

∴The New LOUISIANA

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Pictured are the 2025 RSEA Conference Grand Prize Winners. Donald Hearne top right; Clara Scott bottom right; and Rozella Howard bottom left. Clara won a \$300 gift card. Donald and Rozella each won a \$300 gift card for stays at any State Park generously donated by the Louisiana Office of State Parks.



RSEA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

RESA President Report

Well, how fast time flies. This will be my last report as your President because effective January 2025 the new President will be Dean Moberley, our present First Vice-President.

There are two things that I would like to comment on. First, being your President for the last two years has been a real pleasure. We accomplished many things during my Presidency but there were other things I wish for that are still undone. With all of the ups and downs, I still enjoyed being your President for the past two years.

Secondly, your new President will be Dean Moberley, and it appears that most of the retirees know him. In addition to his great charisma, Dean has a wealth of knowledge about our retirement system. We are looking forward to his leadership. It should be noted that for the next two years, I will be in charge of the Conference Committee, the RESA Foundation Board, and a member of the Executive Committee as the Immediate Past President.

We got some good news from the U.S. House of Representatives that the HR82 Bill had passed. Now we are waiting for the U.S.

Senate to do their thing.

Work has started on our Chapter Meetings which will start in March 2025. Please encourage your retired friends to attend these meetings because so much valuable information is passed on to help us through some of the difficult situations we face daily.

Again, thanks for the opportunity you all gave me the last two years as your President, and I promise I will never forget this.

Your President

James H. Leblanc, Jr.



ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Greetings members! I sincerely hope you all had a Blessed Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I would like to suggest that one of your New Year's Resolutions be that you make a serious effort to recruit one new member for the Association.

At the time of this writing, HR82, the WEP/GPO Repeal bill has passed the House and still awaits in the Senate for action. Read Frank Jobert's article on page 4 for more details. When you read this time will have run out for passage and I am very hopeful that it will have passed and have been signed by the President. If not, then we will have to try again. We will not give up until it is done.

The RSEA Annual Conference was once again held in Marksville, La., at the Paragon Casino and Resort. We had about 100 members there and they all had a wonderful time. There was good food and fellowship as well as door prizes galore. Our keynote speaker, Jay Dardenne was very entertaining speaking of how Louisiana is so unique. We are currently planning our next conference and the dates are Oct 14-15. We will let you know where as soon as it is finalized.

We have started having live webinars one day a month on a variety of retirement subjects. The first one was everything you need to know about Medicare and the second one was about all things to start planning for as you approach retirement. In case you missed them, you can find a link to them on our website. Visit

www.rseala.org and go to Helpful Links, scroll down to the end of the page and click on the links. We will have another webinar this month.

The RSEA Chapter meeting schedule has been set for 2025. See the chart below. Meeting locations will be announced later.

Central Louisiana	March 5
Shreveport	March 6
Monroe	March 7
Lake Charles	March 11
Acadiana	March 12
Capital Area	March 13
Coastal	March 18
New Orleans	March 19
North Shore	March 20

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 took place on November 5, 2024.

The last time I communicated with you through this publication, we were on the precipice in the U.S. House of Representatives of passage of H.R. 82 (Graves R-LA -06 and Spanberger D-VA-07): The Social Security Fairness Act of 2023, which would eliminate the dreaded Social Security Offsets or penalties known as the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO).

The measure did in fact pass the U S House of Representatives by an overwhelming majority of 327-Yeas to 75 Nays on Tuesday, November 12, 2024 with all six (6) Louisiana Congressional Representatives voting for passage of H.R. 82, and repeal of WEP and GPO. The measure was then sent to the U. S. Senate for a vote in the upper chamber.

As of the writing of this article the bill H.R. 82 and companion Senate Bill S. 597 (Brown D-OH and Collins R-ME) are pending scheduling for a vote by U.S. Senate President Charles “Chuck” Schumer (D-NY) who is one of the sixty-one (61) co-sponsors in the Senate, along with Louisiana Senators Cassidy and Kennedy. The bill is assigned to the Senate Finance Committee for a hearing, which has NOT been scheduled as of yet!

