

2021 RSEA Conference

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RSEA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Well, summer was going along fine until the end of August. The anniversary of Hurricane Katrina brought a new and much stronger Hurricane Ida; I think we need to scratch August 29 from our future calendars! I know many of our RSEA members have suffered from this devastating

storm; my thoughts and prayers are with them and I hope for their rapid recovery from this disaster. I also remind myself of the continuing struggle of many in southwest Louisiana from last year's hurricanes. In Slidell, I was fortunate to have only lost tree limbs and about 60 feet of fence from Hurricane Ida. Our power was restored within 36 hours and we cheered when it came back on.

So the bad news for RSEA: due to Hurricane Ida and the continued surge of COVID-19 cases in Louisiana, the RSEA Conference Committee has decided to cancel this year's conference. Much planning had gone into this year's event and some fun activities had been scheduled, so it was a difficult decision to cancel. We hope to carry forward the excellent planning and agenda for next year. The Board is looking into some possible virtual events during the fall to replace some of the information that would have been shared during the conference. Perhaps, at least, we aim to have video updates from LASERS and OGB to share via our website. Please know that the Board and our office staff are working diligently to find innovative ways to pass on information during these difficult times. Please check the RSEA website for updated information. We will also post updates to Facebook and send out emails. As I've mentioned before, if we don't have your email address, please contact the RSEA office so we can keep you up to date.

It's membership time again, and I re-ask that those who pay membership annually to please consider switching to payroll deduction through LASERS. All it takes is a call to the RSEA office or include LASERS deduction on your renewal card. This saves the organization expensive printing and mailing costs. Thank you again for being a member of RSEA.

The RSEA Board continues to plan for Chapter Meetings during Spring 2022. The Chapter Meeting dates will be posted in this newsletter. I hope to be able to meet many of you face-to-face at these upcoming meetings.

On a lighter note, I received a call several weeks ago from a co-worker I hadn't seen in many years. He wanted to tell me I need some new joke material. Well, at least someone is reading the newsletter! So in conclusion and in recognition of the phone call, here's my Dad

2 Joke.

You may know Judy and I had all daughters. If we had a son, I wanted to name him Harley. That way he could introduce himself as: "I'm Harley, David's son".

David Thomas
President

ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Unfortunately, the RSEA Board has decided to cancel the Annual Conference this year due to the spread of the Delta variant of COVID-19 and the destruction that Hurricane IDA had on our membership in Southeast Louisiana. Our prayers go out to all of those affected, and we hope for a speedy recovery.

We will be updating information for you on our website as we receive it from each of our partners. Please be patient with us, as all of our partners have been affected by the impacts of Ida, as well.

Below is a schedule of the RSEA Annual Spring Chapter Meetings, which we all hope and pray will be in person this year. Some of the locations have not been finalized yet, so as soon as we get confirmation from the venues, we will be updating you via our website, Facebook, and email. If you are not receiving emails from us and would like to, please contact us to update you in our system.

SHREVEPORT – March 8 / Tuesday / 9:30 am (doors open at 8:30 am)

North West Technical College
2011 North Market St., Bldg. E. > Shreveport
President: Bonita Hearne > 318-746-1924

MONROE – March 9 / Wednesday / 9:00 am

LOCATION TBA
President: Dianne Guillot > 318-376-62**

ALEXANDRIA – March 10 / Thursday / 9:30 am

Kees Park Community Center
2450 Highway 28 East > Pineville
President: Victor Dennis, Jr. > 318-623-4547

LAKE CHARLES – March 15 / Tuesday / 9:30 am

LOCATION TBA
President: Gwen Thompson > 337-912-9373

ACADIANA/LAFAYETTE – March 16 / Wed. / 9:30 am

Picard Center for Child Development
University of Lafayette at Lafayette
200 East Devalcourt St. > Lafayette
President: Pennie Babin > 337-247-0569

BATON ROUGE – March 17 / Thursday / TBA

LOCATION TBA
President: James LeBlanc > 225-930-0961

COASTAL – March 22 / Tuesday / TBA

LOCATION TBA
President: Mary Mahoney > 985-537-3090

NEW ORLEANS – March 23 / Wednesday / TBA

LOCATION TBA
President: Benny Harris > 504-858-2585

NORTHSHORE – March 24 / Thursday / 9:30 am

Greater Covington Center
Bogue Falaya Hall
317 North Jefferson Avenue > Covington
President: David Thomas > 985-290-2107

Last issue, the RSEA Foundation proudly announced our first ever scholarship winner, Danielle Schexnayder from Port Barre, LA. RSEA will again be accepting applications for another scholarship to be awarded this Spring. Below are the ways you can find information about our Scholarship:

Visit > www.rseala.org
Call > 225-930-0961
Email > janthony.rsea@gmail.com

Get a jump start on the application process and start now.

