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Spring 2022

Defending Your Pension and Health Insurance Benefits

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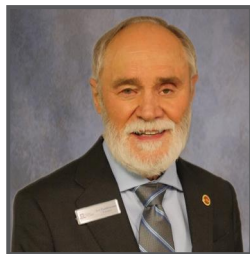
This year has represented a transition back to government by legislators in Springfield. Many of the tasks have been transitioned to a hybrid model, where some legislative meetings are happening digitally, while others have been happening in person. Overall, there has been a fraction of the activity that occurred before the outset of the pandemic, but more activity than happened during the past two years of the pandemic. The most major item of legislation that has passed is an increase of over \$173 million in funding to the Illinois Teachers' Retirement System. SB 2803 quickly passed the House and Senate and was immediately signed by the Governor into Public Act (P.A. 102-0696). This was an initiative of the Governor, who had indicated he wanted to fund over the certified amount in his budget address.

The other major legislative issue that the IRTA has been involved with has been the extension of return-to-work provisions during the teacher shortage that the State is currently experiencing. Representative Janet Yang-Rohr (D, Naperville) moved legislation to the Senate in the form of HB 5472. This legislation allows a retired teacher to return to work for up to 140 paid days prior to July 1, 2022. The legislation passed the House but has stalled in the Senate. The other bill dealing with this issue, SB 3201 is an initiative of Napoleon Harris (D, Dolton). This legislation is more generous in time, allowing a retired teacher to return to work for up to 140 days per year prior to July 1, 2023. This legislation has not yet passed the Senate. At this point, it seems somewhat unlikely, although not impossible, that either bill will be sent to the

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President's Message



Bill Funkhouser
President

I am honored and humbled to serve you as President of the Illinois Retired Teachers Association. I would like to thank John Flaherty for his leadership the past two years. As he said, “My term just started, and a 100-year pandemic hit.” During that time, under John’s leadership, the association continued to function and thrive. The business of the association was carried out with virtual meetings. Our association continued to grow while other groups decreased in membership. Currently we have 39,414 members. Also, I would like to recognize our Executive Director, Jim Bachman, and our great staff for the job they did in providing uninterrupted services to our members whether working remotely or in the office. Great job!

Last year we hired a consulting firm, Brewer Pratt Solutions, to do a complete organizational review of our association. As a result of the review, they gave us a 30-page report with 40 recommendations for changes to keep our association viable in the future. Some of the recommendations were procedural and have been implemented. Others required changes to our Constitution. Over the coming months the Constitution Committee will be studying these recommendations, taking surveys of the membership, and coming up with proposals to be presented to the Delegate Assembly in October 2023.

In December the Executive Committee took part in a 2-day strategic planning meeting conducted by Elisa Brewer Pratt, Chief Executive of Brewer Pratt Solutions. These 2 days were very intense and, in some ways, very disconcerting. For example, to begin with we were asked to imagine what it will be like in 2030. Put yourself in our place and try to imagine all the changes that will occur in the next 8 years. With rapidly changing technology, it is almost unbelievable what life might be like then. Also, we were encouraged to keep in mind that the person retiring in the next 5 to 10 years will have different expectations and interests than current retirees and that in planning for the future we will need to make changes in our association to attract these people to join. From this meeting, a strategic plan was developed setting forth goals for the next 2-3 years. The Board of Directors, the Executive Committee and the office staff will now be working on attaining these goals.

The next two years look to be a very exciting and challenging time with the implementation of the recommendations from the consultants and achieving the strategic plan goals. But perhaps the biggest challenge will come from the retirement of our Executive Director, Jim Bachman, and finding the best qualified person to lead our organization in the future.

Thoughts to ponder:

“The individual who says it is not possible should move out of the way of those doing it.” —Tricia Cunningham

“Even if you’re on the right track, you’ll get run over if you just sit there.” —Will Rogers

Teachers' Retirement System Update

Doug Strand, TRS Annuitant Trustee

Please go to the IRTA website at www.irtaonline.org, login to the Members-Only section, click on Publications and Documents, and then the TRS Update (Doug Strand) link for the full report.

