

August-September 2017

# Direct Line



## Newsletter of West Lake Shore Unit, Illinois Retired Teachers Association

WLSU and IRTA...Your Voice in Springfield  
WLSU - 60 YEARS OF SERVICE TO RETIRED EDUCATORS

[www.wlsu.weebly.com](http://www.wlsu.weebly.com)

Membership Meeting—September 19

### President's Message

WE FINALLY HAVE A BUDGET AFTER TWO YEARS...AND just in the nick of time. I recently listened to a report from Susana Mendoza, Illinois State Comptroller, about the dire condition of the state because of the lack of a budget and the unwillingness of the governor and legislators to compromise. Actually, it was the governor who was unwilling to give up any of his demands among which is his right to work plan.

Mendoza stated that over the last two years the state's bill backlog has more than tripled. We owe vendors more than \$15 billion and \$800 million dollars in interest on late bill payment. The latter alone is outrageous. I am sure most of us try to pay off any credit card debt or other debt to avoid interest; yet, the state is digging itself further and further in debt through these late interest charges.

With regard to these late payments, a judge has mandated that more money must be diverted from state core obligations to Managed Care Organizations as \$3.1 billion is owed to them. In fact, the court has ordered the state to make larger payments to MCO's than it has already been making—as much as \$500 million to \$1 billion or more. Some vendors are waiting 565 days to get paid.

State expenditures are over \$600 million a month after the redirect. There would be no money for hardship cases, mental health, etc. If nothing was done, in addition to these disasters, there could have been delayed pension payments to retired teachers and other state employees. Schools might not have opened on time.

To ward off catastrophe Illinois has been able to borrow, with higher interest rates because the state has never defaulted in the area of debt services. We have never defaulted on debt payment. If we default, we will no longer be able to borrow.

Delayed pension payment would play right into the governor's and legislators' hands. They have continued to promote the idea that TRS is unsustainable which is false. As long as actives pay in, the state contributes its required amount, and TRS investments continue to do well, the system will function. To meet pension payments if the state defaults on its payments, TRS will have to sell investments—investments with which they are making money to add to TRS. Ultimately, TRS could go bankrupt.

What the state needs is a comprehensive budget with immediate borrowing plans, spending cuts, and revenue generation, and several Republicans crossed the line to vote for that.

It is unconscionable for the governor to refuse to compromise when what he wants will benefit his wealthy friends. The inflammatory statements about businesses moving out of the state because of high taxes, workman’s comp laws, and unions are false. Look at Minnesota where corporate taxes are 9.8%. Every time I pass through the state I find new business construction in the Twin Cities. Last month I drove through the countryside outside the Twin Cities and found many small businesses nestled in the outskirts of the cities—all with help wanted signs. With regard to businesses leaving our state—if they are, it is because of the instability of no budget for over two years. And on the contrary, I read almost weekly about businesses moving into the city of Chicago which has become a tech center.

**GOVERNOR—IF YOU WANT TO “FIX” ILLINOIS, DO YOUR JOB. WORK WITH THE LEGISLATURE—COMPROMISE—BRING ILLINOIS BACK FROM THE BRINK OF DISASTER.**

**One final note—my opinion only**—Donald Trump is cannily using the tactic of distraction, used by most politicians when they want us to focus on something other than what is important to us, by posting (I think most people can agree) repugnant and dangerous Tweets. Anyone with a moral compass feels the need to respond in some way, and news coverage is full of condemnation. However, I think we have to divert our focus from these distractions and see what is being done to our country while we are gazing like deer in the headlights at these Tweets. What regulations are being eliminated, what committees are being defunded (Commission on Women and Children, watchdog committee that investigates foreign intrusions in our elections, environmental committees and the scientists on them, attacks on the freedom of the press, and more.) When we finally pull our gaze from the Tweets, we may find that the values, our first amendment rights, and ideals we have upheld for over 200 years, are destroyed. **Marge Sucansky**

*“If we make ourselves sheep, the wolves will eat us.” Benjamin Franklin*

**IRTA HOTLINE**—Members who wish to hear the latest information about legislation regarding pensions and health insurance should telephone the IRTA office for information—1-800-728-4782. Other helpful numbers: Teachers’ Retirement System 1-877-927-5877, email address [members@trsil.org](mailto:members@trsil.org), website—<http://www.trsil.org>; and Central Management Services 1-800-442-1300 or 1-217-524-3438; and [irtaonline.org](http://irtaonline.org)

**Mark Your Calendars 2017**

August 2 Wed.	Executive Board Meeting	Plymouth Place	9:30 a.m.
September 19 Tues.	Membership Meeting	Ashton Place	11:15 a.m.
October 30-31	IRTA Convention	Springfield	11:00 a.m.
October 26 Thurs.	Executive Board Meeting	Plymouth Place	9:30 p.m.
December 1 Fri.	Membership Luncheon	Ashton Place	11:15 a.m.