Below is a list of all of those who have donated since our last newsletter. Thank you all so much!

Donor	Amt.	In Memory of
Mildred T. Daigle	\$40	Russell Don Daigle
Pamela G. Brown	\$20	Phyllis Watts

Jimmy Anthony
Administrative Director

RSEA LEGISLATIVE & GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



In RSEA's continuing pursuit of a solution to the Social Security Offsets (WEP and GPO) problem, we are ramping up our efforts to find a resolution for these unfair provisions of Social Security law.

On the heels of the recently completed 2021 Regular Louisiana Legislative Session and the unanimous passage of HCR-7 (by Representative Michael T. Johnson, House District 27 - Rapides Parish), which memorializes Congress to take actions necessary to review and eliminate or reduce the GPO and the WEP, we are joining

forces with others to make an all-out assault on these unfair Social Security laws.

First of all, Representative Mike Johnson (above), with help from the Louisiana Retired Teachers Association (LRTA) and RSEA, is taking the lead in organizing a meeting with the Executive Directors of the four Louisiana State pension systems (LASERS, TRSL, LSERS, LSPRS) and their respective retiree associations (RSEA, LRTA, LSTA, and LSBOA) and the Executive Director of MERSLA, Ms. Maris LeBlanc. Ms. LeBlanc is the LAPERS liaison to a nationwide group known as the Coalition to Preserve Retirement Security (CPRS) and the Vice President of CPRS. The mission of CPRS is to protect the current structure of public sector retirement plans. CPRS also backs WEP reform legislation, as does RSEA and LRTA, as well as other public employee/teacher organizations that are members of CPRS.

Representative Johnson, with the help of Louisiana's congressional delegation, is organizing a trip to Washington, D.C., to meet with the committee members and the chair of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee. The meetings are tentatively scheduled for November 15-18, 2021, in D.C.

Additionally, Representative Mike Johnson wants to organize a coalition of the public employees'/teachers' organizations in the fifteen (15) states impacted by the WEP and GPO: AK, CA, CO, CT, GA, IL, KY, LA, MA, ME, MO, NV, OH, RI, and TX.

In furtherance of the plan to move forward with our efforts to repeal or modify the WEP and GPO, RSEA also recently had a conference call (organized by LRTA) on WEP/GPO pending federal legislation. On the call were: Representative Garret Graves, Rep. Julia Letlow, the RTA Executive Board and Legislative Committee, Rodney Watson, Executive Director (LRTA), and myself, Frank Jobert, Legislative Director, RSEA.

As a reminder, the pending federal/congressional legislation RSEA is currently tracking is as follows: **U.S. House Bill HR-82** by Rodney Davis (R-IL): "The Social Security Fairness Act of 2021" now has 214 co-sponsors as of this writing. All six (6) of Louisiana's Congressman are co-sponsors. Also in the hopper is **HR-2337** by Chairman Richard Neal (D-MA): "The Public Servants Protection and Fairness Act of 2021" now has 176 co-sponsors, including newly elected LA Representative Troy Carter.

RSEA is hopeful that by organizing and joining forces with as many stakeholders as possible in Louisiana and throughout the country, we might finally bring this matter to a vote in Congress. As everyone who is impacted by the WEP and GPO knows, it has been way too long for these injustices to have existed. It's time to go on an all-out attack and fix these broken laws that are so unfair to public servants!



teachers. My thanks to Representative Mike Johnson for spearheading this effort!

Of special note is recently introduced HR-4788 (introduced July 29, 2021) by Louisiana Representative Julia Letlow (R-LA): "Wellbeing of Every Public Servant Act of 2021" has no other co-sponsors as of this writing. The bill summary is as follows: *To amend Title II of the Social Security Act to restrict the application of the windfall elimination provision to individuals whose combined monthly income from benefits under such title and other monthly periodic payments exceeds a minimum wage-indexed amount of \$5,500 and to provide for a graduated implementation of such provision on amounts above such minimum amount.* And lastly, Senate Bill (S. 1302) by Sherrod Brown (D-OH): "Social Security Fairness Act" has 33 cosponsors including both Louisiana's Senators – Bill Cassidy and John Kennedy.

RSEA has taken a position in support of all of the above bills, with the exception of HR-4788.

NOTE: The Board of RSEA has not met since the introduction of HR-4788 and has not adopted a position. The RSEA Board is not scheduled to meet until after this newsletter goes to print. RSEA will keep you posted on future developments on this matter in future newsletters and e-blasts as information becomes available.

REMINDER: the Office of Group Benefits (OGB) has scheduled Annual Enrollment (October 1, 2021 through November 15, 2021) for its various health insurance plans for the 2022 calendar/plan year which begins on January 1, 2022. Meeting sites and other information will be available in all 9 state regions with in-person meetings for active employees and all retirees throughout all 9 of the regions.