Membership, Foundation Grant Program & Area Conferences

TOGETHER

by Mike Schmidt, IRTA State Membership Committee Chair

In 1959 the musical GYPSY opened on Broadway. In the show Ethel Merman playing Mama Rose LOUDLY sang, "Wherever we go, whatever we do, we're gonna go through it together." Merman wasn't a member of the IRTA, but we are and here's the problem. Even though **TOGETHER** we won our lawsuit against the state government in 2015, there are still efforts to reduce the benefits promised to us. More importantly, there has been a huge turnover in the members of the General Assembly since 2016. There are and continue to be way too many legislators who weren't around during the suit and need to be educated regarding the value that we retirees place on the promises made to us. The surest way to get and keep their attention is to project a united presence **TOGETHER** by having a large and growing membership.

Although our state membership has steadily risen in the last six years, in the past two pandemic years, the increase has slowed. A fast and easy way to quicken the pace is to persuade the non-state IRTA retirees around the state, who belong to a local unit, to join with the rest of us. Every unit has those members who aren't state members. For example, many might be the spouse of someone who is. In any case, check with your unit member directories, your unit treasurer or president to identify those in your unit who can help all of us by joining the state IRTA. Remind them that it only costs \$2.50 per month with TRS dues deduct. The legislators and bureaucrats in Illinois are most impressed with the sincerity of the defense of our rights by an increase in our numbers. So, remember that, like Merman, we are loudest when we are joined **TOGETHER**.

"Excellence in Education Grants for Teachers" Program

The Illinois Retired Teachers Association Foundation is making \$36,500 in grant money available statewide in Illinois. This special grant money will provide additional funds to public school educators (Pre-K through 12) so that their students will have the means to participate in special projects.

Please download, complete, and submit the application online by visiting www.irtaonline.org and looking under the IRTA Foundation section. All proposals must be submitted by June 1, 2022. A special committee will select the recipients of the grant money over the summer. Grant awards will be presented in the Fall.

* Chicago Public School employees are not eligible for this grant program.



Save the Date!

The Association is excited to announce our 2022 Area Conferences. All state members will be invited to register and attend their respective area meetings. All presentations will be taped and available on our website. Mark your calendars and join the meeting live! Additional registration information will be forthcoming. **The conference meeting dates are as follows:**

June 7 – Area 1

June 9 – Area 2

June 14 – Area 3

June 16 – Area 4

June 29 – Area 5

June 30 – Area 6

Smart eNewsletter & Member Benefits

Smart IRTA eNewsletter

IRTA utilizing an artificially intelligent software program, has introduced a new e-mail newsletter to digitize association news and information. Dubbed *Good Dog News: A Smart eNewsletter from your Pension Watchdog*, the e-mail delivers custom content to association members depending on their individual interests twice monthly.

“With every issue, e-mail recipients will see the content they enjoy most, delivered to them based on their own unique interests,” IRTA Member Services Coordinator Tricia Klim said. “It’s basically the opposite of spam. The algorithm learns more about each of the recipients on our list, and with every subsequent send, the member gets a better newsletter.”

The software’s artificial intelligence chooses a set of articles from the content pool for everyone based on their past engagement with our newsletters. The first set of articles was not based on behavior (since we had none). But now since members start clicking on articles, they start to see a more curated selection designated just for them.

The eNewsletter is a step towards keeping members fresh with the latest information possible.

Too often, the content sent in the Association’s quarterly newsletter is out-of-date. This project works towards strengthening the Association’s digital infrastructure to enable interactions, rapid communications, grass-root coordination, and calls for advocacy.

“Members need to feel inclined to interact with our e-mails, and they desire value in the content they are receiving,” Director of Membership & Marketing Nathan Mihelich said. “Whether members are seeking entertainment, information, products, or other things, our end goal is satisfaction. In turn, this will increase member value and overall member retention.”