The 2024 Tentative U. S. Senate Calendar shows the Senate in session until December 20, 2024, in lieu of any changes. As you are probably aware, H.R. 82 or S.597 cannot become law unless they pass the Senate, and not just the House, and are signed by the President. In the interest of time, our lobbying efforts are to bypass the Senate Finance Committee hearing process, and bring H.R. 82 or S.597 directly to the Senate Floor for a vote. Hopefully, by the time you receive this article the matter will have been resolved in our favor. These offsets have been in effect for approximately 40 years and it is the first time they have actually been brought to the floor of either chamber for a vote by Congress. And time is running out quickly to obtain passage before the 118th Congress adjourns on or about January 3, 2025 at noon.

2024 Third Extraordinary (Special) Session on Taxation & Revenue Governor Jeff Landry called the Louisiana Legislature into a third extra-ordinary or “special” 20 calendar day session beginning on Wednesday, November 6th at 3:00 PM until no later than Monday, November 25th at 6:00 PM. The session actually adjourned on Friday, November 22, 2024 or three (3) days early.

The special session focused on revamping of Louisiana’s tax codes by lowering personal income tax rates to a flat rate (3%) for all, as of January 1, 2025, and a tripling of the standard deduction to \$12,500 at the beginning of 2026 for individual filers, in exchange for a modest temporary sales tax rate increase to 5% for 5 years, and reducing back to 4.75% thereafter. This sales tax rate will put Louisiana’s rate as the highest sales tax rate in the country. Other changes to corporate and business taxes were also implemented.

In spite of all the above changes, RSEA was able to preserve the items most important to state retirees and future state retirees. That is, we were able to maintain the exemption/exclusion of state pensions (annuities) from state or municipal taxation (LA. RS 11:405). We also maintain the State Constitutional protection of our pensions (retirement) benefits Article 10, Section 29 (E) (5) which states: The accrued benefits of members of any state retirement system or state-wide public retirement system shall not be diminished or impaired and shall not be encumbered for or diverted to any other purpose. Furthermore, the protection of the homestead exemption including the “Senior Freeze” for the taxable valuation of the property’s worth (for those over age 65) was also left intact by the legislature during the special tax and revenue session.

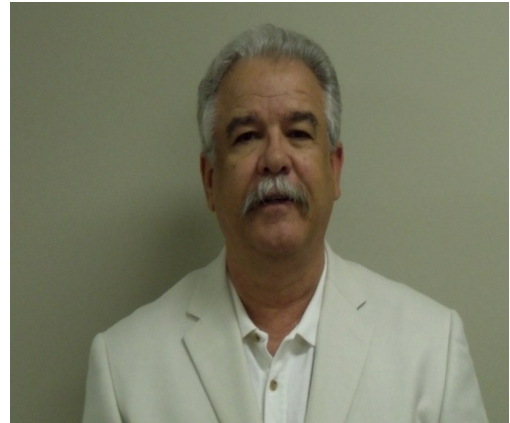
Other items of special interest to consumers were left protected in the state constitution: the previously mentioned homestead exemption was left at \$75,000 and the sales tax exemption for the purchase of groceries, residential utilities, and prescription drugs remain free from state sales taxation. Finally, a “laundry list” of 41 items (primarily services) that we opposed stalled in the House of Representatives and were left free of state sales taxation in the end.

GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS (CONTINUED)

As in recent legislative sessions, RSEA was able to play “defense” and was able to hold on to items, exemptions, and protections that we already have, and place great value on, as retirees and future retirees. In this regard we were “victorious” and remain substantially whole. Our primary mission in the special session was to protect and defend our existing retiree/retirement benefits and exemptions, and as stated above, we were successful in that regard.

Frank L. Jobert, Jr.

RSEA Legislative and Governmental Affairs
Director



The holiday season is here, and we're excited to offer you the perfect passport to savings! The **My AMBA Discounts Passport Program** gives you exclusive access to thousands of merchant discounts. Whether you're shopping local, dining out, traveling, or enjoying other holiday activities, you can save big! And best of all, because you are a member of RSEA, it's free!

