

The New Louisiana Voice



April - May - June 2015 | Volume 23 / Number 2

RSEA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Victor Dennis
RSEA Board President

When I first went to work at Pinecrest Development Center, now Pinecrest Supports and Services Center, I was the Employment Equal Opportunity Coordinator (EEOC). As I worked in that position, I saw a need to get involved in the Worker's

Compensation program. There were over 1500 people working at Pinecrest. Many of those jobs required lifting. The State had funds available at the time and Pinecrest needed to do recruiting. I had some experience in briefing and with one-on-one interviews, so I became the recruiter for Pinecrest for a few years. I see RSEA doing some of the same things. As an EEOC, it was my duty to see that workers were treated fairly and with dignity. Regarding Worker's Compensation, those who needed help with injuries received good medical care and were able to return to work and continue their lives in a comfortable manner. When recruiting potential employees, it was important workers understood all the benefits of the job. We wanted the best workers. Pinecrest had to be a good place to work, with equal treatment, and benefits for all.

I am proud of the way RSEA goes about its task of taking care of active and retired state employees. In 2013, we went out on a limb to fight the Governor's Administration to protect the retirement benefits for our active employees. In 2014, RSEA was fighting for our insurance benefits with OGB. We've made it

known that we'll stand up for the rights and benefits of state employees, both active and retired. We will continue to fight and communicate your needs to our state and congressional representatives. When our Legislative and Governmental Director, Frank Jobert, visits the Capitol, he fights with facts and figures to defend our goals and principles. RSEA is in good hands with Mr. Jobert. Backing him and standing beside him, is the RSEA Board of Directors, with years of experience as managers and supervisors.

As your new President, I know that I'm in good company with RSEA's Board. My task, as well as the Board's, is to continue what we're doing, but do even more to protect our members. RSEA would like to recruit more members, both retired and active state employees. Each of you can help by letting others know what we're doing. There is strength in numbers!

Opportunities for you to learn more about changes in legislation, insurance, retirement benefits, and education on various subjects are provided to you at our annual chapter meetings and annual state conferences.

I encourage you to contact any board member or our Executive Director, if you have questions or suggestions.

Victor B. Dennis, Jr.
RSEA Board President
257 Stilley Road
Pineville, LA 71360-5934
vdennisj@bellsouth.net
Cell: 318-623-4547



RSEA Executive Director's Message

Lorry Trotter

It has been a whirlwind since I became RSEA's Executive Director three months ago. The office spent January and February preparing for the nine chapter meetings across the state. Frank Jobert and I travelled in March to all the meetings and twice to Shreveport as their first meeting was cancelled due to the weather. I really enjoyed all of the chapter meetings, but the travel was exhausting.

RSEA now has a Foundation. Any donations (not

dues) sent to RSEA, will be deposited into the RSEA Foundation and tax credit will be given for your donation. The Foundation was established to help fund the annual state conference and other educational endeavors of RSEA.

We are planning a wonderful state conference this year, October 5-7, 2015. Please see the flyer on page 4. RSEA is also sponsoring a trip to Williamsburg, Virginia, August 30 through September 6, 2015. See page 5 for details.

Director of RSEA's Legislative & Governmental Affairs

Frank Jobert

The 2015 Louisiana Legislative Session is upon us! This year's 60-day session began at noon on Monday, April 13th and must end no later than 6:00 PM on Thursday, June 11th and is primarily devoted to fiscal matters.

From all indications and media reports, it is going to be a very problematic session, as the state budget has upwards of a projected \$1.6 BILLION revenue shortfall.

With this in mind, there are only a few possible solutions: raise revenues; cut expenditures to the marrow (as most state agencies have already been cut to the bone); or a combination of revenue enhancements and spending reductions. This does not bode well for employees and students at institutions of higher learning (colleges and universities) and the healthcare department, as these are the two primary areas of government that are not "protected" in the budget! I would further suggest that everything is on the table or chopping block this year, given the administration's anti-tax stance. There is even more concern than ever, given that just about every available (trust) fund, including your Office of Group Benefits (OGB) has been raided, and the cupboard is virtually empty.

