

The New Louisiana Voice



Summer 2019 | Volume 27 / Number 2

RSEA HONORS 2019 CHAPTER MEMBERS OF THE YEAR



Chapter members of the Year that attended the 10th Annual RSEA Conference in 2018 were honored at the conference luncheon. Pictured left to right above are: Victor Dennis (Chapter President, Alexandria), Joan Jefferies (CMOY Alexandria), James Darrell Richard (CMOY Acadiana), Martin Audiffred (Chapter President Acadiana), Sonya Trebucq (CMOY New Orleans) and Benny Harris (Chapter President New Orleans).

Pictured to the right is our Grand Prize Winner accepting the certificate for a one night stay at the Paragon Casino, a \$100 spa and a \$50 meal voucher. Come to the conference this year and you might win this or some of our many other door prizes.



RSEA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Spring is here and with that came lots of rain and storms. I pray that each of you and your families are safe and well. I am sending a big "Shout Out" to the Chapter Presidents, their officers, volunteers and all who attended the Annual Chapter Meetings that were held in March. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend all of the meetings, but I look forward

to making all 9 of next year's meetings. Our Administrative Director, Jimmy Anthony, did attend all meetings; he praised all those who made the meetings a success. A big "Thank You" as well goes to Susan Jandle, RSEA Office Manager and Linda Price, Communication and Membership Coordinator who work many hours preparing all the materials that go to each chapter President for their meetings. We are very fortunate to have these ladies! I would also like to acknowledge all the work Frank Jobert, our Legislative and Governmental Affairs Director, does for RSEA. The Legislative session just recently ended and Frank will have a report in this newsletter updating us on the legislation impacting LASERS and RSEA. Further, Frank follows the Social Security Offsets (WEP/GPO) and keeps us informed as U.S. Senate Bill (S.521) and House Bill (H.R. 141) move along.

I would like to congratulate each of our Chapter Members of the year! They were pictured on the front page of our Spring newsletter, and they are Joan Dugas, Acadiana Chapter, Barbara McManus, Lake Charles Chapter, Mary Mahoney, Coastal Chapter, Dianne Guillot, Monroe Chapter, Leanza Jordan, Alexandria Chapter, Robert Couvillion, North Shore Chapter and Sid Seymour, Baton Rouge Chapter. They will be honored at our Annual Conference Luncheon on September 11th. I would encourage each of you to begin considering who you might nominate for this honor next year now, as those nominations are due January, 2020. Your Chapter Presidents need your input and assistance with this.

Just a reminder, if you have not paid your dues yet this year please do so. If you pay annually and instead would like to have dues automatically deducted from your LASERS check (\$1.50 deducted monthly), just call Linda Price at the RSEA office, and she'll get it set up for you. Call 225-930-0961 or 866-938-0961 (toll free).

Are you ready to "Celebrate the Good Life" on September 10th and 11th, 2019, at the Paragon Casino and Resort in Marksville? We enjoyed a great conference last year at the Paragon and are looking forward to another one this year. Our conference committee chair is Bonita Hearne, and you will see much more about the conference in this newsletter from Mrs. Hearne. We have some very exciting plans for the conference!

Here's your checklist:

1) Registration form completed and returned to the RSEA office with the registration fee enclosed

2) Hotel reservation made by August 15, 2019, to receive

the special rate. Ask for the RSEA Group rate - RSES11G. If you are in need of a mobility scooter, ask to reserve one when you call to make your reservation.

3) Check out the vendors who will have their booths set up near the conference registration table. Do some Christmas shopping! We expect even more vendors this year!

Hope to see you in Marksville where we'll be "CELEBRATING THE GOOD LIFE"!!!!

Gwen Thompson,
RSEA President

ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Let me start by thanking every one of our members who have signed up for automatic withdrawal of their membership dues from LASERS retirement check. Seventy-three per cent (73%) of our members now have enacted this service. Let's see if we can get 80% this year. It is safe, quick and very convenient and it saves our

office staff and you time and effort over writing a check. And you never have to remember, "Did I write that check?" At the same time, you can also notify LASERS that you would like to have your pension funds automatically deposited into your bank account. LASERS made the announcement at our Chapter meetings that there has been a lot of check forgery attempts lately and it's getting worse. The absolute safest way to guard against fraud of our LASERS retirement money is to have your funds automatically deposited. Your funds will always be on time with no delays. So, what are you waiting for? Contact LASERS at 800-256-3000.

