

Direct Line

Newsletter of West Lake Shore Unit, Illinois Retired Teacher's Association

WLSU and IRTA...Your Voice in Springfield

www.wlsu.weebly.com

May 2 Membership Luncheon

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

On February 25, Northern Illinois Jobs With Justice held a pension forum in Bolingbrook. Speakers included John Laesch of Jobs...; State Representative Larry Walsh, Jr.; Dr. B. Barclay, founding member of Chicago Political Economy Group; Dr. Jean Pierce, of the League of Women Voters; Justin Nigro, Director of We Are One Coalition; Senator Patrick McGuire; and Senator Bertino-Tarrant.

Again the panel made a watertight case for the problem being a revenue problem rather than a benefits problem. You can view their data in power points and video of the forum on www.nijwj.org in "Media" menu item. Then scroll to "Other Media" and look for "power points and video."

The legislators who attended are all freshmen legislators. Senator McGuire was very candid about the fact that he knows very little about pension issues and how they are being handled in the Senate. He said it is hard to get information about the pension proposals. He tried last year to find out about what was going on but never got a straight answer. He doesn't know where the committee of 4 held their meetings. He said the Senate got HB1673 on Wednesday before the end of the May session and was told it would be the last thing on the agenda on Thursday, May 31 (269 pages). He did say that the Senate voted to close the loophole about offshore drilling, but my understanding was that the house had already left and did not act on it. As far as he knows, no pension talks were done all last summer. There was nothing about pensions in the lame duck session. Legislators kept asking about where the pension reform discussion was, but it never showed up.

Cullerton believes that SB1 will stand up in court. Madiar, his chief counsel, supports this form of benefit cut as constitutional as healthcare is not constitutionally protected. However, there are five other bills out there, one of them by Lou Lang which would make the income tax hike permanent with 2% going to fund the unfunded liability.

Supposedly the Speaker of the House is impatient, and not happy with AFSCME. McGuire says he has heard nothing about revenue enhancements, and there is no talk of closing loopholes while, in fact, the GOP in the House unveiled 30 proposals that would provide more corporate tax cuts: cut the corporate income tax from 7% to 4.8% by 2014, make a permanent tax credit to companies now getting it for their research and development expenses, and other perks for business. To see the full line-up, check out the www.wlsu.weebly.com. Look in the "Pension Related Articles/Videos" menu option.

Senator Bertino-Tarrant has only been in office 1 1/2 months. She is on the education committee. She did not understand the Speculation Tax presentation and does not like SB1. However, she thinks Representative Biss's heart is in the right place. She does want more information because she knows very little about the issues regarding revenue and pensions.

Larry Walsh has been in office since 4/30/12, and has worked at Caterpillar and with unions. He mistakenly thinks "the state of Illinois is in dire straits," and no one is willing to "pull the trigger" to make bills a reality--to create new revenue. The good news is that he would be willing sign on to the graduated income tax. Walsh clearly said that LEGISLATORS DO NOT HEAR ABOUT TAX LOOPHOLES FOR CORPORATIONS which if closed could repay 75% of the unfunded liability.

He said something very telling for our members: To get a bill moving through the House it needs a lot of co-sponsors. WE NEED TO TALK TO LEGISLATORS IN LARGE NUMBERS ABOUT REVENUE STREAMS AND PENSION ISSUES. Walsh said the calls his office is getting now from constituents don't refer to pensions but rather to guns and gay rights. He did say that the Democrats rarely caucus but have done so 3 times in the last few months about pensions.

THERE WILL BE SOME TYPE OF PENSION BILL THIS SPRING. The theme in the legislature seems to be "Shared Sacrifice" which means: Educators sacrifice, and others will share the benefits.

Someone from the audience asked why legislators are demonizing educators. Walsh's reply was that they are not. It is groups like the Civic Committee who have the big money and are able to broadcast their point of view through the media owned by the wealthy.

What we took away from the meeting is that if we have any hope at all of forestalling the "sacrifice" we need to be more aggressive and vocal all across the state. Legislators are not hearing us because enough of us are not speaking up. Your emails and calls on February 28 to legislators seem to have done some good. I receive many replies to my legislator emails from legislators who are starting to see the light. I think these freshmen legislators are people we should cultivate. Hopefully, they are not so jaded that they will go with the flow.