Frank Jobert, Jr.
RSEA Legislative & Governmental Affairs Director

LASERS UPDATE

SIX CANDIDATES QUALIFY FOR LASERS 2021 BOARD ELECTION

Voting begins September 24 in the 2021 Board of Trustees Election. Six candidates are eligible to run in this year's active member election, with three open seats to be filled. A retiree election will not be conducted this year, as one nomination for Barbara McManus was received to fill the one open retiree position.

The six candidates in ballot order are:



Catherine Herman
Louisiana State University



Reggie P. Dupre, Jr.
Terrebone Levee & Conservation District



Amy A. Mathews
Department of the Treasury



Theresa Delafosse
Department of Environmental Quality



Byron P. Decoteau, Jr.
Louisiana State Civil Service



Ternisa Hutchinson
Division of Administration, Office of Planning & Budget

Visit the LASERS website to review the candidates' platforms and qualifications: www.lasersonline.org/about/2021-lasers-board-of-trustees-election/candidates/.

LASERS REPORTS 35.6% INVESTMENT RETURN

LASERS reported a 35.6% investment return for the 12-month period that ended June 30, 2021, which is the highest in the System's 75-year history.

"I must recognize the guidance from our Board of Trustees and our forward-thinking investment team led by Chief Investment Officer Bobby Beale," said LASERS Executive Director Cindy Rougeou. "Their ability to cope with the challenges of a pandemic environment reflects their continued dedication to provide retirement security for our members and beneficiaries. The recovery of the market and our investment performance will be remembered far into the future."

QUESTIONS ABOUT COLAS & DROP RATE OF RETURN

As a result of LASERS' historic investment return this year, we have understandably received numerous inquiries from retirees concerning the possibility of a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), and questions about the DROP rate of return. Please keep in mind that System funding takes into account five years of returns, not just one.

LASERS' annual actuarial valuation report is presented to our Board of Trustees in late September. Both the DROP rate of return and the amount of funds deposited into the Experience Account (which funds COLAs) are calculated in the valuation report. LASERS' actuarial valuation must be approved by the Public Retirement Systems Actuarial Committee (PRSAC) before an announcement is made regarding the DROP rate of return. This usually occurs in December or January.

LASERS' Board of Trustees is well aware that our retirees are long overdue for a COLA. The last general COLA was granted in 2016. Over the past year, LASERS completed a study of our existing COLA granting statutes along with possible alternatives.

Under current law, COLAs are funded through excess investment earnings, which are earnings above the LASERS expected actuarial return and above the hurdles that have been legislatively established to help reduce the debt owed to the System. The Experience Account, which receives these excess investment returns, must have a balance sufficient to fund a COLA on an actuarial basis. COLAs are not automatic or guaranteed, but if funding is available, recommendations can be made and presented to the Legislature. For a COLA to be granted, at least a two-thirds vote of both the Louisiana House and Senate is required.

This current COLA granting mechanism has not resulted in regular, dependable COLAs for our retirees. Something needs to be done. Fortunately, because of our excellent market returns this year, even with the statutory restrictions in place, we are in a position to recommend some type of relief. Over the next couple of months, we will discuss various options with our Board.

To ensure that you are kept up-to-date, please sign up for Member Connection on our website. You may also learn more about COLAs and the DROP rate of return by visiting the website.

OGB UPDATE

LIVE BETTER LOUISIANA: DEADLINE FOR 2022 CREDIT IS EXTENDED!

Due to Hurricane Ida, OGB has made the decision to extend the deadline for the 2022 wellness credit to September 30, 2021. You can schedule a free checkup with a licensed nurse practitioner and health technician through the online scheduler. You'll get lab-accurate diagnostic tests and receive a full Personal Health Report with checkup results and recommendations.

What do you do? Schedule your appointment online at www.TimeConfirm.com/OGB or call 1-877-841-3058. Complete your clinic to get the credit. If there are no clinic dates and locations available in your area, you can have your doctor complete a Primary Care Provider form, found at info.groupbenefits.org, and fax or mail it to Catapult Health by 5:00 pm September 30th.

Available dates and times for appointments can be found at www.TimeConfirm.com/OGB or by calling 1-877-841-3058.

LIVE BETTER LOUISIANA SCREENINGS AVAILABLE AT ACCESS2DAY!

Visit your local Access2day clinic for your no-cost annual wellness visit before September 30th to receive a \$120 discount on your 2022 health insurance costs through the Catapult program.

Catapult is an easy-to-use program that currently has more than 22,000 participants. When you visit your local Access2day clinic for your annual wellness exam, be sure to have your provider complete the Catapult form and send it to Catapult by September 15th to receive your monthly savings for the 2022 plan year.