Last November I met for two days with Directors of seven other state retirement associations. States represented were Texas, Alabama, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio, California and Kentucky. You never really know how you "stack up" to other state organizations, but I am proud to tell you that RSEA of Louisiana is one of the best run organizations in the nation and you have every right to be proud. We all shared with each other our operating procedures, goals and strategies to being successful for our members. No one state operates exactly the same because of state to state regulation differences, but we did find that we share some common issues, such as recruitment and retention of members, newsletter costs, and communication with members, to name a few. Everyone came away from the meetings with plenty of new ideas and with a support group that we can rely on for information with other problems as they occur. AMBA is now planning for our second meeting which will be in November in San Antonio, Texas and we plan to have some other states join us. A huge thank you to AMBA (Association Member Benefits Advisors) for organizing these meetings and offsetting the costs for all of us.

I recently turned 65 years old this year and am now a certified

card-carrying Medicare member. Many of our members are also on Medicare, but for those of you who are approaching that phase in your life, I would offer some advice. Please PLAN AHEAD! And the best way to do this is to attend one of our Chapter meetings next March or our Annual Conference in September and listen to the accurate and timely information from Dean Moberly of OGB (Office of Group Benefits). All of your questions will be answered and you will take away a feeling of confidence that you can successfully navigate the complications of Medicare sign-up. Or call OGB 225-542-9733. When I made application for my Medicare benefits this year, I was able to do it all from my computer. I did not have to call, make an appointment or visit a Medicare office. Just go online at <https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/medicare/> and do it all in just a few minutes. Just remember that it may take you awhile to fully understand what is involved, so please do not wait.

Jimmy Anthony
Administrative Director



RSEA LEGISLATIVE & GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The 2019 Regular Louisiana Legislative Session is in the books! This year's Regular Session ended (sine die) at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 6th. Since

the session was officially termed as a "fiscal session" and only five (non-fiscal) bills could be filed by each legislator, it was expected to be a relatively quiet and non-controversial session. The biggest and most controversial matters that ended up being debated had less to do with budget and fiscal matters, and more to do with other things. The state's revenues are now stabilized, and actually resulted in a recent budget surplus, making the task of balancing the 2019-2020 budget easier.

With 2019 being an election year for the entire 144 members of the legislature, the governor, and other statewide elected officials, no one was expecting any new taxes to be proposed, further minimizing the opportunity for anything "controversial" to pop up. In fact, one measure (HB 599) by Rep. Lance Harris proposed to reduce state sales taxes, but it did not pass! Fantasy Sports Betting (HB 459) by Rep. Kirk Talbot and Sports Wagering (SB 153) by Senator Danny Martiny, both failed to gain passage, thereby reducing the potential for additional state revenues.

Some legislators even suggested, that since the state ran a budget surplus last year, there should be a "roll-back" of some previously approved taxes. The legislature was not, for the most part, inclined to accept this notion after the recent 2018 tax compromises, enacted last year, have just begun to show up on the state's revenue stream. Finally,

on the infrastructure front, nearly \$700 million in Gulf oil spill recovery money, given to the state by British Petroleum (BP) to account for economic damages caused by the spill, will pay for a list of road, bridge and infrastructure projects in just about every corner of the state.

There were basically five (5) retirement bills impacting LASERS that were pre-filed by the February 22nd pre-filing deadline. Additional measures: HCR 20 (Rep. Sam Jones) and SCR 34 (Senator Beth Mizell) and HB-392 (Rep. Cameron Henry) were added along the way. All of these measures will be detailed elsewhere in this newsletter with RSEA's recommended positions and the outcome of each piece of legislation.

Of special note, was House Bill 28 by Rep. Barry Ivey which called for the establishment of a "hybrid retirement plan" (part defined benefit and part defined contribution) effective July 1, 2020, which was opposed by RSEA, was voluntarily deferred by the author in the House Retirement Committee. I expect to see a version of this measure reintroduced in the 2020 legislative session next year!

