

THE NEW LOUISIANA VOICE

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Caityn Muse
with
Gayle O'Neal

Isabella Fulmer
with
Jessican Dreher



Soren Cate with Susan Harwell



Jordan Lee
with
Lorrain Trotter

Kelsey Hopkin
with
Katherine Porche



RSEA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello: again, this message is from your president who is proud of the operation of our Association. Things have been moving smoothly and below are several items we have been working on.

First: all of our local Chapter meetings went off without a hitch. All were well attended, and our vendor representatives did a great job as usual. The one change was made at our Alexandria Chapter where Victor Dennis Chapter President resigned because of health problems. At our board meeting on May 14, 2024, Marline Sawrie was ratified as Alexandria Chapter President.

Second: our state legislative session has ended. There were several bills filed that may have positive and or negative effects on retirees. Frank Jobert, Jr., our Legislative / Government Affairs person, kept a close eye on all bills and informed us of the outcome. We were given daily outcomes on most of the bills by email. So, if you have email it is important that it is shared with the main office. It only takes a minute to get this done.

Third: we did our scholarship for this year and issued five (5). The

participation was great, and we were blessed to have funds to furnish five one-thousand-dollar scholarships.

Lastly: we are getting ready for our state conference in Marksville and David Thomas and his committee are doing a great job with that. Again, this year we have great guests and presenters scheduled. We are looking forward to our state conference and we will never forget about our membership. Recommendations on what we all can do to attract more members are accepted. Let's pray for good health and hopefully, I will see you all in Marksville.



James Leblanc
RSEA President

Please join with me in thanking Patsy Austin for all the hard work she put into the American Flag Quilt that she hand crafted and donated to RSEA for the auction raising \$2,180 for our Scholarship Program. Thanks also to all of you who took a chance on the raffle. Our winner was Wendy Landry.

The Scholarship Committee had a hard time narrowing down the field of candidates to three, so they decided to give five \$1,000 scholarships instead.

Congratulations on our winners who are pictured on the front page. See page 11 for more information on them.

They are truly worthy of the award and we wish them all the best on their academic journey. **Thanks also to these members who have donated to the Scholarship Fund this quarter.**

Cynthia Clouatre	Cynthia Phillips
William L. Cann	Retha Powell
Sharon Scioneaux	Jeff Smith
Steward Hingle	Shelley Stelly
Kaitlyn Tidwell	Brenda Clark
Yevetta Chesser	Lennie Lankford
Mary A. Simon	David Thomas
Ray L. Clement	

RSEA LEGISLATIVE & GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The 2024 Regular Louisiana Legislative Session has finally adjourned! This year's Regular Session began at noon on Monday, March 11 and concluded (*sine die*) at 6:00 p.m. on Monday June 3rd. It is possible, as of this writing, that we could still see a Special Session called for purposes of rewriting the State of Louisiana Constitution (perhaps sometime in August). I will have more to say about that later in this newsletter.

The just-ended session was very important for RSEA and Civil Servants in the Louisiana Classified Service. The session started out with RSEA tracking just a few, (3) retirement bills, as follows: SB-1 by Senator Edward "Ed" Price provides relative to transfers of service credit between retirement systems. RSEA took a neutral position on this bill and the bill passed and became Act 46 upon signature of the Governor.

Proposed SB-5 by Senator Blake Miguez requires fiduciaries for public retirement systems to make investment decisions based solely on financial factors. Some have referred to this bill as an anti-ESG bill. Initially, RSEA had no position on this measure, as we were relying on LASERS to provide expert/technical guidance to RSEA on this particular bill. Eventually, RSEA ultimately took a position of opposition on this measure and the bill died in the Senate Retirement Committee.

Finally, RSEA was also tracking HB-30 by Representative Larry Bagley. It provides relative to retirement eligibility (25 years of state service at any age) for rank and file employees in the Louisiana State Employees Retirement System (LASERS). RSEA initially took no position on this bill, as it would have

had a rather large actuarial cost to the LASERS system. It would have added to the unfunded accrued liability (UAL) of LASERS, unless the legislature provided additional employer/state funding. Traditionally, RSEA does not support any legislation that adds to the UAL unless adequate funding is appropriated. After being amended several times to bring the cost of the measure down, HB 30 failed on the House Floor by a vote of 67 YEAS to 17 NAYS coming up three votes shy of super majority of 70 required YES votes. Perhaps this measure may see the light of day again in the 2025 Regular Session.

Other measures that RSEA ended up tracking during the 2024 Session were items of interest and led to some serious political theatre. For example, SB 462 (Hodges), SB 181 (Morris), HB 800 (Beaullieu) were all fiercely debated and amended in Committee and on the Floor.

SB 462 provided for gubernatorial appointments on State Boards and Commissions. This conceivably could have impacted Pension Boards, like LASERS. It ended up passing 26-10 in amended form in the Senate, and became Act 491 upon the Governor's signature. It did not however adversely impact LASERS in final form, and will cause no harm to our pension system Board of Trustees, who are mostly elected by active employees and retirees of State Government.