As of February only 18,500 IRTA members were enrolled in Voter Voice. Considering the fact that there will be pension action this spring, according to Representative Walsh, if you are not on VV yet, please sign up immediately so you receive Calls to Action and updates and can act on them promptly. See the information on Page 6 for help in enrolling.

If you live outside of Illinois, you can still contact:

Michael Madigan at 773-581-8000, 217-782-5350.mmadigan@hds.ilga.gov

Governor Quinn at 217-782-0244, Pat.quinn@illinois.gov

Tom Cross at 217-782-1331, 815-254-0000 tom@tomcross.com

Marge Sucansky, President

Who Voted for the February 28 House Bills? Remember These Names When You Vote

Amendments....

House Bill 1165, Amendment 1: Immediately raises retirement age to 67.

Who voted to raise the teachers' retirement age to 67? **Only one vote** out of the 118 members of the Illinois House of Representatives -- **Speaker Michael Madigan.**

House Bill 1166, Amendment 1: Increase employee contributions by 5%.

Who voted to raise teachers' contribution rate 5%? **Three votes** -- Michael Madigan, Elaine Nekritz and Charles Jefferson. (118 **Some of the vote totals on The Madigan Pension** House members - 71 D, 47R)

House Bill 1154, Amendment 1: Completely eliminates cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs).

Who voted to eliminate the total COLA for everyone? **Five Votes** -- Michael Madigan, Elaine Nekritz, Charles Jefferson, Frances Ann Hurley and Michael Zalewski.

Action on March 7:

Three pension amendments to HB1154 were debated on the House floor this afternoon. Floor amendment #7 passed 65-7.

Amendments 6 and 8 failed. A short description of the amendments follows:

The amendments to House Bill 1154 include the following:

- Suspends/eliminates COLA for all Tier I employees and retirees (anyone hired before 1/1/2011) from the bill's effective date through January 2024. **Amendment failed 2-67**
- Limits/freezes pensionable salary of TRS employees to the greater of the Social Security base for the previous year (currently \$113,700), or the annual salary of the member in the previous year - does not apply to salaries determined by contracts or collective bargaining agreements currently in place on the effective date of the bill. **Amendment passed 65-7**
- Increases employee contributions 4% over two years - **Amendment failed 11-58-2**

Mark Your Calendar

• April 18	Area 3 Conference	Bradley, Illinois
• May 2	Membership Luncheon	Willowbrook Holiday Inn 11:15 a.m.
• May 14	Executive Board Meeting	Plymouth Place 9:30 a.m.
• June 11	Bus Trip	City in a Garden 9:00 a.m.
• August 6	Executive Board Meeting	Plymouth Place 9:30 a.m.
• September 12	Membership Meeting	Plymouth Place 10:00 a.m.
• September 24	Bus Trip	Bit of Blarney 9:00 a.m.
• October 17	Executive Board Meeting	Plymouth Place 9:30 a.m.
• October 21-22	IRTA Convention	Springfield—Abraham Lincoln Hotel
• December 6	Membership Luncheon	Willowbrook Holiday Inn 11:15 a.m.

WLSU Spring Luncheon

Thursday, May 2, at Willowbrook Holiday Inn

Return this form and a check for **\$23** members and **\$28** for guests to **Marie Trankina, 10 Algonquin Drive, Unit 2, Indian Head Park, Illinois 60525**. Reservations must be received by April 24, 2012. No telephone reservations. Make Checks payable to **West Lake Shore Unit**.

Member Name (s) _____

Guest Name (s) _____

email address _____

Phone _____ Total \$ _____

Entree Choices:

Chicken with raspberry pecan sauce

Baked Salmon with dill sauce

Roasted sirloin of beef au jus

WLSU Spring Luncheon

Thursday, May 2, 2012 11:15-2:15

Socializing, cash bar, short business meeting,
door prizes and plated lunch

Program:

Dr. Jean Pierce is a retired professor and chair of the Faculty of Educational Psychology at Northern Illinois University who is actively involved with the League of Women Voters. She will present a case for a progressive income tax in Illinois which could partially alleviate the revenue problems of the state.

Questions:, call Marie Trankina at (708) 246-6709.

The Willowbrook Holiday Inn is located at 7800 Kingery Highway (Rte 83), north of I-55. In Willowbrook (630)325-6400

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan, who has presided over many years of pension holidays (more accurately called pension fund diversions), decided to get the “pension reform” show on the road early this legislative year after the debacle of the lame duck session. He meant business. No more setbacks as he has experienced these last few years attempting to force teachers and public employees to pay for his sponsored “pension diversions.” Make no mistake, although he has taken an ego bruising these past few years, he is still the “main man” in Illinois politics, and he is not in a compromising mood.