The latest updates on the Social Security Offsets (WEP/GPO) are as follows: U.S. Senate Bill (S.521) was introduced by Senator Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) now has 30 co-sponsors up from 7 in my last report. However, as of this writing, neither of Louisiana's Senators, Cassidy or Kennedy has co-sponsored this measure! The U. S. House of Representatives "Social Security Fairness Act of 2019" (H.R. 141) has been filed by Congressman Rodney Davis (R-Illinois) and now has 182 co-sponsors, as of this writing, up from 140 co-sponsors on my last report. Also, all six of Louisiana's Congressmen are now co-sponsors, including Rep. Steve Scalise. These measures appear to be truly bipartisan efforts and are also known as the "Equal Treatment of Public Servants Bills". We need 290 co-sponsors to force a vote in the House of Representatives.

Please contact your U.S. Senators, Bill Cassidy (202-224-5824 www.cassidy.senate.gov) and John Kennedy (202-224-4623 www.kennedy.senate.gov) and ask them to co-sponsor Senate Bill (S.521). Also, contact your friends and relatives in other states, and ask them to contact their U.S. Senators and U.S. Representatives in their states, and request they too co-sponsor the above proposed legislation.

Finally, remember this is an election year and all 144 of Louisiana's Senators' and Representatives' seats in the Louisiana legislature are up for election. And all statewide elected officials, including the Governor, are also up for election. So always remember to exercise your right to vote and vote for the candidate(s) that pledge to protect your retirement and healthcare benefits!

Frank Jobert, Jr.
RSEA Legislative & Governmental Affairs Director



2019 Legislation Impacting LASERS with RSEA Recommended Positions and Final Outcomes:

HB 28 – Ivey

Systems Impacted: All Four (4) State Retirement Systems

Provides for a new hybrid retirement plan for members of the four (4) state retirement systems whose first employment occurs on or after July 1, 2020.

RSEA: Oppose

Final: Deferred

HB 29 – Johnson, Robert

Systems Impacted: LASERS

Provides for the calculation of the retiree's portion of health insurance premiums for certain Hazardous Duty Services Plan retirees in the same manner as other state retirees, once member reaches regular age for retirement.

RSEA: Neutral

Final: Passed

HB 392 – Henry

Systems Impacted: LASERS & TRSL

Supplemental Appropriations: Appropriates \$9,478,184 of surplus funds to LASERS to be applied to the initial unfunded accrued liability (IUAL). The appropriation of surplus funds towards the retirement system debt is constitutionally required.

RSEA: Support

Final: Passed

SB 9 – Peterson

Systems Impacted: LASERS

Removes future employees of the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) of New Orleans hired on or after July 1, 2019 from the state civil service and LASERS.

RSEA: Neutral

Final: Passed

SB 14 – Peacock

Systems Impacted: State and Statewide Systems

Provides for term limits for members of state and statewide retirement systems' boards of trustees to a time limit of no more than 12 consecutive years of service, effective 6/30/19.

RSEA: Neutral

Final: Did Not Pass

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SB 15 – Long

Systems Impacted: LASERS

Provides for firefighters of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry to be members of the LASERS Hazardous Duty Plan and for training requirements for membership eligibility, effective 6/30/19.

RSEA: Support

Final: Passed (Act 42)

HCR 20 – Jones, Sam

Systems Impacted: Of Interest to LASERS and RSEA

Memorializes Congress to consider eliminating the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) Social Security Offsets (benefit reductions). Although these resolutions have no effect of law, the Louisiana Legislature is on record urging action at the federal level on this issue impacting numerous retired state employees, retired teachers, and their spouses, as well as, law enforcement officers, public safety workers and others.

RSEA: Support

Final: Passed

SCR 34 – Mizell, Beth

Systems Impacted: Of Interest to LASERS and RSEA

Memorializes Congress to consider eliminating the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) Social Security Offsets (benefit reductions). Although these resolutions have no effect of law, the Louisiana Legislature is on record urging action at the federal level on this issue impacting numerous retired state employees, retired teachers, and their spouses, as well as, law enforcement officers, public safety workers and others.

