with local legislators and invite non-members of LRTA to also attend these meetings. Our aim will be to have a more positive, symbiotic relationship with legislators instead of contacting them only when we need their vote on or against an issue.

Clyde Hamner also is serving as State Legislative Chair. Since we are able to meet through Zoom, the Legislative Committee can meet monthly. We are working on new and improved ways to contact our legislators and will encourage and educate members on these methods.

I know we are ready to see 2020 come to an end, so this seems like a

good time to make a few resolutions:

- Continue our efforts to protect our retirement benefits
- Become more proactive in electing those who understand and support our issues
- Establish positive relationships with our local legislators and with those on education and retirement committees
- Get every member active in contacting legislators
- Encourage members to recruit at least one new member

I am looking forward to seeing you all again in 2021! In the meantime, STAY SAFE!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janis M. Hernandez".

Janis M. Hernandez
LRTA State President



During my later years of teaching, I noticed a group of teachers that were retired but active in community service and meetings. I learned they were members of the Bogalusa Retired Teachers Association (a local Unit) and the Louisiana Retired Teachers Association. Later on, my former principal, Mr. Rupert Breland, spoke at my school about LRTA and their work to make our retirement years better. He made us aware that we could become associate members while still being actively employed. Excitedly, I became a member that day. As soon as I retired, I became an active, annual member of this outstanding organization. I also participated in training by LRTA to become a future leader, not knowing that I would continue to follow this path for years.

With the pandemic, storms, hurricanes and other issues, 2020 has been a year like no other. For these reasons and others, you may be wondering “why is it important to join LRTA now?” Our organization is the voice of the retired education community. **It is paramount that we keep this voice loud**

and strong. We may not be able to meet face-to-face, but that doesn't mean we should be oblivious to the issues that could impact our benefits. Legislators will take advantage of the oblivion to try to make changes that could harm our benefits that we worked hard for.

In spite of unusual circumstances, LRTA has not missed a beat. This is thanks to the collective effort of our local, District and state endeavors. LRTA continuously keeps us informed of bills coming before the legislature and explains how it impacts our retirement benefits. When it's time to take action, they let us know so we can urge our Representatives and Senators to keep our benefits intact! Some Districts and local Units have also held meetings through Zoom to keep members updated and engaged. As First Vice-President and State Membership Chair, I also started conducting Zoom meetings with the District First Vice-Presidents. We are currently finalizing plans to meet with Unit Membership Chairs to share ideas on increasing membership.

We, as retired educators, all have unique talents and skills. Our experiences in the classroom have taught us the importance of using these skills to support each other and become a part of something bigger than ourselves. Over the years, LRTA has won legislative battles to divert threats to our benefits thanks to our efforts. **Our power and efforts will be enhanced as we grow.** I hope you will be a part of this growth.

Join or Renew Today!

LRTA is the **ONLY** membership organization in Louisiana devoted solely to advocating for the needs of the retired education community. LRTA representatives work diligently to support legislation beneficial to this community, and to oppose legislation that will adversely affect retirees.

We need your support to remain strong and to maintain a unified voice representing all retirees from Louisiana's educator community. This mailing from LRTA includes several items. Please check the chart below to ensure that you've received all necessary materials. All materials may be returned to LRTA in the enclosed postage paid envelope (if applicable). Please see the back of this newsletter for more details.

Membership Class	Newsletter	Return Envelope	Membership Form
Lifetime Member	X		
Continuing Member	X		
Annual Member	X	X	X
Non-Member	X	X	X
Associate Member	X		

Introducing LRTA's Newest Staff Member Morgan Milling



LRTA is pleased to introduce and welcome our newest staff member Morgan Milling! Morgan is joining the LRTA staff as the membership services coordinator for LRTA. She will be responsible for processing membership applications and updating membership information. Morgan joined the staff on November 2, 2020.

Morgan received her bachelor's degree in business administration and minor in accounting from Louisiana State University at Alexandria. Currently, she is pursuing her master's degree in business administration. Morgan has a passion for associations and is excited to share her skills and grow with LRTA.

"It is such a privilege and honor to work for an association that represents our retired educators. I look forward to meeting and working with all our LRTA members."

2020 Second Special Session Update

The legislature called itself into a Special Session on September 28, 2020. One retirement Bill was filed, HB 97 (substitute bill to House Bill 36) by Rep. Tony Bacala, which would have provided for the reemployment of retirees during a declared emergency. LRTA SUPPORTED the bill. However, the bill did not pass. The Second Special Session of 2020 ended October 23, 2020.

NOTICE ABOUT THIS MAILING:

The LRTA Executive Board unanimously approved a motion to waive the requirement calling for a January 2021 ballot to select a state Nominating Committee and ask the current Nominating Committee to serve another two-year term due to extraordinary circumstances. Since there were no matters for the LRTA membership to vote on, no ballots were included with this mailing. Please refer to the grid on page 3 to ensure you have received all necessary materials in this mailing. If you have any questions or concerns, please email the state office at info@lrta.net or call 225-927-8837.

LRTA Foundation Donations

Anna Weidenhaft in memory of:
Lenette Ladner Zulli

Bossier RTA in memory of:
All deceased retired teachers from Bossier Parish 2019-2020

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