

The New LOUISIANA VOICE

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2024 RSEA Conference Agenda

Tuesday, October 15th

10:00 – 2:00 Registration
10:00 – 3:00 Vendors
1:30 - 2:00 Welcome and Opening Remarks
2:00 - 3:00 Cyber security
3:00 - 3:15 Break – Coffee & Water
3:15 - 4:00 Energizing Body & Mind - Kerry Ruiz
5:00 - 6:00 Sandwich Buffet / Music by DJ Tony Groove
6:00 - 7:00 Party - *“Spice up your Life”*
7:00 – 9:30 Bingo

Wednesday, October 16th

7:00 – 9:00 All American Breakfast
8:00 - 9:00 Registration
8:00 - 3:00 Vendors
9:00 - 9:15 Welcome and Opening Remarks
9:15 - 10:00 *“Louisiana ain’t Mississippi”* – Jay Dardenne
10:00 -10:15 Break – Coffee & water
10:15 -11:45 Benefits Discussion
12:00 -1:15 Luncheon & Recognitions
1:15 - 2:00 *“Ageing in Place”* – Jon Green, AMBA
2:00 - 2:45 State Parks–Cliff Melius, Dep. Asst. Secretary
2:45 - 3:00 Closing and Grand Prize Drawings



RSEA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello, Hello, Hello: we are nearing our yearly State convention Which will be held at the Paragon Casino in Marksville, Louisiana. David Thomas and his conference committee personnel have been working hard to make this our best convention to date. Everything is looking great, and you can still register at Check-In if you didn't register early. We are hoping to see you there.

We had a combination conference committee /special board meeting on August 20, 2024, to cover several items. The Conference Committee Meeting was held to make sure we have everything covered for our October 15 – 16 Conference. We have left no stone unturned.

A Special Board meeting was held to cover two items. First, we gave Victor Dennis the title of Director Emeritus, which was unanimously approved by the board members present. The other item covered by the Special Board was to authorize the services of two marketing companies to assist us in our Membership Drive Campaign. One of the companies will target our retirees and the other will target our state active employees.

We have several ideas as to why our membership is falling but one of the items on

my mind is that we must make ourselves known to our active employees. After all, the work we do is just as important to them as it is to the retirees. It is our hope that we will get some positive results with these endeavors.

Again, let all be safe and hopefully, we will meet in Marksville in October.

James H LeBlanc Jr.

RSEA President



ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



As I write this article Hurricane Francine is barreling towards the southeastern coast of Louisiana. I hope that everyone is prepared and wish everyone good luck. RSEA will be sending out notices for a webinar series which will begin September 19th if we have recovered from the impacts of this storm. The first webinar in this monthly series is entitled ***"I'm Retired, Now What?"*** We will delve into what you need to know as you get closer to your final day. Do not wait to make your preparations and wind up like people who say, "I just wish I had know that before hand." Even those of you who are already retired will learn plenty of "What to Dos" going forward. So plan to join us. It will only take 30 minutes of you time.

Senior Discounts at Retailers in Louisiana

1. ALBERTSONS

Age for discount: Varies Senior discount is available at select stores throughout the country. Customers are encouraged to reach out to their store to confirm if there's a senior discount.

2. BROOKSHIRE'S FOOD & PHARMACY

Age for discount: 60+ Every Tuesday and Thursday, customers 60 and older can save 5 percent off their grocery purchase when they use their Brookshire's Thank You Card. Eligible adults need to ask for the discount at checkout. The discount doesn't apply to milk and other dairy products and a host of other things including fuel, tobacco and prescription drugs.

3. WALGREENS

Age for discount 55+ 20% off eligible in-store merchandise on the first Tuesday of each month. Must have a Balance Rewards card.

