



April-May 2014

Direct Line

Newsletter of West Lake Shore Unit, Illinois Retired Teachers Association

WLSU and IRTA...Your Voice in Springfield

www.wlsu.weebly.com

Membership Luncheon, May 1; Bus Trip, June 24

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As you probably know, The Illinois Supreme Court ruled on Monday, March 3, 2014, that all four lawsuits challenging last year's pension "reform" law will be consolidated and heard in Sangamon County. So now we wait...and hope that constitutionality will prevail.

WLSU's initiative for the next several months will involve getting the Fair Tax Amendment on the November ballot. You may know that the Republicans in the legislature have unanimously signed a resolution against the Fair Tax Amendment, and some are sending out misleading information with regard to it. Jim Durkin recently sent out an email petition claiming that such a tax would lead to higher income tax rates for everyone making over \$18,000 a year and costing Illinois jobs. The gradations for income levels under a Fair Tax would have to be determined by the legislature. It would be the job of the legislature to morally and ethically set those levels. Ralph Martire of the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability suggests one model under which 94% of all taxpayers—those with under \$150,000 in annual base income--would receive a tax cut. Such a model would provide for \$2.4 billion annually in new revenue and stimulate the growth of at least 36,000 jobs in the state's private sector.

Illinois is only one of 7 states to have a regressive flat tax. A Fair Tax is more equitable than a flat tax because it is the only tax which increases or decreases with ability to pay. A flat tax places the greatest burden on low and middle-income families. Illinois has the 3rd highest tax burden on low and middle income.

It is not true that the highest tax rate that you reach becomes the tax rate for all of your income. A Fair Tax rate would not be levied against one's total earnings but rather only on new money beyond the threshold determined by the legislature. Example: If the state determines that \$150,000 is the threshold amount to start taxing at a higher rate and you earned \$151,000, you will pay the higher rate only on that top \$1000. John Dillon's February 12 blog has a good explanation.

Our neighbor states with a Fair Tax have achieved the following: Iowa--\$6.3B in additional revenue (0.36%-8.98%); Missouri--\$1.8B (1.5%-6%); Wisconsin--\$3.6B (4.6%-7.75%); Kentucky—\$1.6B (2%-6%). Minnesota has one of the highest tax rates of 9.85% on income earners of \$250,000 and has seen job growth between 2% and 2.9% since 2009 – see the article "Right v. Left in the Midwest" in the November 23, 2013 *New York Times*.

The other argument you hear from legislators is that Illinois is a poor, high-spending state. They cite that the temporary tax hike did nothing to bring down our debt because we spend too much. The fact is that Illinois is the 5th wealthiest state in the Union according to GSP (Gross State Product) and, according to the Federal Bureau of Economic Analysis, despite ranking fifth in population and 13th in *per capita* state Gross Domestic

Product, Illinois is ranked 43rd in state spending as a percentage of GDP in FY 2008. Illinois has been cutting General Fund spending in real terms over time. After adjusting for inflation, Illinois General Fund spending was 5% lower in FY2011 than it was 16 years earlier.

Illinois does not overspend on services. We are trying to pay for the same or better services for more Illinois citizens at higher costs without raising new revenue.

If more money is collected in taxes under a Fair Tax, the legislature should pay first the \$8 million it owes to vendors.

The next step is to get Michael Madigan and John Cullerton to call the joint resolution to the floor. We have to be sure there are enough yes votes on it before or on May 1. The Resolution has to be voted on 180 days before it appears on the November ballot. WLSU is counting on your help to spread the word about the necessity for a Fair Tax. It requires a 3/5 majority vote in the House and Senate to pass. Talk to your legislators about the need for a Fair Tax in Illinois.

Continue to contact your legislators with your feelings about the FAIR TAX, other REVENUE enhancements, and health care problems. Check out our website for contact lists.

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

Jim Durkin 217-782-0494, 708-246-1104, repdurkin@hotmail.com

Marge Sucansky, President

Membership Report

Well, now we wait. There is no IRTA Call to Action asking members to contact or visit legislators to lobby them to oppose any pension bill that reduces our pensions. The pension theft bill, Senate Bill 1, passed in early December by the slimmest of votes. Unless overturned, it will greatly diminish our annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA). The COLA, which begins at age 61, is currently set at 3% compounded annually. Under the new formula you can expect an annual COLA increase of approximately \$1,000 depending on years of teaching service. To view your COLA under the new law, go to www.ieanea.org/resources/pensions. Look on the right for the COLA calculator.