Another bill that was closely watched was HB 800 by Representative Beaullieu, provides for calling a limited state constitutional convention. After several long and drawn out House and Governmental Affairs Committee Meetings and being debated heavily on the House Floor, it was modified by amendment from Rep. Bagley to preclude Article VII, Section 9 and Article X, Section 29 from inclusion in the proposed Constitutional Convention (Con-Con), as it became known.

These articles are the foundation of the protections of our guaranteed pension benefits, currently embedded in the present State Constitution, and are sacrosanct to state employees, state retirees, teachers, State Police and school employees. The bill passed the House by a vote of 75 YEAS to 27 NAYS, but was killed in the Senate, by not being afforded a committee hearing in the Senate and Governmental Affairs Committee by Chairman, Senator Cleo Fields. As I stated above, there is a distinct possibility of a Special Session being called by Governor Landry for the purposes of a Limited Constitutional Convention in August. This has yet to be decided until the House and Senate agree to the time, place, composition of the delegates, and subject matter of the Con-Con! Stay tuned for future developments on this. RSEA will continue to provide updates on this as we acquire any new information.

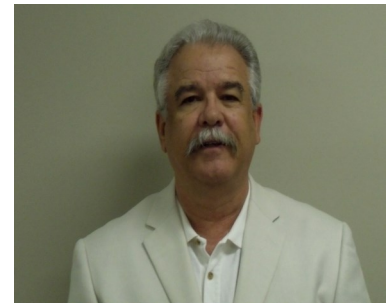
Another bill (Constitutional Amendment) that got serious attention from all stakeholders—Civil Servants and retirees (RSEA), legislators, City of New Orleans and the Executive Branch (including reportedly by NOLA.COM the Governor himself) was SB 181 by Senator Jay Morris of (West Monroe). SB 181 provides for Membership of the State Civil Service Commission. Additionally, it would have provided for reclassifying of State Civil Servants from Classified Service to Unclassified Service or “At-Will” employment status, virtually eliminating Civil Service worker protection, as we know it today, and returning to the “Spoils System” and days of Governor Huey P. Long. SB 181 was hotly contested in Committee and on the House Floor. At the end of the process the bill received 68 YEAS and 30 NAYS and failed by a mere 2 votes shy of the 70 votes required (Super-majority for a Constitutional Amendment). I expect to see more of this legislation in upcoming sessions and/or in a constitutional convention.

Finally, two Measures that were popular with virtually everyone in the House and Senate, and at RSEA were HB 782 (Rep. McFarland) the 2023-2024 Supplemental Appropriations Bill. This measure appropriates \$8,895,245 to the LASERS Unfunded Accrued Liability (UAL). It passed the House by 104 YEAS to 0 NAYS and the Senate by 38 YEAS to 0 NAYS!

Lastly, HCR 20 (Rep. Mike Johnson) provides relative to the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP). This instrument memorializes the United States Congress to review and eliminate the provisions of federal law which reduce Social Security benefits for persons receiving pensions from federal, state, or local governments by supporting H.R. 82 (Garret Graves) and S.597 (Brown) of the 118th Congress. This measure (HCR 20) passed the Louisiana House by a vote of 98 YEAS—0 NAYS and the Louisiana Senate by 39 YEAS—(0) NAYS!

In conclusion, I wish to thank all the RSEA Board and staff members, along with our RSEA membership, and state retirees/employees, who responded to our calls to action throughout the session. And contacted their Representatives and Senators by telephone and emails or personal visits during the Session. Acting alone we are virtually powerless. But acting together, there is strength in numbers and we can change the outcome of a situation, if we join together and make our presence known. I like to remind our members when contacting your legislators, always be respectful, polite and courteous! And always thank them for listening to you and for taking your requests into consideration before they make their decisions.

Frank Jobert
RSEA Legislative
Director



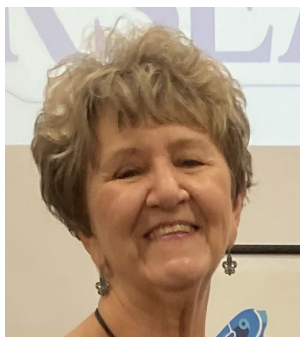
RSEA Chapter Members of the Year

07



Karen St. Cyr—Baton Rouge

Sandra Bonin—Acadiana



Jerre Perry—Shreveport



Charlotte Belveal—Monroe

Judy Smart—Coastal



The 2024 regular legislative session has come to an end. Throughout the session, the Office of Group Benefits (“OGB”) has been tracking several bills that could have an impact on our members. As of the writing of this article, only a few of those bills have been signed by the governor. Below is a list of the signed bills and when they will take effect:

HB 839/Act 453 Prohibits health coverage plans (including OGB) who utilize step therapy or fail first protocols from subjecting prescriptions or orders for a ventilator to step therapy or fail first protocols if either of the following apply: 1) the ventilator requires frequent or substantial servicing as classified by CMS, and described in La R.S. 22:1821(G); or 2) there is clinical evidence or patient history that suggests the alternative treatments required under the protocol will be less effective or cause an adverse reaction to the patient. **Effective Date 8/1/2024**