4. THE SALVATION ARMY THRIFT STORES

Age for Discount 55+ Up to 50% off on senior discount days (varies by location). For a complete list of other retailers that offer senior discounts use this link. 2022 Biggest List of Senior Discounts (Restaurants, Retail, Travel & More) (theseniorlist.com)

RSEA LEGISLATIVE & GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The 118th Session of the United States Congress is scheduled to end on January 3, 2025. And, as you know, the presidential election and congressional elections take place on November 5, 2024. In what seems like a never-ending process, we are still working on and lobbying for passage of H.R. 82, the repeal of the Social Security Offsets: Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO). The repeal legislation can be found in H. R. 82 co-authored by our own Louisiana Congressman Garret Graves (R-LA) and co-authored by Congress Woman Abigail Spanberger (D-VA).

To date there are now a total of 325 co-sponsors of H.R. 82 (210 Democrats & 115 Republicans) known as the "Social Security Fairness Act of 2023." In what seems like an "annual update" on the latest developments on the Social Security Offsets—the WEP (Windfall Elimination Provision) and the GPO (Government Pension Offset), I mention above the ending date of **January 3, 2025 as the "deadline" for passage of H.R. 82 in this 118th session of Congress.**

Congressman Graves, along with the entire Louisiana House Congressional Delegation (Six Districts), have co-sponsored H.R. 82.

For comparison purposes, at this time in 2021, U.S. House Bill H.R.-82 by Rep. Rodney Davis (R-IL) Social Security Fairness Act of 2021 had 214 co-sponsors. In 2022, this same instrument gained the co-sponsorship of over 300 Congressmen and women from both political parties. In RSEA's continuing pursuit of federal legislation to repeal the WEP and GPO, RSEA joined forces with Louisiana-based and other out-of-state organizations and pension systems to form a coalition under the leadership of State Representative Mike Johnson (District 27-Rapides Parish).

Unfortunately, H.R.-82 did not pass the U.S. House of Representatives in 2022 as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and the House leadership **never brought the matter up for a vote**, where it eventually died when the 117th Congress adjourned the 2021-2022 session.

Fast forward to 2023 when U.S. Congressman Garret Graves (Republican--Louisiana) re-introduced H.R. 82 (Social Security Fairness Act of 2023) in the 118th Congress again this year with co-sponsor Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger, (Democrat--Virginia). I have recently written a letter to each of the 6 Louisiana Congressional Representatives, including House Speaker Mike

Johnson, asking him to bring the matter to a vote on the House Floor as part of a push to get the bill through the process in this session before adjournment on January 3, 2025. The measure has 325 co-sponsors as of this writing. Furthermore, Louisiana State Rep. Mike Johnson (Pineville-Rapides Parish) again sponsored HCR (20) in the 2024 Louisiana Legislative Session to memorialize Congress to pass legislation repealing the WEP and GPO. The concurrent resolution (HCR 20) passed both the Louisiana Senate and House chambers by unanimous votes!

By having at least 290 co-sponsors (two-thirds of the 435 House seats), a threshold that under House rules, allows bills to be placed on the consensus calendar and to force a vote on the House floor, if the committee of jurisdiction (House Ways and Means) doesn't take it up for a hearing. The letters to Congress are requesting that members sign a "discharge petition" allowing the bill to be brought directly to the House Floor bypassing the House Ways and Means Committee with a mere 218 signatures (or one-half plus 1 seat of the 435 seats) in the U. S. House of representatives. Unfortunately, the Members of Congress must be in Session and therefore, can't sign the discharge petition until they return to Congress on September 9th. Congressman Graves and U.S. Representative Spanberger (co-author) sent a letter, on or about August 23, 2024, to their colleagues in the House advising them of the filing of the discharge petition and asking for their support.

This would allow Congress to put the matter on the consensus calendar and bring the matter directly to the House floor for a vote. In furtherance of the cause to bring the matter (H.R.-82) to an official House vote. If the bill passes the House, it must still pass the U.S. Senate before it goes to the President for his signature.

EDITOR'S NOTE: There is a companion bill in the Senate (S. 597) by Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) which currently has 62 co-sponsors, including Senators Kennedy and Cassidy both from Louisiana. The bill has 46 Democrats, 13 Republicans, and 3 Independents signed on as co-sponsors. These numbers are current as of the day of this writing (September 3, 2024). Like H.R. 82., S. 597 would repeal the WEP and GPO in their entirety.

GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS (CONTINUED)

NOTE—the Office of Group Benefits (OGB):

OGB has scheduled Annual Enrollment (October 1, 2024 through November 15, 2024) for its various health insurance plans for the 2025 calendar/plan year which begins on January 1, 2025. Meeting sites and other information will be available in all 9 state regions with in-person meetings for active employees and all retirees (Medicare and non-Medicare) throughout all 9 of the state's regions.

Frank L. Jobert, Jr., RSEA Legislative and Governmental Affairs Director



What's in a Name ... Louisiana Blue

Louisianans love a nickname. Now, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana has a new one. If you are a customer of Blue Cross here in Louisiana, you officially do business with the Louisiana Health Service & Indemnity Company, and/or Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana, or HMO Louisiana, Inc. Talk about a mouthful!

How about we just boil that all down to what you really WANT to call us anyway: Louisiana Blue. In reality, we get called “Louisiana Blue” all the time. So from now on, we are going to put our Louisiana focus first and embrace that identity. In this edition of Straight Talk, Louisiana Blue Healthcare Economist Mike Bertaut explains why we made the change. But know that no matter what you call us, we are (Louisiana) Blue for YOU.



September is Childhood Obesity Awareness Month

Recognized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, September is National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month in the United States. At Pennington Biomedical, researchers explore a wide array of scientifically proven causes, treatment, and prevention programs for childhood obesity, including healthy food choices, environmental factors, and community parks and playgrounds. “Seventy percent of children or adolescents with obesity will have it as adults,” said Dr. John Kirwan, Executive Director of Pennington Biomedical. “At Pennington Biomedical, we are committed to research that improves health across the lifespan. Our dedicated researchers explore ways to prevent and address childhood obesity.” What you should know about childhood obesity:

It’s not a character flaw. It’s a disease. Children with obesity have brains and bodies that are wired to gain weight and keep it on. They also live in a world with unhealthy foods and activities 24/7/365.

It’s not inevitable. Scientists have proven that realistic strategies, like limiting consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages, increasing regular physical activity, and reducing sedentary activity, can decrease the risk of children developing obesity.

It’s not harmless. Seven out of 10 children with obesity grow up to be adults with obesity. Those adults go on to have a higher risk of type 2 diabetes, cancer, heart disease, dementia, and stroke.

It’s not funny. The belittling treatment that children with obesity endure – from children and adults alike – can create scars that last a lifetime.

There’s good news. Childhood obesity is preventable. Family members, caregivers, and other role models are integral in helping children make healthy choices. We can reverse the trend. For more information, visit www.pbrc.edu/pediatrics.

Prepare for Cold & Flu Season with Access2day

As the seasons change and children head back to school, it's crucial to prepare for the upcoming cold and flu season. As a provider of high quality, \$0 care to employees and their covered dependents, our goal is to ensure you and your family stay healthy and protected throughout the colder months.

Cold and flu viruses spread rapidly in school and work environments, making it essential to understand the differences between these illnesses and how to prevent them. The common cold typically causes milder symptoms such as a stuffy nose, sore throat, and gradual onset of fatigue, primarily affecting the head and sinuses. In contrast, the flu hits harder and faster, with severe muscle aches, high fever, and intense exhaustion. Recognizing these symptoms early can help in seeking appropriate care and preventing the spread of these viruses.

Access2day offers an easy solution to keep you and your family healthy this season. As an Access2day member, you can receive a \$0 flu shot at any of our clinic locations, with no appointment necessary. Simply identify yourself as an Access2day Health member to activate your benefit. In addition to getting your flu shot, practice good hygiene by washing your hands frequently and sanitizing surfaces.

Remember, your membership is 100% prepaid by the Office of Group Benefits, providing you with a fast pass to \$0 care and a healthy, illness-free season.

Visit any Access2day clinic to get started: <https://access2dayhealth.com/locations.php>

Sickle Cell Awareness Month

Sickle cell is an inherited condition that is passed down from your parents the same way people get the color of their eyes, skin, and hair. There is no way to catch sickle cell – it is not contagious.