One of our goals this session is to see **no further erosion of OGB and its benefit structure**. Additionally, we would like to see additional protection of OGB through better (legislative) oversight to insulate us from further raids on the reserve fund balance, and to protect the benefits, that we worked for and continue to need throughout our work careers, as employees, and into retirement, as retirees.

Given the backdrop described above and the state's current fiscal condition, we shall be all the more vigilant

in our attempt to protect our healthcare and retirement benefits for current and future retirees. In addition, we shall seek passage of HB 42 (Sam Jones) to provide a 1.5% cost-of-living allowance (COLA) or permanent benefit increase (PBI) for all four state retirement systems (see HB 42-Sam Jones and other retirement legislation elsewhere in this newsletter). Be advised **that the funds are available** in the "Experience Accounts" of all four state systems to fund a COLA this year **without impacting the state general fund** or the projected \$1.6 BILLION shortfall.

Furthermore, it is our goal is to utilize the "Experience Account" balance for its intended purpose, as prescribed in current state statutes. That is, **for providing retiree COLAs** and not for diversion to the general fund or for some other such raid on these trust fund balances! We will be watching this situation VERY closely and will let you know who in the legislature and/or administration, might try to attempt to raid these trust funds for some illicit purpose. If there was ever a time for all 4 state retirement system members to stick together--it is this session and no such raid should be allowed to happen!

In that members' OGB premiums have been increased in 2014 and 2015 and are projected to increase again in 2016, coupled with increased healthcare out-of-pocket expenses for co-pays/deductibles, reduced pharmacy benefits & increases in general living expenses, retirees need the COLA now more than ever. Hopefully, your legislator, (who in all probability) is up for re-election this October, will recognize these facts and will vote in favor of a retiree COLA this session when HB 42 is put to a vote. We will let you know when that situation presents itself and will also let you know how your legislator voted on this proposed COLA bill.

2015 Proposed Legislation Impacting Lasers/Retirement:

HB 33 – Berthelot

Systems Impacted: All systems covering agencies that issue litter citations

Increases littering fines (by 50%) and distributes the increase in fines to the retirement system of the law enforcement agency issuing the litter citation. The funds shall be applied to the oldest outstanding positive amortization base of the system.

- House Natural Resources Committee

RSEA Position: *Support*

HB 42 – Sam Jones

Systems Impacted: State Systems

Authorizes a COLA of up to 1.5% (based on the amount of funds available in the Experience Account) for LASERS retirees and beneficiaries effective July 1, 2015.

RSEA Position: *Support*

HB 45 – Pearson

Systems Impacted: LASERS

Relative to implementation of new age sixty-two retirement eligibility for new hires effective July 1, 2015. Provides that system membership is “optional” for persons age 62 or older after July 1, 2015.

RSEA Position: *Support*

HB 46 – Reynolds

Systems Impacted: LASERS

Provides relative to benefits for minor children of certain wildlife agents in the enforcement division of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries; changes all of the references to children under the age of 18, and will instead refer to minor children. Minors will include unmarried full-time students under the age of 23.

RSEA Position: *Support*

HB 55 – Ritchie and SB 15 - Nevers

Systems Impacted: LASERS and TRSL

Constitutional Amendment - Levies a 4% tax on the use of hydrocarbon processing facilities and dedicates a portion of the tax proceeds to payment of the IUAL of LASERS and

TRSL (\$250 Million per year allocated proportionally based on the UAL of each system).

HB 55 – House Ways and Means

SB 15 –Senate Revenue and Fiscal

RSEA Position: *Support*

HB 83 – Patrick Jefferson

Provides for continuance of nutrition assistance for retirees who are at least 80 years of age and whose SNAP benefits are reduced or eliminated due to income gained from a cost-of-living adjustment in retirement income.

- Health and Welfare Committee

RSEA Position: *Support*

SB 14 – Guillory

Systems Impacted: State Systems

Includes noninvestment related administrative expenses in calculating the required employer contribution rate.

RSEA Position: *Neutral*

SB 16 – Guillory

State Systems

Clarifies provisions regarding excess investment earnings, employer contributions and COLAs.