When a summit meeting was organized by labor for February 11, some legislators attended, including Republican House minority leader, Tom Cross. The purpose of the meeting was to make some headway on the pension issue. Speaker Madigan couldn't be bothered saying he's heard it all from labor before, that is, raise taxes. Instead, his response was the February 28 legislative session where he proposed 4 amendments to current pension bills. The most votes he could muster on any amendment was the one to completely eliminate the COLA. He got 5 votes (including his own) of the 188 members in the House. He alone voted for his amendment to raise the retirement age to 67.

His amendments to bills were so toxic to legislators that they abandoned him. It isn't because legislators have joined the side of teachers and are now ready for a resolution developed by both sides. It goes back to what Tom Cross said after the lame duck session in January. He stated, “These have never been easy votes. The opposition is incredibly strong.” Our side, composed of teachers, active and retired, and public employees, has kept up intense pressure on legislators by calls, emails, letters and visits. We need, at a minimum, to keep up the pressure. However, it would be better to intensify our efforts since the “other side” will not back down and will most probably push all the harder.

It is heartening to see that a number of legislators are supporting progressive measures as the graduated income tax, reamortization of the pension ramp, and an ironclad funding guarantee. Our pressure on legislators has brought us to this stage. It would be very detrimental to sit back and relax.

Please contact legislators when asked to do so by the IRTA in its Voter Voice message. The WLSU has lists easily available of important legislators to contact by going to our website, www.wlsu.weebly.com. It's a simple process of copying and pasting from the website to contact many of them. You may also copy any list from the website to your hard drive or flash drive. One letter can go a long way. If you don't have a computer and want a list to make calls or write letters, contact Marge Sucansky or Tom Szot, and we will mail lists to you. Sample letters to use as guides are also available. We can all play a part in protecting what is rightly ours. Frederick Douglass, the great abolitionist, said in 1857 that “If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.” We can't give in now.

As always, increasing the membership of IRTA and WLSU helps because our IRTA lobbyists can point to how many retired educators they represent across the state. On our local level, increased membership can be used to influence local legislators also. Thanks to the efforts of our database manager, Victor Corder, we know how many of our members are constituents of WLSU area legislators. For example, we have 177 WLSU members who are constituents of Christine Radogno and 183 who are constituents of Kimberly Lightford. Both of these legislators are party officers.

Please ask friends if they are members of IRTA & WLSU. Any non-members can still join and enjoy a free year in the IRTA if they send in a membership form with WLSU on it and agree to sign up for IRTA dues deduct in 2014. The membership form is printed in this issue and may be used. New retirees get free membership for 2013, no strings attached.

There continues to be much confusion among our members as to why they are asked to pay dues to IRTA and then to WLSU. The simple answer is that the IRTA does not collect dues for its 93 locals across the state. The locals are on their own in regard to dues collection. Why belong to both organizations? IRTA concentrates on lobbying, Voter Voice, recruiting, member benefits and foundation work. WLSU concentrates on providing members with direction, information, leadership, meetings, recruiting, and an organized response to pension and benefit threats. It pays to belong to both groups since there is so much to lose.

Tom Szot and Darlene Mc Namara, WLSU Membership Committee Co-chairs

City in a Garden, Bus Trip June, 11, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., departing from North Riverside Mall parking lot, north of Sears

COST is \$78 per member, \$83 per guest, limited to 50 persons on a first-come, first-enrolled basis. No phone reservations.

Deadline: May 11, 2013.

Questions? Call Sharon Kman at 630-988-5266

Explore extraordinary green spaces in Chicago! "City in a Garden," the official motto of Chicago has guided Chicago's vision of maintaining and increasing green space for all. Discover the **Alfred Caldwell Lily Pool**, originally built in 1889, redesigned in 1930, and 2001 and is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Stop at a new green space, **The Nature Boardwalk at Lincoln Park Zoo**. Visit Chicago's premier urban perennial garden, **Millennium Park's Lurie Garden**. Travel to **Garfield Park Conservatory**, designed by Jens Jensen and wander one of the world's largest gardens under glass. Complete luncheon included, served family style at Carmine's, consisting of house salad, Rigatoni *a la* Vodka, Chicken Piccata, dessert and non-alcoholic beverage.