Look for the eNewsletter in your e-mail inbox on the first and fifteenth of each month. If you don’t see it, please check your other folders like social, promotions, or spam. It’s likely there somewhere. Add irta@irtaonline.org as a contact in your e-mail address book and that should help delivery as well. If you still need help, call the office. The staff is always happy to help.

IRTA Member Benefits

You can find information on all of IRTA’s member benefits by visiting www.irtaonline.org, logging into the Members-Only section, and clicking on the Member Benefits tab. **Some of IRTA’s other benefits include Liberty Mutual, Lifeline Screening, and Hear in America.** You can also contact the IRTA Office at 1.800.728.4782 for additional information.

* IRTA benefit codes must be mentioned to receive discounts.

Unit of Distinction Program & Member Benefits

2021 IRTA “Unit of Distinction” Program Award

The following eighteen units (below) are being recognized as a **2021 IRTA “Unit of Distinction.”** The “Unit of Distinction” Program is a voluntary program based on the honor system that is designed to help guide and direct local unit leaders, as well as acknowledge IRTA units that are the best in the state. Units receiving the “Unit of Distinction” Award will be recognized at the IRTA Biennial Convention, in the IRTA ACTION, eNewsletter, and on the IRTA website. Units will also receive a gift of \$250. **Congratulations!**

Blackhawk RTA
Carroll County RTA
Champaign County RTA
Hamilton County RTA
Joliet Area RTA
Madison County #2 RTA
Marion County RTA
McHenry County RTA
Moultrie County RTA
NW Suburban RTA
Peoria Area RTA
South Suburban RTA
Stephenson County RTA
Tazewell County RTA

West Lake Shore RTA
Whiteside County RTA
Williamson County RTA
Winnebago County RTA



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IRTA - Illinois Retired Teachers Association

IRTAPAC

Legislative Update *(Continued from page 1)*

Governor. While the IRTA is supportive of expanding this return-to-work provision, the priority has been to maintain the current 120 day extension, which we have been successful in doing.

Aside from the pandemic, the major reason that so little legislation is moving is that Illinois is experiencing an unusual election cycle. Every 10 years, Illinois changes the legislative districts to reflect the new census information. The 2022 election falls into this 10 year cycle, so that not only must all elected officials run, but most are running in at least partially new districts. In addition to that, the 2022 election cycle is generally viewed as being hard on incumbents in many existing districts do to a variety of polls that show general dissatisfaction from voters. This situation has created a feeling by many lawmakers that inaction is preferable to action as challenged incumbents are fearful of negative reactions to any passed legislation.

IRTAPAC

The IRTAPAC Fund continues to grow, but we need your help. Donate to our Political Action Committee and protect the status of retired educators by donating just \$1.00 per month through pension deduction. IRTA will continue to fight for retired educators' benefits as we have for over 60 years. Help Us in Our Fight! Mail the IRTAPAC donation form on this page to IRTA, 828 S. Second St., 4th Floor, Springfield, IL 62704.

Member dues money is never used for PAC purposes.



Please mail to IRTA.

IRTAPAC Donation Form

828 S. Second St., 4th Floor • Springfield, IL 62704 • 1-800-728-4782
e-mail: irta@irtaonline.org • webpage: www.irtaonline.org

IRTAPAC Donation – I hereby authorize the Teachers' Retirement System to DEDUCT my IRTAPAC donation in monthly installments of \$1.00.

Signature Required Here _____

Social Security # _____

(Only Last 4 Digits Required)

Name Last _____ First _____ MI _____ DOB _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone () _____ E-mail _____ Retirement Year _____

Memorials

In Memory Of

Below, you will find a list of names of those remembered by memorial gifts for the months of September - December. For a complete list of donations to the Foundation, please visit the IRTA website and look under the Foundation section.