SB 48/Act 160 Repeals Section 3.(A) of Act 324 of the 2023 regular legislative session, which requires a specific appropriation to be made in order for the biomarker testing coverage provisions of Act 324 to become effective. Makes the coverage provisions of Act 324 applicable on/after 1/1/2025. **Effective Date 5/23/2024**

SB 338/Act 174 Requires health coverage plans (including OGB) to expand coverage for breast cancer diagnostic imaging (to evaluate breast abnormalities) to include coverage for contrast enhanced mammograms and breast magnetic resonance imaging to evaluate breast abnormalities. Makes the coverage provisions of the legislation effective on/after 1/1/2025, but no later than 1/1/2026. **Effective Date 5/23/2024**

As of the writing of this article, there are several bills awaiting the Governor’s signature. Below is a list of those bills and when they would take effect, if signed by the Governor:

HB 172 Requires each OGB administrator and pharmacy benefit manager (“PBM”) contract to establish an administrative fee to be retained by the contractor for services rendered, and prohibits those contractors from retaining any revenues attributable to their contract with OGB, other than the administrative fee. Requires each OGB administrator and PBM to report on and remit to OGB any revenues collected which are attributable to their contract with OGB, other than the administrative fee. Allows for penalties to be assessed to each OGB administrator and PBM for failure to disclose revenues received which are attributable to their contract with OGB. **Effective Date 7/1/2024**

HB 508 Requires health benefit plans (including OGB) to provide medical and surgical benefits to treat urinary and sexual dysfunction resulting from cancer treatments, as chosen by the cancer patient in consultation with the attending physician. Prohibits such health benefit plans from denying coverage for procedures to correct urinary and sexual dysfunction resulting from cancer treatments, including penile injections, external pumps, and surgical implants, as chosen by the cancer patient in consultation with the attending physician. Makes the coverage provisions of the legislation effective on/after 1/1/2025, but no later than 1/1/2026. **Effective Date 8/1/2024**

Attend the LASERS Retiree Workshop on August 13 in Baton Rouge or Online

LASERS will host a workshop for retirees at our office in Baton Rouge and online on **Tuesday, August 13, 2024**. This workshop offers a great opportunity for retirees to gain valuable information and updates from the LASERS Executive and Member Services staff and connect with our state agency and community partners. Registration information will be forthcoming through *Member Connection* email and on the LASERS website at www.lasersonline.org.

September 1 Benefit Payment Falls on a Sunday Please note that the September 1 benefit payment falls on a Sunday, which could affect the receipt of your funds.

Direct deposits are guaranteed to be in your bank or credit union on the first day of the month. Be aware that if the first falls on a weekend or holiday, funds may not be available until the following business day. In these cases, contact your financial institution directly for information on when your funds will be made available to you. That decision is made by your financial institution, **not** LASERS. If you have not received your monthly benefit payment by the first business day of the month, contact LASERS at 225.922.0600 or 800.256.3000.

LASERS UPDATE (CONTINUED)

Be Prepared for Hurricane Season with Direct Deposit

Hurricane Season is here, and it's essential to be prepared. One way to ensure your finances are secure during this time is by receiving your monthly LASERS benefit payment through direct deposit, which is crucial during emergencies when you need quick access to your money.

Direct deposit ensures you receive your payment on time, even if there are disruptions in mail delivery. It can also help you avoid the risks associated with paper checks, such as loss, theft, or damage. If you are not yet enrolled in direct deposit, sign up today! The form to authorize direct deposit is available in myLASERS and on the LASERS website.

Jordan Lee graduated from Brusly High School with a 4.25 GPA and ranked in the top 10 of her class. She will be attending the University of Louisiana at Lafayette pursuing a degree in Architecture. Jordan's grandmother, **Lorraine Simmons Trotter** sponsored her for this award and has been an RSEA member since 2006.

Caitlyn Muse graduated from Oak Forest Academy in Amite with a 3.8 GPA and ranked 14th in her class. She will be attending Southeastern Louisiana University pursuing a degree in Biology with the ultimate goal of becoming an optometrist. Caitlyn was sponsored by her grandmother, **Gayle M. O'Neal** who has been an RSEA member since 2015.

Isabella Fulmer graduated from Ouachita Christian High School in Monroe with a 4.00 GPA and ranked in the top 10% of her class. She will be attending LSU pursuing a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) Degree and a Master of Social Work (MSW) Degree with the goal of becoming a social worker like her grandmother, **Jessica Dreher**. Jessica sponsored Isabella and has been an RSEA member since 2015.

Kelsey Hopkins graduated from Live Oak High School in Denham Springs, Magnum Cum Laude, in 2023 with a 3.7 GPA. She is currently attending Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond pursuing a degree in Early Childhood Education. Kelsey was sponsored by her grandmother, **Katherine Porche** and has been an RSEA member since 2019.

Soren Cate graduated from Caddo Parish Magnet High with a 3.9 GPA ranking 6th in her class. She will be attending Tulane University in New Orleans pursuing a degree in Voice Performance and Environmental Policy. Soren was sponsored by her grandmother, **Susan Harwell** who has been a member since 2006.



*Working Today for **Your** Tomorrow*

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