**WLSU Contact Information**

<b>President</b> Marjorie Sucansky 630-985-2620 <a href="mailto:sucansky@comcast.net">sucansky@comcast.net</a> Website: <a href="http://www.wlsu.weebly.com">www.wlsu.weebly.com</a>	<b>Membership</b> Tom Szot 630-852-3138 <a href="mailto:jtszot@comcast.net">jtszot@comcast.net</a>	<b>Treasurer</b> Louise Sterett 630-325-6470 <a href="mailto:Lsterett@joimail.com">Lsterett@joimail.com</a>	<b>Foundation</b> Frances Pettersen 630-985-7508 <a href="mailto:narfp@sbcglobal.net">narfp@sbcglobal.net</a>
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**Reminder to Members**

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

## Membership Report

**As dire financial straits continue to plague our state**, instead of rectifying the actual causes there still exist efforts to pass blame and find easy solutions to stubborn, slow growing problems. Although I never watch Fox News, I happened to take notice because I saw on a TV monitor at the health club a panel of “experts” lamenting on the debt-ridden Illinois economy. Why was Illinois in such a state of economic decline with so many of its citizens abandoning the state, the Fox moderator asked the “experts”? If your answer was any reason for the cause other than your TRS pension, you don’t qualify as a Fox “expert.” The entire short segment focused only on your pension as the root cause of the economic debacle. One “expert” talked of the insanity of the legislators who voted for these pensions. They all argued that what was needed was a system of 401(k)s and drastic cuts to the program. Not one “expert” mentioned that nearly 80 % of the money the state pays into our pension goes for debt payment. Remember pension holidays? The money is still owed along with interest. The point to be made here is that your pension has been blamed for years as the cause of the state’s fiscal problems to avoid dealing with the real causes—pension holidays; using money that should have gone into pension funds for legislator pet projects; avoiding a tax hike—necessary because the state can’t pay for 2017 services for more people based on a 1970’s income tax.

**You are a target** because you retain a defined benefit pension that you have earned by choosing education as your profession and by contributing nearly 10% of your gross salary from each paycheck while teaching. Only our combined strength will help us keep what we have earned. I find it inconceivable that any TRS annuitant would not join the IRTA, IFT or IEA retired to give strength to our main purpose for being which is protection of TRS pensions and health benefits. Likewise, I find it shocking that nearly 10% of our IRTA and WLSU members do not renew their memberships and are dropped for non-payment of dues.

**Why would members who agree whole-heartedly with the IRTA and WLSU principles decide not to renew** their memberships? An IRTA survey back in 2016 asked non-renewing members why they did not renew. They were asked if they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the work of the IRTA. Fifty-nine percent expressed satisfaction and fourteen percent were dissatisfied. That being the case, there must be other reasons for non-renewal.

**Why don’t more retirees join and retain membership in the IRTA?** Two-thirds of all TRS annuitants are not IRTA members. Choose what you think is the most likely answer from choices below.

**Can’t afford membership**

(Actually, membership is cheaper than a newspaper subscription, a day at Six Flags, a meal out with drinks, etc. This is **not** a good reason not to join.)

**Pensions and health benefits are safe**

(In reality, they are not safe. Only pressure from teachers and our representative organizations keep the wolves from our door. This is **not** a good reason to **not** join.)

**Being a member has no benefit**

(Besides building our strength, the IRTA (via AMBA) offers a list of benefits such as dental, vision, hearing and long-term care, travel discounts, etc. This is **not** a good reason to not join.)

**Spouse is already a member**

(Every single membership builds strength. Numbers are important to legislators. This is **not** a good reason to not join.)

**Too busy to join**

(Joining the IRTA is as simple as a few strokes on a computer. Joining and retaining membership is made easy so as to not frustrate the member. This is **not** a good reason to not join.)