- Health and Welfare Committee

RSEA Position: *Support*

SB 18 – Adley

Systems Impacted: TRSL

Provides for withdrawal of higher education systems from TRSL & establishment of new retirement plan(s). Systems may pay their share of liability by pension obligation bonds.

RSEA Position: *Oppose*



RSEA 6TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

October 5-7, 2015

MARKSVILLE, LA

TENTATIVE AGENDA:

MONDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2015

12:00 noon – 4:00 pm Registration
12:30 pm AARP Driver Safety Training
1:00 pm Workshop
5:00 pm – 7:00 pm President's Reception
7:00 pm Bingo

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2015

8:00 am Registration, Breakfast, Exhibits & Crafts Open
9:00 am Opening Ceremony
9:30 am – 10:15 am General Session
10:30 LASERS and Group Benefits
11:30 am Lunch
1:00 pm Workshops
2:00 Break
2:15 Workshops
6:00 pm Banquet

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2015

8:00 am Coffee
8:00 am – 10:30 am General Session/Brunch
10:30 am Announcements, Door Prizes
10:45 am Adjourn

Lodging Rates (plus taxes/fees):

- Hotel - Standard Guest Room \$78
- Hotel – Deluxe Atrium Guest Room \$99

Reservations Call: 1-800-642-7777

(Ask for RSEA 2015 Convention – RETS005G)

Shuttle Service available from Hotel Entrances,
RV Park and Cabins to Conference Meeting area

Registration Fees (Note: Fees include all meals)

- RSEA Member and/or RSEA Guest (1) – \$50 each
- Non-Member – \$70 (includes RSEA Membership)

Free Door Prizes!!

Join the Fun!

RSEA 2015 CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM

Name: _____ Guest Name: _____

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

Address: _____

Email: * _____ Telephone: _____

* Agree to share email address with conference vendors

_____ Please indicate the average volunteer hours you work each month

\$ _____ Total Enclosed. Mail completed registration form and check to:

Terri Adams, RSEA Conference Coordinator, 9412 Common Street, Suite 7, Baton Rouge, LA 70809

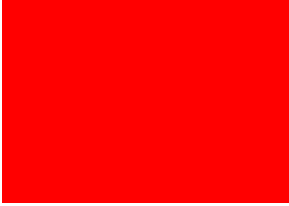
Questions: Call (225) 933-1309 or by Email tabs1@bellsouth.net

RSEA SPONSORED EIGHT-DAY TRIP

Alexandria, La To Williamsburg, Va

August 30 thru September 6

Total Price Per Person/Double Occupancy: \$1,375.00



Package includes: 1. Lodging/hotel for seven nights; 2. Breakfast and one other meal per day. (Exception: three travel days - breakfast meal only included); 3. Tickets to all events; 4. Travel in luxury travel bus (bathroom equipped; plugs for electronics); 5. Experienced driver and escort.

We will be taking a different route coming home so no duplications!

Routes to and from Williamsburg, VA:

**Alexandria, LA ® Atlanta, GA ® Charlotte, NC ® Williamsburg, VA (3 nites) ® Lexington, KY
® Nashville, TN ® Alexandria, LA (HOME!)**

Sightseeing Events:

Tours of CNN, Coca Cola, Billy Graham Library & Museum, Dale Earnhardt, Inc Museum, Williamsburg Tours: Kimball Theater, Williamsburg General Store, Colonial Williamsburg; and Merchants Square. Other tours: Yankee Candle Village and the historic town of Berkley, Virginia.

Only twenty-five travelers required to guarantee price listed.

(If less than 25 submit deposit by June 1st, price will change, and travelers will have the opportunity to pay additional cost or opt out with full refund.)

**Payment Schedule: 1st Deposit (\$975.00) - due by June 1st
and Final Payment (\$400.00) due by August 3rd.**

Hotel room for August 29th in Alexandria, LA will be available for additional cost. If you need reservations, please contact Dianne Guillot at (318) 396-6275.