September

Champaign County RTA in memory of:
Susan Durbin
Bonnie Hummel

Clinton County RTA in memory of:
Don Jones

DeKalb County RTA in memory of:
Natalie Calhoun

DuPage County RTA in memory of:
Donald Adcock
Annabelle Bilek
June Eaton
Charles Geitner
Patricia Haidle
Dorothy Kerner
Marlene McGirk
Shirley Orlopp
Keneth Ritzert
Roger Sargeant

Fulton County RTA in memory of:
David P Little

Jo Daviess County RTA in memory of:
Carol Grzelak
Charlene Huso
Carole Koester
Eula Jean Meier
John O'Boyle
Nancy Ray

Madison County II RTA in memory of:
Jennie Lou Cox
Ellie French

Madison County III RTA in memory of:
Kathy Parker

McDonough County RTA in memory of:
Pat Roark
Audrey Welty

Northwest Suburban RTA in memory of:
Len Burt
Patricia Kunnen
William Maki
Paul Mueller

Tazewell County RTA in memory of:
Burdrl Hall

Other Memorials:
Rita Allen in memory of:
Roger Tuttle

Bill Bailey in memory of:
Bill McCauley

Matt & Vanessa Born in memory of:
Jim Harter

Shirley Dodds in memory of:
Jack Jungers
Betty Starkey

Peggy and Bill Funkhouser in memory of:
Phil Robbins
Betty Starkey

Georgiana Glennon in memory of:
Bill Glennon

Maylo Hranac in memory of:
Barbara Millburg

Bob & Gloria Lorenz in memory of:
James Harter

October

Alex/Pul/Union RTA in memory of:
Dale Britt
Mary Herndon

Aurora Area RTA in memory of:
Howard Burns
Diane Crawshaw
Wilma Wolfe

Champaign Co. RTA in memory of:
Celeste Taylor

Christian Co. RTA in memory of:
Betty Lovkamp
Russell (Mick) Sullivan

Clinton Co. RTA in memory of:
Marjorie Harter
Richard Krajcovic

Elgin Area RTA in memory of:
Marian Peterson
Seena Woleben

Iroquois Co. RTA in memory of:
Elna Davis

Madison Co. RTA #3 in memory of:
Rosemarie Fertl
Mildred Hediger
Margaret Louer

Marshall-Putnam Co. RTA in memory of:
Julia Condit
Verna Reed

Northwest Suburban RTA in memory of:
James Harter
Janice Kayson

Warren Co. RTA in memory of:
Colleen Kinney

West Lake Shore RTA in memory of:
Martha Kirchman
Barbara Raz
Joesph Vizek

Whiteside Co. RTA in memory of:
Ruth Mitick

Other Memorials:
Diana Brennan in memory of:
James Brennan

Judith Quiram in memory of:
John Byrne

Lucille Powell in memory of:
Jack Powell

Donnie & Kay Ostrom in memory of:
Elizabeth "Betty" Starkey

Larry Crippin in memory of:
Dr. David Byrne
(correction from February)

November

Clinton Co. RTA in memory of:
Jean Speiser

Jackson Co. RTA in memory of:
Jeanna Balch
Press Berry, Jr.
Inez Blessing
William Brunty
H. Ray Bush
Sarah Doerr
Betty Ebbs
George Edwards
John Gilmore III
Darren Haney
Ada Heller
Lawrence Huseman
William Kirksey
Coralee Lawder
Lelia Marvin
Faye McDaniel
Judy Mittendorf
Archibald Mosley
Michael Mugge
Tom O'Boyle
Jerry Qualls
Carolyn Rendleman
Frances Shiplett
Kathryn Tarantino
Charles Taylor
Floyd Waggoner
Marcia Weber