However, should we be encouraged in our wait by the favorable pension ruling for state retirees in Arizona this past February? Yes, on one hand, we should. Arizona, Illinois, and New York are the only three states with constitutionally mandated protections for state pensions. Also, in Illinois, there are several antedated court cases that have upheld the pension clause in the Illinois Constitution.

Should we be overly encouraged by the Arizona ruling? No, we should not. The Arizona Supreme Court ruled that the state effort to curtail benefit increases to retired judges was unconstitutional. The ruling did not directly cover other retirees. As you probably know, House Majority Leader Michael Madigan made sure judges were the only Illinois pension system exempt from Senate Bill 1. He did not feel judges could be impartial ruling on diminishing their own pensions. He wanted to rid them of the burden of a conflict of interest. He also confidently stated on TV “at least four members of the Illinois Supreme Court will approve (his) bill.” There are seven justices on the court. Three justices are elected from Cook County and one from each of the other four districts. It seems like a conflict of interest that judges should be exempt from the law in order to foster a favorable ruling for the state. Actually, the conflict of interest subterfuge seems more like a bribe. Let’s hope it backfires.

If it does not backfire, and we get an unfavorable ruling, look for the suit to move to the U.S. Supreme Court because contract rights are protected under the U.S. Constitution. Included in the U. S. Constitution in Article 1- Limitation of Powers of States, Section 10, it says, “No state shall...pass any...ex post facto law or Law

impairing Obligations of contracts...” The Illinois Constitution states in Article XIII-Pension and Retirement Rights, Section 5, that membership in any pension system shall be an enforceable contractual relationship, the benefits of which shall not be diminished or impaired.

This may take a long time to resolve. The IRTA is suing on your behalf. A long legal battle takes a lot of money. As members we should support this effort by contributing to the IRTA Legal Defense Fund. The money is in a dedicated fund and cannot be used for any other purpose. As of February 20th, the current total is \$252,000 with \$63,700 having been expended. Send what you can afford to IRTA, 620 N. Walnut Street, Springfield, IL 62702. Make the check payable to IRTA, and write “Legal Defense Fund” on the check memo line.

Besides sending a check, why not help by increasing membership in the IRTA and WLSU. Be proactive by talking to retired colleagues who are not IRTA members or who may be members of IFT or IEA Retired. Many of us currently belong to the IRTA and one of the other retired teacher organizations. The cost of belonging to two organizations is hardly prohibitive when you compare it to your monthly cable or smart phone bill.

The WLSU membership committee is in need of names and addresses of retired teachers. Our WLSU unit encompasses 39 school districts, and last June, 149 educators retired. The school districts have been very cooperative about telling us who is retiring, but they rarely give us a home address. Once the teacher retires, we have no way to contact him again. Schools do not forward mail to retired teachers. We need WLSU members to give us any names and addresses of retirees from your former school district. Email us at jtszot@comcast.net or darcarmac@aol.com. If you are concerned about violating someone’s privacy, be aware that information such as addresses, phone numbers, relatives’ names, maps, and often ages are available on the online white pages. We do not share our lists of retirees with any organizations other than the IRTA.

We would also like another member for our membership committee. If interested, email or call one of us. The only requirements are a willingness to volunteer and ownership of a working computer. It’s a great way to learn about the workings of the IRTA and WLSU.

Tom Szot & Darlene Mc Namara, WLSU Membership Chairs

Mark Your Calendar 2014

April 30	Area 3 Conference	Bradley, Illinois	
May 1	Membership Luncheon	Willowbrook Inn	11:15 a.m.
	“Abraham Lincoln” will attend		
May 13	Executive Board Meeting	Plymouth Place	9:30 a.m.
June 24	Bus Trip	Tiffany Glass--Dreihaus	8:30 a.m.
August 5	Executive Board Meeting	Plymouth Place	9:30 a.m.
September 9	Membership Meeting	Plymouth Place	10:00 a.m.
	Speakers from CMS to discuss insurance		
September	Bus Trip		9:00 a.m.
October	Possible legislative forum	Plymouth Place	
October 15	Executive Board Meeting	Plymouth Place	9:30 a.m.
December 5	Membership Luncheon	Willowbrook Inn	11:15 a.m.
	Don and Sandie’s Christmas Celebration		

In Memoriam

For each of our recently deceased members, WLSU donates \$25 to the IRTA Foundation for Needy Teachers
Richard Lindenmeyer

WLSU Spring Luncheon

Thursday, May 1 at Willowbrook Inn

(Formerly 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 21, 2014. No telephone reservations. Make Checks payable to **West Lake Shore Unit**.