Registration Form - 2015 RSEA Sponsored 8-Day Trip to Williamsburg, VA

(Mail Registration Form and Payments to: RSEA, 9412 Common St., Suite 7, Baton Rouge, LA 70809)

Name: _____ Roommate: _____

Address: _____

Home Telephone: _____ Cell Phone: _____ Email: _____

Contact Information in the Event of Emergency (Name and Telephone Number)

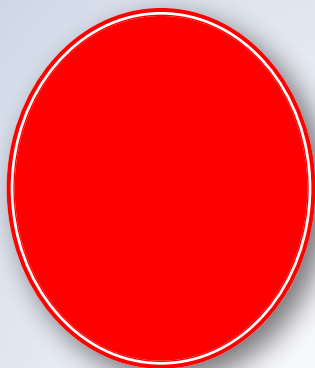
Amount Enclosed: \$ _____ **Final Payment Due at RSEA Office by Close of Business August 3, 2015**

Signature of Traveler _____



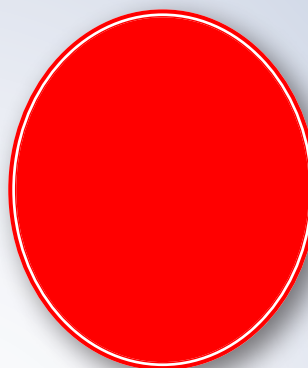
RSEA Honors 2015 Chapter Members of the Year

Seven RSEA members were honored as Chapter Members of the Year during the 2015 Annual Chapter meetings held in March. These honorees will also be recognized at the RSEA Statewide Conference that will be held at the Paragon Casino Resort, October 5-7, 2015.



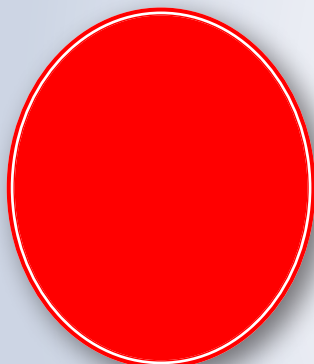
ROBERT E. FREEMAN

ACADIANA CHAPTER



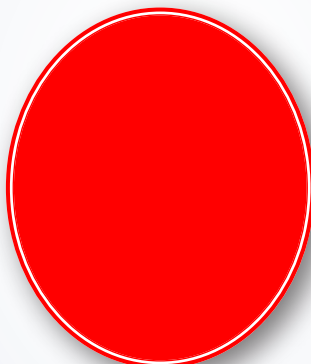
RONALD SCHNEIDER

ALEXANDRIA CHAPTER



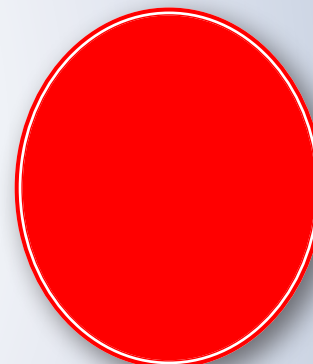
BRUCE E. PILLEY

BATON ROUGE CHAPTER



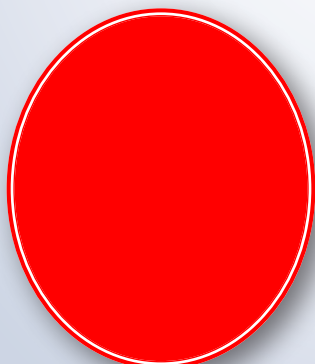
JUDY M. SMART

COASTAL CHAPTER



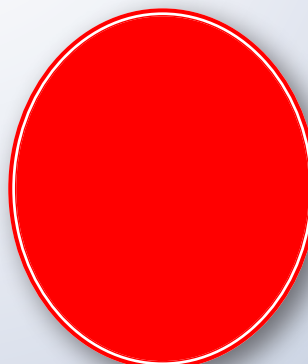
ROBERT E. SHADION

MONROE CHAPTER



WILLIAM E. KNIGHT III

NORTHSHORE CHAPTER



NELDA RAINS-THOMAS

SHREVEPORT CHAPTER

Update from LASERS

Nominations Now Open in 2015 LASERS Board of Trustees Election

Every two years, LASERS members are asked to cast their ballots for candidates for the thirteen-member Board of Trustees. 2015 is an election year and five seats on the Board will be up for a vote. Two of the seats to be voted on are held by LASERS retirees. Nominations will be accepted by LASERS until July 14, 2015 at 4:30 p.m. Central Time. Votes will be cast in September and October. The results will be certified by the Board and published in November.