Sickle cell begins with hemoglobin, the part of the red blood cell that carries oxygen. People with sickle cell have a type of hemoglobin that when it releases oxygen, it clumps together on one side of the red blood cell, causing the cell to sickle or become banana-shaped.

Sickle cell affects about 100,000 people in the United States alone. People of African descent make up 90% of the population with sickle cell in the U.S. It also affects people of Hispanic, South Asian, Southern European, and Middle Eastern ancestry.

How Do Sickled Cells Affect the Body

Sickled red blood cells are stiff and sticky and don't move freely throughout the blood vessels.

Sickled red blood cells can pile up and block blood flow like a traffic jam, keeping healthy red blood cells carrying oxygen from getting where they need to go. This may prevent your organs from getting the oxygen they need.

Because sickled red blood cells break down, there are fewer and fewer in the body to carry oxygen. When there are too few red blood cells carrying oxygen, anemia can result, which causes people to feel weak and tired.

LASERS UPDATE

LASERS Retiree Workshop Presentations Available Online

The 2024 LASERS Retiree Workshop, held in August, featured presentations by LASERS staff, and covered topics such as investments, myLASERS, rehired retirees, benefit payments, cybersecurity, tax information, legislation, and more.

Additionally, the Louisiana Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) provided valuable insights into Medicare. Representatives from RSEA, Empower, and the Office of Group Benefits also provided brief presentations.

If you missed the workshop or would like to revisit the presentations, we invite you to explore the resources and video recordings on our website at <https://lasersonline.org/retirees/retiree-workshop/>.

LASERS UPDATE

LASERS Achieves 14.0% Investment Return

LASERS reported a 14.0% investment return for the 12-month period that ended June 30, 2024. The System's total market value of investment assets stands at just over \$15 billion.

"I would like to recognize the excellent guidance provided by our Board of Trustees and our investments team, who skillfully manage over one-third of our portfolio internally. Achieving a 14.0% return in a complex market environment is a testament to our rigorous investment process and forward-thinking strategies." LASERS Executive Director Trey Boudreaux said. "Our priority is always to secure the retirement benefits for our members."

For more details, go to <https://lasersonline.org/2024/08/lasers-reports-14-0-investment-return/>.




Marksville, La.

LOUISIANA LAGNIAPPE - "Spice up your life"

October 15 - 16, 2024



Lodging Rates (plus taxes & \$15 Resort fee):

South Tower Guest Room	\$119.00
North Tower Guest Room	\$109.00
Atrium Guest Room	\$129.00

\$15.00 Resort Fee will be assessed per room, per stay.

For Reservations Call: (800) 642-7777 — Conference Group Rate—**RSE015GR**

- To receive this special rate, you must reserve your room by: **September 22, 2024**

Registration Fees: RSEA Member: \$50 Non-Member and Guests: \$60

Sessions Include:

- Entertaining Keynote Speaker
- LASERS/OGB Benefits Update
- Topics you love and asked for
- Door Prizes after every session!

Activities Include:

Breakfast and Lunch
Recognition Luncheon
Informative Exhibits/Vendors
BINGO!

RSEA 2024 CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM

Name: _____ Guest Name: _____

Retired From (Agency): _____ Year: _____ Veteran (Yes/No): _____

Address: _____

Email Required*: _____ Telephone: _____

Your email address will be shared with conference vendors. An Agenda at a glance will be included in the next Newsletter.

REGISTRATION FEES

\$ _____ \$50 Member / \$60 Non-Member Registration Fee

\$ _____ \$60 Guest Registration Fee

\$ _____ TOTAL ENCLOSED

Mail Your Registration Form and Check to: RSEA Foundation, 9412 Common Street, Ste 7, Baton Rouge, LA 70809

Questions? Call (225) 930-0961 or email janthony.rsea@gmail.com www.RSEALA.org




Questions? Contact Jimmy Anthony at 225-930-0961 or email janthony.rsea@gmail.com



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