**There is no good reason** to not be a member of a retired teacher organization such as the IRTA, IFT or IEA. Many of us belong to the IRTA and another retired group. **However, if you had to choose only one, it should be the IRTA because it protects, first and foremost, retired teachers.**

**WLSU is facing a crisis** that has nothing to do with enrolling new members or retaining members. At the end of this year, the WLSU Executive Board will lose its President and Membership Chairperson. The membership committee has been successful in getting and retaining members. WLSU ranks in the top five of the state's ninety-three locals. Without a membership committee, fewer retirees will be recruited, fewer will retain membership, and both the IRTA and WLSU will be weakened. Your pension is better protected by a strong organization rather than by a weak one. To meet this challenge of recruiting a new Membership committee, we have proposed dividing the work of the committee into 3 parts, so that no one person feels overburdened by too much work. The 3 parts would be recruitment, retention, and record keeping--the 3 R's.

**By Fall, all members will receive**, via email, a breakdown of membership duties. Three members, who have access to a computer, would be needed to step-up and help protect our pensions by volunteering for one of these positions. Some of our largest school districts have no representation on our WLSU board. We need volunteers from Cicero District #99, Oak Park District #97, Berwyn Districts # 98 & 100, and OPRFHS District #200. Don't worry that if you volunteer for these positions that we will throw you into the deep end without a life preserver. You will have my help and advice until you can make the positions your own. Morton and Lyons Twp H.S. have been carrying the load for many years. This is your organization that is run for your benefit. Don't let it down!

**The August-September issue of *Direct Line*** begins our renewal process for 2018. All current members who pay IRTA and/or WLSU dues on an annual basis will receive a renewal letter the first week of October. This letter will contain a form explaining exactly what is owed and how to proceed. The mailing label on this newsletter will show your current dues status. A '17 behind IRTA and/or WLSU indicates that dues are owed for next year. Any questions about membership, renewals, or dues status if you received an emailed newsletter, should be directed to Membership Chair, Tom Szot, 630-852-3138 / [jtszot@comcast.net](mailto:jtszot@comcast.net) or Treasurer, Louise Sterett, 630-325-6470, [louisesterett@att.net](mailto:louisesterett@att.net). Please do your by renewing quickly and for multiple years. Your immediate attention to this matter helps a lot since we don't have to contact you more than once. You save both the IRTA & WLSU time and money. **Tom Szot—WLSU Membership Committee**

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**WLSU/IRTA Welcomes These New Members**

<b>Renee Smith-Quinn</b>	<b>Linda Pudlo</b>	<b>Nancy Steineke</b>	<b>Deborah Duvall</b>
<b>Terry Wethington</b>	<b>Valerie Helm</b>	<b>Steven Goldberg</b>	<b>Elaine Pawlak</b>
<b>Mary Radek-Carreon</b>	<b>Scott Yount</b>	<b>Laurie Ann Stokes</b>	<b>Ann Ambrosia</b>
<b>Barbara Schumacher</b>	<b>Ronald Brija</b>	<b>Cathleen Bartone</b>	<b>Clinton Zellmer</b>
<b>Ann Goddeyne</b>	<b>Jean Krcmar</b>	<b>Joseph Iskrzycki</b>	<b>Scott Pedersen</b>
<b>Gail Petrenko</b>	<b>Richard Yena</b>	<b>Pamela Erickson</b>	<b>Jane Campbell</b>
<b>Regina Mac Askill</b>	<b>John Berg</b>	<b>James Pickard</b>	<b>Patricia Williams</b>
<b>Barbara Englebert</b>	<b>Rose Cicero</b>	<b>Diane Corless</b>	<b>Thomas Mc Cann</b>
<b>Gail Edgerton</b>	<b>Peggy Grams</b>	<b>Raynell Walls</b>	<b>Darlene Dwyer</b>
<b>Marnie O'Connor</b>	<b>Karen Mackey</b>	<b>Robert Brunet</b>	<b>William Lavaas</b>
<b>Robert Bartlett</b>	<b>Sandra Ridker</b>	<b>Kathleen Schultz</b>	

**In Memoriam**

For each of our recently deceased members WLSU donates \$25 to the IRTA Needy Teachers Fund.