RSEA: Support

Final: Passed

RSEA 11TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE September 10-11, 2019

~ Celebrate the Good Life ~



711 Paragon Place, Marksville, LA 71351

www.paragoncasinoresort.com

Sessions Include:

- Entertaining Keynote Speaker
- Interesting Topics
- Informative Exhibits
- LASERS/OGB Benefits Update

Activities Include:

- Bingo
- AARP Driving Program **
- Breakfast and Lunch
- Door Prizes

Lodging Rates (plus taxes/fees):

- \$99.00 North & South Towers
- \$119.00 Atrium

For Reservations Call:

- (800) 642-7777 — Ask for the 2019 RSEA Convention Group Rate—RSES11G
- To receive this special rate you must reserve your room by: August 15, 2019

Registration Fees:

- RSEA Member—\$40
- Non-Member and Guests—\$50

RSEA 2019 CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM

Name: _____ Guest Name: _____

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

Address: _____

Email*: _____ Telephone: _____

* Your email address will be shared with conference vendors *

The Conference Schedule and description of sessions will be in the next Newsletter

*** AARP Driving Class Fee is Collected at the Door the Day of the Class—The Cost is: \$15 Members / \$20 Non-Members ***

REGISTRATION FEES

\$ _____ \$40 Member / \$50 Non-Member Registration Fee

\$ _____ \$50 Guest Registration Fee

\$ _____ TOTAL ENCLOSED

Mail Your Completed Registration Form and Check to:
RSEA Foundation, 9412 Common Street, Suite 7, Baton Rouge, LA 70809
Questions? Call (225) 930-0961 or email janthony.rsea@gmail.com
www.RSEALA.org



RSEA 11th Annual Conference Agenda

Celebrate the Good Life!

Come and enjoy a fun-filled and informative conference which includes terrific workshops and topics, giveaways, door prizes, delicious food, music, bingo, and much more!

Tuesday, September 10, 2019

- 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. Conference Registration Desk Open
- 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. Vendor Exhibits
- 12:30 p.m. – 4 p.m. AARP Driving Safety Program
- 1:30 – 2:30 p.m. Workshop – *Ageism* – Learn how to stay young and refuse to “buy in” to the bias that “I am too old to...”
- 2:30 – 3:00 p.m. Break
- 3:00 – 4:00 p.m. Workshop – *Keeping a Healthy Brain*
- 5:30 - 6:30 p.m. Heavy Hors d’oeuvres
- 6:00 - 7:00 p.m. Enjoy Mardi Gras Music – Second Line Dance, and much more.
(Everyone is encouraged to bring Mardi Gras decorations, including masks, headdresses, umbrellas, hats, or outfits. An award will be given for the person who embodies the “Mardi Gras Spirit”!)
- 7:00 p.m. - Bingo!

Wednesday, September 11, 2019

- 7:30 – 11 a.m. Conference Registration Desk Open
- 7:30 – 9 a.m. All American Full Breakfast
- 8:00 a.m. – 3 p.m. Vendor Exhibits
- 9:00 – 9:30 a.m. Welcome and Opening Remarks
- 9:30 – 10:15 a.m. Keynote Address
- 10:15 – 10:45 a.m. Break
- 10:45 – 12 Noon Benefits Discussion
- 12:00 Noon – 1 p.m. Lunch
- 1:15 – 2 p.m. Topic – “Avoiding Telephone Scams”
- 2:00 – 2:45 p.m. Topic – “The Joys of Travel and Other Fun Experiences”
- 2:45 – 3:00 p.m. Closing – *Grand Prize Drawing!*

LASERS UPDATE

Nominations Close July 9 in LASERS Board Election

Nominations will be accepted by LASERS in the 2019 Board of Trustees Election until July 9, 2019, 4:30 p.m. Central Time. Every two years, LASERS members cast their ballots for candidates for the thirteen-member Board of Trustees. In this election, three seats will be filled by active members and two by retired members. Voting will occur in September and October and results certified and published by the Board in November.

If you are interested in running for the Board, you may obtain a nominating petition from the LASERS website, www.lasersonline.org, or by calling LASERS at 1.800.256.3000 or 225.922.1131 in the Baton Rouge area. The election rules, schedule of events, and additional information about the Board are available on the LASERS website.