BLUE CROSS CASE MANAGEMENT CAN HELP YOU NAVIGATE CARE

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana has a Case Management program that provides help when you or a family member have a complex medical condition or a catastrophic illness or accident.

Our nurses have experience with cancer treatment, transplants, high-risk pregnancy, children with special needs, traumatic injuries, and other conditions.

What can the program do for you? Our nurse case managers can help you coordinate your healthcare services and serve as an advocate for your healthcare needs. We can provide you with educational materials and information about community-based resources. The program promotes a healthy lifestyle. We will help you set positive healthcare goals and coach you to reach them.

Ready to get started? To see if you are eligible and get started, call one of our health coaches, available Monday – Friday from 8 am – 5 pm at 800-363-9159.

WELLNESS WEDNESDAY FACEBOOK BROADCASTS WITH BCBSLA

Access live while streaming from 12 – 12:30 pm on the Blue Cross Blue Shield of LA Facebook page or later in our Videos section on the BCBSLA Facebook page or on the BCBSLA YouTube channel.

Sept. 9th @ 6pm – Conversando Francamente 2: *A Candid Conversation about the Covid Vaccine in English with a Spanish Interpretation Option*

Zoom: www.bit.ly/conversando9

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/events/148949500713263>

Sept. 18th – Motivated Mindset: *You are Stronger Than Stress*

Sept. 21st @ 10am – Medicare Made Easy: *Annual Enrollment Educational event*

Sept. 25th – Romaine Calm and Carrot On: *Healthy Eating*

Sept. 29th – Keeping Up With Healthcare

SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL CHILDHOOD OBESITY AWARENESS MONTH

Did you know that Louisiana ranks sixth nationally for prevalence of childhood obesity?

Help us to change that ranking by starting the school year with a healthy habit scientifically proven to help reduce your child's risk of obesity – limiting screen time!

But how much is too much?

We recommend following the American Academy of Pediatrics' guidelines.

For children up to 18 months: Avoid the use of screen time except for video chatting.

For children 18 to 24 months old: Limit screen time to 1 hour per day and choose high-quality interactive and educational programming (like PBS kids).

It helps if you watch with your children to help the children understand what they are seeing.

For children 2 to 5: Limit screen time to 1 hour per day of high-quality programs.

For children 6 and older: Set consistent limits on the time spent using media and on the types of media. If your child is overweight, limit to no more than 1 hour per day.

Make a family media plan for free at <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/media/Pages/default.aspx#wizard>.

Don't let screen time take the place of adequate sleep, physical activity, and other essential health behaviors.

Designate media-free times together, such as dinner or driving, as well as media-free locations at home, such as bedrooms. *SOURCE:* <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/Food-and-TV-Not-a-Healthy-Mix.aspx>

Having a TV in your child's bedroom increases his or her risk of developing obesity.

Eating meals at the table as a family helps promote healthy family relationships, promotes speech development for younger children, and decreases the risk of obesity for all family members.

For more from the AAP, visit www.healthychildren.org/English/news/Pages/AAP-Announces-New-Recommendations-for-Childrens-Media-Use.aspx and <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/Where-We-Stand-TV-Viewing-Time.aspx>.

Let's use this month to establish habits that can improve our children's health!

ACCESS2DAY COVID-19 UPDATE

Access2day Health clinic locations are still open, providing primary and urgent care treatment to members and following all CDC guidelines as COVID-19 cases continue to increase. Access2day clinics are safe options for members to receive treatment with no out-of-pocket costs.

No appointment is necessary for treatment. However, Access2day is asking members to please call ahead

before visiting their local clinic so the clinics can follow proper COVID-19 procedures. Clinic contact information can be found at www.access2dayhealth.com/locations.php or in the Access2day Clinic Finder App. Members may be asked to wait in their car if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.

Access2day clinic providers can also help members find testing and vaccination locations. To learn more about Access2day clinic procedures for COVID-19, visit www.access2dayhealth.com.

What to Know about Access2day

Access2day saves you money every time you visit the clinic. You and your covered dependents can visit any Access2day clinic to receive primary or urgent care services with no co-pay, no out-of-pocket expenses, and no appointment is necessary.

Access2day is available to all state and school board employees, as well as retirees and their families covered on the Magnolia Local, Magnolia Local Plus, Magnolia Open Access, and Pelican HRA1000 health plans.



TIME TO EXPAND YOUR COVERAGE.

As your life changes, consider some of these benefits and discounts from RSEA & AMBA:

- Dental & Vision Insurance
- Long-Term Care
- Home Health Care
- MASA (Air and Ground Ambulance Plan)
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- Accident Policy
- Medicare Supplement Policy
- Easy Issue Life Policy
- Tax Deferred Annuity
- Hearing Benefits
- Discounts on Travel, Dining & more

Learn more: 1-877-556-4582

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NOTES:

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