Giles Culver	Robert Fletcher	Rosemary Padula	Sophie Pitrak	Norman Dziedzic
Judith Holloway	Louis Kuk	Mary Elizabeth Robinson	Charles Samec	Elizabeth Fox

**ALERT-90 Years Old and Above-** If you are 90 or older and are a current member, you qualify for free Life Membership in IRTA & WLSU. To qualify for this perk, you must contact us. If you are 90 or older, act now. **Contact Tom Szot or Louise Sterett with your date of birth. See WLSU Contact Information box.**

## **PLAN TO ATTEND THE SEPTEMBER 19 MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

The meeting will be at Ashton Place, 341 75<sup>th</sup> Street, Willowbrook, starting at 10 a.m. There will be no lunch, so reservations are not needed. Our speakers will be Jim Bachman, Executive Director of IRTA, and Nathan Mihelich, Director of Membership and Marketing. Find out the latest about what is happening in Springfield, regarding the budget, pensions, and health insurance.

## **WLSU NEEDS YOU!**

I know we all have other obligations, but saving our pensions and health benefits should count among them. As of January 2018, WLSU will need someone to step up as president as I will no longer accept that position. Anyone who accepts this position will not be left in the lurch. I will be available to help until you can make this position your own. Please reconsider, and let me know if you are willing to share some of your time.

### **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

## **Start Making Plans to Attend the IRTA Biennial Convention in October**

It is once again time to prepare for the 2017 IRTA Convention. It will be held at the Crowne Plaza in Springfield, IL, on October 30-31

West Lake Shore is entitled to send 37 delegates. Several of you have already told me that you will be attending. WLSU will be paying your \$45 registration fee and your meals. You will have to make your own hotel reservations by calling the Crowne Plaza at 1-800-589-2769. Ask for the IRTA Convention rate which is \$109 plus tax. The deadline for our block of hotel rooms is October 5, but it is best to make your reservations as soon as possible as two years ago, late callers were housed in the Holiday Inn Express next door. This was not a great hardship as there is a walkway between the two buildings; however if you prefer the Crowne Plaze, call soon.

When you let me know that you will be attending, I need the following information:

**Tee shirt size: sm, med, lg, xlg, xxlg, xxxlg**

The meals you plan to attend:

**Lunch on Monday from 11 a.m. to 11:45 \$25**

Tuscany Buffet

Caesar salad, mixed greens salad, Lasagna, Chicken piccata, cheese tortellini marinara, garlic cream sauces, Italian herb buttered broccoli, breadsticks, tiramisu

**Banquet on Monday 7 p.m. \$32**

Chicken Marsala

Pan seared chicken breast in a sweet Marsala & mushroom sauce. Mixed green salad, vegetable medley, herb roasted red potatoes, Boston crème bundt cake

**Breakfast on Tuesday from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. \$20**

Rise and Shine Buffet

Sliced seasonal fresh fruit, breakfast pastries, scrambled eggs, bacon or sausage links, breakfast potatoes, coffee, tea, fruit juices.

We usually get a large number of members attending and would like to repeat that this year. WLSU will be presenting an amendment to the IRTA constitution which I have attached. Please come and participate.

Let me know as soon as you can if you will be attending, what size T-shirt you need, and what meals you plan to eat. I look forward to hearing from you—630-985-2620 or [sucansky@comcast.net](mailto:sucansky@comcast.net)

## Amendment to IRTA Constitution

### Current Wording

#### Article III—Membership—Dues

Section 4 The Annual, Dues Deduct, and Life Active membership dues and the Associate membership dues shall be determined by the delegate assembly.

### Proposed Amendment

Section 4 Any proposal to increase the Annual, Dues Deduct, and Life Active Membership dues and the Associate membership dues must be reviewed by the Membership Committee before it can be Presented to the House of Delegates in convention.

The results of the Membership Committee review shall be presented to the House of Delegates along with the proposed increase.

Section 5 The Annual, Dues Deduct, and Life Active membership dues and the Associate membership dues shall be determined by the delegate assembly.

### Rationale:

The members of the West Lake Shore Executive Board and the WLSU membership Propose the above amendment because they feel the members of the Membership Committee know full well the task of recruiting and maintaining members at the local level. With the input of the Executive Committee, they can fully discuss the need for an increase and an amount which would not be a burden on local recruitment efforts. The House of Delegates would benefit from learning of the Membership Committee review in determining the proposed increase.