James Wells
Janet Wittenborn

Lake Co. RTA in memory of:
Leah Center

Madison Co. RTA #2 in memory of:
Patrick Hamm

Richland Co. RTA in memory of:
Roy Hixon

Stephenson Co. RTA in memory of:
Kathleen Baldauf
Janet Bausman
Lucille Bruning
Mary K. Determan
Frances Ditsworth
James Ditsworth
Sharon Griner
Donald Gruszka
Charles Koppi
Roger Lehr
George Matz
Jean Meier
Helen Milligan
Linda Orr
Virginia Waggoner
Ed Wegner
Chauncey "Bud" Wells
Randall Welp
Patricia Willging
Lydia Young

Tazewell Co. RTA in memory of:
Doris Hall

Winnebago Co. RTA in memory of:
Catherine Adams
Bruce Bankson
Peter Damby
Ann Dooley
Phyllis Gordon
Barbara Hildreth
Margot Kelley
Delores Kuberka
Glenn Palmer
Evelyn Reid
Ralph Sullons
Polly Wright

Other Memorials:
Charles Mestek in memory of:
Jim Harter

Bill Bailey in memory of:
Bill McCauley

Lawrence A. Turner
Patricia Weiss

DuPage Co. RTA in memory of:
Lola Lehman

Elgin Area RTA in memory of:
Mike Alft
Linda Kuehl
Marian Peterson

Joliet Area RTA in memory of:
Matt Connor

Livingston Co. RTA in memory of:
Vera Yvonne (Bonnie) Plesko

Madison Co. RTA #2 in memory of:
Arene Wiemers Burgess

McLean Co. RTA in memory of:
Unit members who have passed away

Montgomery Co. RTA in memory of:
June Strahl

Randolph Co. RTA in memory of:
Loretta Odle

Tazewell Co. RTA in memory of:
Ernest Cretaro

West Lake Shore RTA in memory of:
Richard Hospers
Martha Klybert
Louis Marovitch
Katherine Perry
William Stamper

Whiteside Co. RTA in memory of:
Estella Metcalfe

Other Memorials:
Sara Ellen Anderson in memory of:
Maxine Bohn

James Barr in memory of:
DARTA members who passed away

Patricia Barr in memory of:
DARTA members who passed away

Ruth Cortright in memory of:
DARTA members who passed away

Mildred Dillie in memory of:
DARTA members who passed away

Judith Ford in memory of:
DARTA members who passed away

Jean Gift in memory of:
DARTA members who passed away

Barbara Hannon in memory of:
DARTA members who passed away

Priscilla Palmer in memory of:
DARTA members who passed away

Karen Penn in memory of:
DARTA members who passed away

Nancy Peterson in memory of:
DARTA members who passed away

Elizabeth Query-Smith in memory of:
DARTA members who passed away

Nadine Wimmer in memory of:
DARTA members who passed away

Lucille Harter in memory of:
Kathleen Gabbey

Sara Ellen Anderson in memory of:
Nancy Louck

Bill Bailey in memory of:
Bill McCauley

Carolyn White in memory of:
Roger Steingraber

December

Aurora Area RTA in memory of:
Jane Butters
Ruth Hogan

Blackhawk Unit RTA in memory of:
Unit members who have passed away

Christian Co. RTA in memory of:
JoAnn Daniel

Decatur Area RTA in memory of:
Azalee Berner
Florence Bolin
Rose Mary Bradford
Helen Brown
Betty Jo Browning
Esther Lange Carlson
Jack Coffman
Naomi Davis
Don Diller
Donald K. Dillie
Gordon Eckols
Margaret Aileen Hagan
Billie Harmon
Martha Hill
Sara Jerome
Virginia Casey Maines
Bernard Michael "Mike" McLaughlin
Meredith McMinin
Cynthia Reed
Nellie M. Templin

Thank You!

Please remember that you can ask your local funeral home to add the IRTA Foundation as a memorial choice at your loved one's funeral.

Illinois Retired Teachers Association Foundation

828 S. Second St., 4th Floor Springfield, IL 62704

Yes, I want to *HELP SERVE THE NEEDS OF EDUCATORS*
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Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift to the Foundation for:

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Latest News!

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