Three open seats must be filled by active members. 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.

Trustees serve four year terms unless they are filling an un-expired portion of a term. No trustee may serve more than three consecutive terms.

Six of the thirteen trustees are elected by the LASERS active membership. Three are chosen by our retirees. Four serve as ex-officio members. Those seats are reserved for the State Treasurer, the chair of the House Committee on Retirement, the chair of the Senate Committee on Retirement, and the Commissioner of Administration.

The LASERS 2015 Board of Trustees Election will be conducted by a third party vendor experienced in handling balloting for state and public pension systems. LASERS members will receive election ballot packets by mail, and will be able to vote by mail, telephone, or the Internet. We look forward to your participation in this important and exciting process.

2015 Legislative Bills Impacting LASERS

The 2015 Regular Legislative Session begins April 13. The LASERS Board of Trustees will meet March 26 to vote and take positions on the bills that directly affect the System. To stay up-to-date

on the retirement bills and the LASERS Board of Trustees position on each, visit the LASERS website or sign up for LASERS Member Connection email service.

LASERS Elects New Board of Trustees Officers for 2015

In January, the LASERS Board of Trustees elected Thomas Bickham, Undersecretary of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, as its new Chair. Bickham has been a Trustee since 2012 and most recently chaired the Management Committee of the Board.

Janice Lansing was elected as the new Vice Chair. Lansing, Chief Financial Officer of the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, joined the Board in 2010 and most recently served as the Investment Committee Chair.

LASERS Retiree Workshop Scheduled

Make time to attend the LASERS Retiree Workshop on July 22, 2015, from 9:00 a.m. until noon. The workshop will be held in the LASERS Board Room, 8401 United Plaza Blvd., 4th Floor, in Baton Rouge. The workshop is for retirees only and seating is limited. Please register early to guarantee your spot.

The workshop includes a welcome by the LASERS Executive Staff, vendor presentations and materials, an update on the retirement system, investment information from Empower Retirement, and Social Security information. The workshop is also a great opportunity for networking and a chance to win fun door prizes. Attendees are encouraged to bring a canned good to donate to the Baton Rouge Food Bank.

If you would like to attend, please register online under Quick Links, Seminars, Retiree Workshop on the LASERS website or contact LASERS Customer Service Department at 225.922.0600 in Baton Rouge or 800.256.3000 toll-free.





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OGB UPDATE

OGB Policy Changes

With the recent reorganization of the Office of Group Benefits (OGB), an update of some internal policies has become necessary.

Contacting OGB:

Effective immediately, all calls to OGB should go through the toll free customer service line – (800) 272-8451. If a customer service representative is unable to assist you, they will forward your call to the appropriate staff member.

Documentation:

Any eligibility documentation should be emailed to ogb.eligibility@la.gov. This email address will ensure that the information has been received and will be handled in a timely fashion.

As always, we appreciate your cooperation.
Contact customer service with any questions.

Have \$120 Annually on Your Health Insurance Premium

If you're enrolled in a Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana health plan through OGB, you can save \$120 annually (\$10/month) by participating in the Live Better Louisiana wellness program. The premium credit will take effect January 1, 2016**.

To qualify for the discount, complete the following steps by August 15, 2015:

1. Participate in an on-site wellness check-up*
2. Complete your Personal Health Assessment (PHA) on the BCBSLA website

If you haven't yet completed your assessment, go to <https://www.bcbsla.com/Pages/Login.aspx>. Then, find a Live Better Louisiana Wellness Clinic happening near you and schedule your appointment!

Please contact OGB customer service at 1-800-272-8451 with any questions.

** You may also complete the checkup at your primary care physician's office by asking your doctor to fill out this form.*

SAVE THE DATE

RSEA 7th Annual Conference and Expo

October 5-7, 2015

Paragon Casino and Resort — Marksville, LA

SEE REGISTRATION FLYER ON PAGE 4