Member Name (s) _____

Guest Name (s) _____

email address _____

Phone _____ Total \$ _____

Entrée Choices:

- Chicken with raspberry pecan sauce
- Baked Salmon with dill sauce
- Roasted sirloin of beef au jus

NO ENTRÉE SUBSTITUTIONS AT THE LUNCHEON

WLSU Spring Luncheon

Thursday, May 1, 2014 -- 11:15-2:15

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

Program:

R. J. Lindsey will again entertain us. Some of you may remember him as Franklin Delano Roosevelt at a WLSU luncheon. He is a member of Actor's Equity, the Screen Actor's Guild, and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists.. He has appeared on stage and television. His 35 years of experience as a researcher, writer and actor have contributed to the success of his living history programs which are performed all over the country. This time as Abraham Lincoln he will speak about his life growing up in Kentucky and Indiana, attending a blab school, earning his first dollar. He reviews major election contests: Congressional race against evangelist Peter Cartwright ; Senate race against Stephen Douglas; the historical importance of his re-election. And of course the famed Lincoln humor will be exhibited with stories about critics, office seekers, lawyers, generals, and Congressman. In conclusion, the president says it will be up to the American people to keep the Union strong and the flag flying.

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

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

WLSU BUS TRIP-- TIFFANY IN CHICAGO: PAST AND PRESENT

Tuesday, June 24 -- 8:30AM - 3:30PM

Tiffany Special Exhibit at Driehaus Museum, Second Presbyterian Church, Chicago Cultural Center

Experience the genius of a designer and the passion of a collector at the **Driehaus Museum's** inaugural exhibition *Louis Comfort Tiffany: Treasures from the Driehaus Collection*. The **Driehaus Museum**, originally the **Nickerson Mansion**, offers visitors a fascinating view of one of the few remaining examples of the palatial homes erected by the wealthy of America's Gilded Age. Admire **sixty exquisite works** by the renowned American artist **Louis Comfort Tiffany** representing his prolific 50 year career. The exhibition includes outstanding examples of Tiffany lamps, stained glass windows, ceramics, metal work, furniture, and accessories, beautifully displayed in the Museum's late 19th century interior. Your self-guided tour includes the **20-room elegant house museum** and the special **Tiffany exhibit**.

Enjoy lunch at nearby **Bijan's Bistro** consisting of Grilled Chicken Breast in a light sauce, spinach, cherry tomatoes, basil and mashed potatoes.

Chicago is fortunate to be home to significant works by Tiffany. While Tiffany's studio was in New York, his reputation was made in Chicago, largely on the strength of the chapel he designed for the **Columbian Exposition**. View the bejeweled **Tiffany Dome** located in the **Chicago Cultural Center**. Completed in 1897 and recently restored, this dome is claimed to be the largest Tiffany Dome in the world! Visit the National Historic Landmark **Second Presbyterian Church** and view the religious figural works contained in the nine stunning **Tiffany stained glass windows**.

(City Ventures *TOUR COST: \$90.00*)

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

TIFFANY IN CHICAGO: PAST AND PRESENT

Tuesday June 24—8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Departing from North Riverside Mall parking lot—North of Sears

SIGN UP NOW. Mail this form and a check for \$90 for members and \$95 for guests to Sharon Kman, 105 S. Hudson, Westmont, Illinois 60559. . Deadline for reservations is May 20, 2014. Make checks payable to West Lake Shore Unit.

If you want to meet the tour in Chicago rather than at North Riverside Mall, that would be fine, but there is no discount in price and those meeting the tour in Chicago must find their way home after the last stop.

If you require a vegetarian lunch, please write a large V next to your name.

Member Name(s) _____

Guest Name(s) _____

_____ Total _____

You must include phone number and email to be informed of confirmation of receipt or cancellation.

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 May 20, 2014.

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				



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** - \$30 a year (see left side of form)
- Annual - \$40
- 5 Years - \$175
- Life - \$400
- Membership Free for the Calendar Year of Retirement

State Associate Dues (non-certified)

- Annual - \$25
- Life - \$125

Local Unit Dues

- First Year Free

Dues Deduct – I hereby authorize the Teachers' Retirement System to deduct my IRTA dues in monthly installments at an initial rate of \$2.50 or as subsequently established by the Delegate Assembly.

Association Dues are Not Tax Deductible

(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

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 will listen to our ideas about such things as charter schools and high stakes testing. Kate Singletary, of the Legislative Committee, will be conducting training for anyone interested in being on the Visiting Teams. Our emphasis this year will be on promoting the Fair Tax Amendment's placement on the ballot in November and informing citizens about its importance to insure its passage in the November election. If you are interested, please contact me at sucansky@comcast.net.