A third party vendor experienced in handling balloting for public pension systems will conduct the LASERS 2019 Board of Trustees Election. LASERS members will receive election ballot packets by mail, and will be able to vote by mail, telephone, or the Internet. We encourage your participation in this important event.

Register for the Online Retiree Workshop Set for July 24

Join us for an online webinar Wednesday, July 24, 2019, as LASERS hosts a workshop for retirees only. Presenters will include the LASERS Executive staff, Office of Group Benefits, EMPOWER Retirement, RSEA, SHIP, and more. Registration is required for our webinar. Those who join online will see PowerPoint presentations and hear each presenter live through their computer. However, webinar attendees cannot actually see the presenters. LASERS recommends that webinar attendees have strong Internet connection and computer speakers to avoid any connection and audio issues.

To register for the workshop via webinar, go to <https://seminars.lasers.state.la.us/Registration>

If you have questions about registering, please contact us. We look forward to having you join us online for the Retiree Workshop on Wednesday, July 24!

Are You Financially Prepared for Hurricane Season?

One of the best ways to financially prepare for hurricane season is to be enrolled in direct deposit. Why? The answer is simple. Your LASERS benefit payment goes straight into your financial institution with direct deposit. No worries about delayed paper checks because of post office and road closures, or other emergency shutdowns. You will be ahead of the game if you utilize direct deposit. The Direct Deposit Authorization form is available for download on the LASERS website at www.lasersonline.org, or LASERS can mail one to you. Sign up today!

WEP/GPO Information Centralized on LASERS Website

A new page on the LASERS website provides information on the Social Security offsets, the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO). Resources include fact sheets on both federal laws, LASERS Social Security Offsets video, current legislation, and contact information for the Social Security Administration (SSA). To view the new page, go to <https://lasersonline.org/social-security-offsets/>.

Special Offer for RSEA Members

Join AAA today for only \$40

Your RSEA Membership can more than pay for itself with these great benefits!

- *24-Hour Roadside Assistance
- *Shopping Discounts
- *Free Identity Theft Protection
- *Full Service Leisure Travel Agency

Join Now and receive a first year membership for an eligible family member for free (\$29 value). You must contact Bradley Collins at 318-848-6449 to sign up for this offer. Discounts are available on all levels. Offer is for new accounts only. Offer is not available online or in stores. Call to join today.



OGB UPDATE

The Office of Group Benefits Introduces a New Way to Receive Care

Imagine going to the doctor and being seen right away and not having to pay anything for that visit. It seems like an impossible dream, right? Well dream no more. The Office of Group Benefits (OGB) is bringing that dream into reality for our members enrolled one of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana health plans*. OGB has partnered with Access Health Primary Care Clinics, Access2day, to deliver preventative and primary care with the convenience our members desire and the added bonus of NO out-of-pocket costs.

OGB Plan members enrolled in the Pelican HRA1000, Magnolia, Magnolia Local Plus, or Magnolia Open Access plans are eligible to receive care through Access2day. The use of these clinics is completely voluntary and members may still choose to visit their primary care doctors, and pay the applicable, co-pay, co-insurance or deductible costs.

Access2day providers treat many common problems for primary, preventative, and wellness care with no out-of-pocket expense to the patient. Treatment available at the Access Health clinics includes, but is not limited to:

- Respiratory conditions
- Fractures
- **8** Head, eye and ear conditions

- Lacerations and cuts
- Digestive and urinary conditions
- Skin, hair and nail conditions
- Preventative health care
- Basic lab work
- Vaccinations and shots
- Routine physicals
- Screening panels
- Specialty referrals

After your assessment, if a higher level of care is required, a provider referral will be made for your care. If you do not have a primary care physician, Access2day clinics can provide this care also. If you need a specialty physician for a more comprehensive level of care, this referral will be made for you; at which time, your health insurance and all applicable deductibles and co-pays will then apply.

Keep an eye on your mailbox for more information from OGB and Access Health, including a welcome kit and list of participating clinics. In the meantime, visit access2dayhealth.com/ogb.php to learn more about this new benefit option.

* Members enrolled in the Pelican HSA775 plan are not eligible to receive care through Access Health Primary Care Clinics.



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