It's easy to get started:

Visit the <https://passportcorporate.com/join/?pk=5oRHZISnp8s=&prc=SAVERS> program website.

1. Enter your preferred email to register with.
2. Complete your profile details on the next page.
3. After you complete registration, you'll receive a unique membership number from the myAmba discounts program.

Also, don't forget to download the "Passport Mobile" app from your app store to access discounts on-the-go! After downloading the app, simply log in with your email address and unique Passport membership number issued after registration.

DON'T MISS OUT ON THIS OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE YOUR HOLIDAY SEASON A LITTLE BRIGHTER WITH GREAT DEALS ALL AROUND YOU. START SAVING TODAY!

GUIDE TO YOUR RSEA MEMBER BENEFITS

RSEA A VOICE
FOR YOUR
TOMORROW



Dental & Vision Plans

Flexibility and Freedom are the words best described when it comes to your Dental and Vision plans. Easy-to-use, broad coverage and discounts with a wide range of providers.



Long-Term Care

A Long-Term Care insurance policy can ease the financial burden on your loved ones helping to protect your life savings and reduce the stress on your spouse and children.



Whole Life

With no premium increases, or reduced coverage due to age or health once issued, this policy can help protect your family from the high cost of final expenses.



Hospital Indemnity

A supplemental hospital indemnity insurance policy could be a smart financial decision for other hospital expenses including extended hospital stays, emergency room visits, ambulance transportation and more.



Short-Term Care/Home Health Care

A Home Care policy can allow you to choose where you recover and offset the costs of care not covered by traditional health care. The choice of your home, assisted living facility, or the nursing home should be yours.



Cancer, Heart, Stroke, Accident, and Disability Insurance

Benefits paid directly to you. You select the benefit level that best suits your needs.



Emergency Air and Ground Transportation

Medical Air Services Association (MASA) provides plans for lifesaving emergency transportation services. Services are paid in full, with no deductibles, co-pays, or dollar limits.



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If you have any questions about the program or would like assistance locating a specific discount or vendor, contact Passport at 800.410.4211 or support@passportunlimited.com.

ADDITIONAL MEMBER DISCOUNTS:

Start Hearing, Inc.

Start Hearing, Inc. offers members a complete hearing evaluation, warranty on digital technology aids in any style, loss and damage protection, and batteries with a complete benefit package.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, contact us at 888.200.5071 or visit us online at www.startheating.com/partners/AMBA.

Connect America Medical Alert Service

Cell phones are good for keeping connected to family and friends but they're no substitute for a medical alert service. Connect America offers significant discounts on small, discreet medical alert devices that give you access to emergency response 24/7 with just the press of one help button.

For more information, contact Connect America at 800.404.5869 or visit www.connectamerica.com/amba.

Identity & Fraud Protection

Our world continues to become increasingly connected to the Internet. While this can be incredibly convenient, it also puts some things that matter most to you at risk, such as your identity, money and assets, family, reputation, and privacy. That's where ID Protection comes in. An all-in-one digital safety net for you and your whole family includes credit monitoring, military-grade encryption, and insurance protection to help cover any eligible losses and fees due to ID theft and fraud. <https://offer.aura.com/amba>

Legal Services

Protect yourself and your family with a legal services plan. Like many people, you may need legal assistance sooner rather than later. You'll want a lawyer you can trust at the right price. Members can access a nationwide network of attorneys for a low monthly cost with no copays, deductibles, or claim forms. <https://legalplan.metlife.com/amba>

BENEFITS MADE AVAILABLE THROUGH



AMBA

Some benefits not available in all states. Association membership required to obtain benefits. Some associations have made a special benefits website available to their members. Register at myAMBAbenefits.info.