Mail this coupon or a reasonable facsimile with your check for this event only.

City in a Garden

Thursday, June 11-- 9 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Departing from North Riverside Mall parking lot, North of Sears
SIGN UP NOW. Mail this form and a check for \$78 for members and \$83 for guests to Sharon Kman, 105 S. Hudson Westmont, Illinois 60559. Reservations are limited to 50 people on a first-come, first-enrolled basis. Deadline for reservations is May 11, 2013. Make checks payable to West Lake Shore Unit.

Member Name(s) _____

Guest Name(s) _____

_____ Total _____

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

I/We understand that refunds will be made only if the trip is canceled or I/we cancel at least two weeks prior to the trip and only if a substitute is found. Checks for those taking the trip and waiting list refunds will be processed after June 11, 2013

WLSU Contact Information

President	Membership	Membership	Treasurer	Foundation
Marjorie Sucansky	Tom Szot	Darlene McNamara	Louise Sterett	Frances Pettersen
630-985-2620	630-852-3138	773-429-1779	630-325-6470	708-246-2128

website: www.wlsu.weebly.com

WEB WATCH from *Consumer's Report* February, 2013

The Federal Trade Commission is offering a one stop shop for consumers looking for info on money management, credit, loans and debt, scams, ID threats and more. Topics on www.Consumer.gov are broken down into categories of What it is, What to Know, and What to Do. The site also provides links to agencies where you can file a complaint, and other resources from a range of agencies. The good news is that this site will continue to expand. **Maureen Lyons, FYI Committee**

IRTA Convention to be Held in October

The biennial IRTA Convention will be held on October 21 and 22 in Springfield at the Abraham Lincoln Hotel. All members are invited to attend and vote on issues of importance. Members are responsible for their own transportation and accommodations (the hotel will provide a special rate), but WLSU will pay for convention meals and registration fees. If you are interested in attending, please contact Marge Sucansky at 630-985-2620 or www.comcast.net as soon as possible as reservations will be due in June.

Legislator Visit Committee

The Legislative Committee has created a sub-committee of interested members who would like to get trained to visit legislators. Our goal is to build a network of relationships with legislators as their constituents who are willing to offer our 1000's of collective years of experience in the field of education. We would like to have a rational dialogue with legislators, especially the new unjaded ones, to present the facts and contradict all the propaganda that has been spread about pensions and the unfunded liability. Eventually, we hope they would listen to our ideas about such things as charter schools and high stakes testing. Kate Singletary, a new addition to the Legislative Committee, will be conducting training for anyone interested in being on the Visiting Teams. Our first training was on January 23, but more will follow. If you are interested, please contact me at sucansky@comcast.net.

IRTA Establishes Legal Defense Fund

To be prepared in the event that unconstitutional legislation is passed, IRTA is asking members to contribute to a Legal Defense Fund. You can find information about how to contribute at www.irtaonline.org on the Home Page. Here is the address for sending donations to the Legal Defense Fund: IRTA, 620 N. Walnut St., Springfield, IL 62702. *Please write "Legal Defense Fund" on the check memo line.*

Register for VoterVoice

VoterVoice is a vital tool; however, Jim Bachman said sometimes fewer than half our members respond when all they have to do is push "submit." Only 18,500 members of 34,700 are even enrolled in VoterVoice. Get excited about our organization! Let's make ourselves heard. We represent retired teachers and educators. As in the lame duck session, time is of the essence, and VoterVoice allows you to contact legislators in a timely fashion.

For quick access to your legislator and to receive CALL TO ACTION notifications:

1. Go to www.irtaonline.org
2. Go to "Member Login"
3. Select "VoterVoice"
4. Choose "Please click here to go to VoterVoice"
5. Create a profile if you have not already done so to allow the program to identify your legislators.

After your initial login, you will only have to put in your email address to log on once you are in VoterVoice. Then you may respond with a Call to Action prewritten message or write your own at any time. If you have difficulty, call Tricia at 1-800-660-3326. She will be happy to help you register, or send me your name, and I will get you registered. Marge Sucansky – sucansky@comcast.net

In Memoriam

For each of our recently deceased members, WLSU donates \$25 to the IRTA Foundation for Needy Teachers
Lee Mishkin
Theodore Nelson

Get Involved with Your Legislator... Since the media is unwilling to present the facts with regard to pensions and Illinois debt, a good way to get the message to legislators is to offer your services to them for at least three hours a week. As teachers we possess a talent that many people do not have—we are communicators. Making phone calls to constituents for your legislator is a job that is appreciated. Usually there is a script, so you don't have to "wing it." However, your personal touch can be meaningful. There are other tasks such as stuffing envelopes or canvassing that you may be able to do. Any little duty you perform for a candidate makes you known as a person with issues to discuss. We need to put a face to the dilemma legislators have caused in the past and give them our suggestions about how to fix it.