Updated 08/2024

RSEA Foundation Scholarship Donors

RETIRED STATE EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION • LOUISIANA

09

Kenneth Roy
Ronald Schneider in memory of Cleo Yarbrough
Ivory B. Williams
Elsie J. Azare in memory of Arlene Ledet
Nancy B. Hadley
Julia Jackson
Margaret Gilcrease
Joyce Ben in memory of Leroy Richard
Gail Durham
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Rebecca Tedford
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Access2dayHealth Update

Thankful for Our Members: A Season of Gratitude for Our Retirees

As we enter the season of giving, we at Access2day Health want to share our heartfelt appreciation with you, our valued retiree members. Your trust in us as your healthcare partner means the world, and we're proud to support your journey to better health in this new chapter of life.

This year, we conducted our annual member survey, and members like you shared experiences. Here's what the numbers revealed:

- **98.8% of respondents** reported being satisfied or extremely satisfied with their service at Access2day clinics—the highest satisfaction rate in four years!
- **97.8% of members** agree that Access2day Health has improved their overall health.

88.3% of members have visited an Access2day clinic more than once, and **8.6%** shared they would have gone to the ER if Access2day hadn't been available. These results reflect a commitment to prioritizing your health, and we are honored to play a role in your care. For retirees, peace of mind matters more than ever, and we're dedicated to providing care that is not only effective but also convenient and cost-free to you.

Whether it's a routine checkup, a flu shot, or managing a chronic condition, Access2day is here to simplify your healthcare experience. We're grateful to be part of your wellness journey, helping you save time, avoid unnecessary trips to the ER, and enjoy more of what matters—spending time with loved ones and enjoying your well-earned retirement.

Remember that we're just around the corner, ready to assist you whenever you need us, even during the holiday season.

From all of us at Access2day Health, here's to a healthy, happy, and joyful season ahead!

Visit any Access2day clinic for convenient, zero-cost, hassle-free care: <https://access2dayhealth.com/locations/>

[The Access2day Health benefit is for retirees covered on the Magnolia Local Plus, Magnolia Local, Magnolia Open Access, or Pelican HRA1000 health plans.](#)

LASERS UPDATE

Mailing Soon: Form 1099-R for 2024

1099-R tax forms will be mailed to retirees no later than **January 31, 2025**. Please allow up to two weeks for delivery. If you have not received your 1099-R by **February 14, 2025**, or need a duplicate, you can access and download your 1099-R information online via **myLASERS**. Additional information and answers to your frequently asked questions regarding 1099-R forms can be found at www.lasersonline.org/retirees/1099r. For corrections or to request a mailed duplicate, contact LASERS at **225.922.0600** or **1.800.256.3000**. If you have any questions about the details of your 1099-R, we recommend consulting your tax advisor.

February and March Benefit Payments Fall on a Saturday

Please be aware that your upcoming benefit payments on **February 1 and March 1, 2025**, will fall on a Saturday, 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. 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 to know 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, please contact LASERS at **225.922.0600** (Baton Rouge) or

800.256.3000 (toll-free)

Search for Unclaimed Property Online

The **LASERS unclaimed property list** was recently updated on our website at www.lasersonline.org/retirees/unclaimed-property. By searching the list, you can quickly see if LASERS is holding any funds that belong to you or your beneficiary. These funds may include unclaimed benefit checks or contributions left by deceased members. If you find your name, simply complete the form provided on the webpage to start the process of claiming your funds.

2025 Election Year for LASERS Board of Trustees

Four seats on the LASERS Board are up for a vote in 2025. One seat is open for retired members and three for active members. **Nominations will open on March 1, 2025, and close on July 8, 2025.** Voting occurs in September and October, and the Board certifies election results and announces newly elected Trustees in November.

As winter approaches, so do our cravings for heartier meals. This month's recipe, Roasted Chicken with Caramelized Winter Squash, offers just the right amount of savory goodness. It contains plenty of protein, just a touch of sugar, and a dash of spicy seasonings for an extra kick. Everything works together beautifully, with the sweet and tangy flavors carrying through from the caramelized squash to the oven-roasted chicken.

Open the hyperlink below for the recipe.

[Roasted Chicken with Caramelized Winter Squash](#)



*Working Today for **Your** Tomorrow*

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