A Donation to IRTAPAC Is in Your Self-Interest

The **IRTA Political Action Committee** was formed by IRTA to increase our impact on incumbents and challengers in order to protect and improve the status of retired teachers. If every member donated just \$10 this year, we can build a fund of \$300,000 to support legislators who champion our goals. IRTAPAC can contribute to campaigns by sending our civic-minded volunteers to candidate picnics, dinners, and events as well as donating to their campaigns. Help us meet our target!

A target this year of \$10 contribution per member will be a good jump start for IRTAPAC. Mail your donation, whatever the amount, payable to IRTAPAC, attn. IRTA, 620 N. Walnut St., Springfield, IL 62702 or go on line to www.irtaonline.org and make your contribution

Diane Fator Resigns

Thanks to Diane for serving as recording secretary for the last year. Her presence and contributions at meetings was beneficial to us all and she will be missed.

HELP WANTED: WLSU is in need of a recording secretary. The job requires attendance at 9 meetings during the year. Please join the WLSU board in this position. Contact Marge at sucansky@comcast.net.

Super Foods for your Brain

Neal Barnard, an adjunct associate professor of medicine at George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences, lists the following foods as being especially beneficial for maintaining healthy brain power.

Walnuts provide vitamin E which may help boost brain power, and according to some studies reduce the risk of Alzheimer's by 25%. Nuts and seeds are the best source of vitamin E. Blueberries, along with other fruits and vegetables, do not contain cholesterol which is important in keeping arteries clear. Barnard especially likes blueberries for their anti-oxidant properties which have been shown to help with memory problems.

Broccoli contains folates and along with vitamin B6 and B12 can help eliminate homocysteine, a molecule that may affect the heart and brain.

A good source of vitamin B6 is sweet potatoes so Barnard suggests adding them to your grocery cart. Barnard also suggests that wine, drunk in moderation of course, has been shown to cut the risk of Alzheimer's. Red wine contains resveratrol which may be good for your heart.

This information is from Barnard's new book *Power Foods for the Brain* as reviewed in the Health and Fitness section of the *Daily Herald*, 3/11/2013.

As always, consult your health care professional for the diet best suited to your health issues.

Barbara Grabowski, FYI Committee

Reminder to Members: If you change your contact information, be sure to let us know.

Membership Cards
Many AMBA and other IRTA endorsed benefits require proof of membership in IRTA. Please call the Springfield office to request a membership card. The number is 800-728-4782



IRTA State & Local Unit Membership Form

620 North Walnut Street • Springfield, IL 62702 • 1-800-728-4782
e-mail: irta@irtaonline.org • webpage: www.irtaonline.org

- State Dues
- Dues Deduct** - \$24 a year (see left side of form)
 - Annual - \$35
 - 5 Years - \$150
 - Life - \$400
 - Membership Free for the Calendar Year of Retirement

Dues Deduct – I hereby authorize the Teachers’ Retirement System to deduct my IRTA dues in monthly installments at an initial rate of \$2.00 or as subsequently established by the Delegate Assembly. Association Dues are Not Tax Deductible

- State Associate Dues (non-certified)
- Annual - \$25
 - Life - \$125

- Local Unit Dues
- First Year Free

(Signature required for Dues Deduction) Social Security # _____

Please print or use your return address label. _____ (Only required for Dues Deduction)

NAME LAST FIRST MI DOB

ADDRESS CITY STATE ZIP RETIREMENT YEAR

PHONE () E-MAIL UNIT West Lake Shore SCHOOL DISTRICT RETIRED FROM

Please mail to IRTA.

**West Lake Shore Unit
Direct Line Newsletter**

Marjorie Sucansky, President
2942 Crabtree Avenue
Woodridge, Illinois 60517

Direct Line mailers:Trudy O’Reilly
Rosemary Pietrzak

DIRECT LINE

“Investing in the FUTURE of retired teachers”

Luncheon and Bus Trip Coupons Inside