### Foundation

The IRTA Foundation has announced the 2016-2017 scholarship winners. Each year the Foundation awards six \$1500 scholarships, one in each of the six IRTA areas. Susan Jachmiak of Orland Park is the Area 3 recipient this year. She is a junior at ISU where she is majoring in Middle Level Education, specializing in mathematics and ESL. The Foundations is currently assisting ten retired teachers with monthly checks that range from \$300 to \$650 for a total annual payment of \$53,700 which also includes one time assistance with special needs such as medical expenses and real estate taxes. The Excellence in Education Grants are now available yearly throughout the state. The total amount allocated for these grants is \$36,500, and the grants are available to public school educators to help them finance special projects for their students. **Fran Pettersen, Foundation Chair**

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## Giving Back Partnership for 2017-2018 School Term -- Year 3!

We will continue to collect supplies for Rhodes school at the September 19 membership meeting. You may also drop off supplies at Julie Jeter's house, 427 N. Waiola, LaGrange Park. Feel free to bring the supplies whenever you have the opportunity. I assure you that all supplies will be greatly appreciated. Here is the list!

1. Small toys/prizes, given for positive behavior rewards for weekly drawing---need lots!
2. Winter Coats
3. Zipups, hoodies, sweaters
4. Gloves and hats
5. Backpacks
6. Wide-ruled spiral notebooks—lots!
7. College-ruled spiral notebooks—lots!
8. Kleenex
9. Scissors
10. Dry Erase Markers
11. Packs of Markers
12. Pocket Folders
13. Crayons
14. Index Cards
15. Glue Sticks
16. Rulers
17. Highlighters
18. Pencil boxes
19. Zippered pencil cases
20. Baby Wipes
21. Red, black, blue ink pens
22. Sharpies
23. Hand sanitizers
24. Binders
25. Ziplock bags
26. Erasers
27. Non-perishable food to send home with students
28. Travel-size toiletries (especially deodorant)

At the May luncheon we hosted a teacher from last year's school adoption program, Britta Reinertsen; principal, Greg Leben; and superintendent, Mike Dziallo.

Britta Reinertsen, a the teacher from last year's school adoption, said the following:

I want to thank you all for your extremely generous donation of classroom supplies. Being former teachers, you all know how much of our own money teachers spend in order provide our students with valuable and engaging learning opportunities. In Westchester, we strive to create a caring and safe environment that addresses various instructional needs through an inquiry-based curriculum. With your donation, our teachers were able to continue with this mission.

The day the supplies were delivered, I sent a three students to the office to collect them. They came running back into the room with several bags full of supplies shouting excitedly, "There's more!!!" It took them several trips to get all the bags back to my room, their excitement growing with each trip. They couldn't believe that all of this, the literal car full, of supplies had just been given to them. They asked me over and over again, "This is really all for us?"

In my 15 years of teaching, I've never witnessed students, let alone, middle schoolers, show that much excitement over glue sticks!

Since then there has not been a day that has gone by that one of our students hasn't benefited from your donation, whether it was replacing a pencil or using the engineering process to create ziplines, towers, and bridges, the supplies have been invaluable.

We use the scissors and glue daily to aid students in the creation of interactive notebooks, and the coloring tools and rulers to help students draw more accurate, colorful and detailed scientific drawings. The rubber bands, paper clips, cups, and popsicle sticks are frequently used as building materials for various STEM Building Challenges. The Plastic Bags and bins have helped organize materials and protect projects during investigations and the various stages of the engineering process. Also, because of your generosity we have plenty of materials to use next year as well.

You have made a real difference in the lives of the students we serve. Thanks to you approximately 350 students benefited from your donation, just this school year, and even more in the coming years.

Your years of service along with your generous donation demonstrate your continued commitment towards providing a quality education for all students. There is no way to fully express our gratitude for your support. The staff and students in Westchester are inspired by the dedication and generosity of donors like you and very graciously thank you for all that you have given to our school this year.

### **Julie Jeter—Legislative and Adopt-a-School**

### **Executive Board Loses Valuable Member**

Al Popowits, long-time Legislative Committee member, has resigned his position. Al has served on the board for fourteen years, offering us his insights, wisdom, and knowledge about politics and the condition of the state of Illinois. He has contributed countless articles to local papers defending and explaining teacher pensions and how the state legislature got us into the current problems. He has worked tirelessly for his local representative and shared his knowledge with the board and members through astute discussions. His expertise and professionalism will be missed by the board.

**Teachers' Retirement System is changing its telephone numbers, email address, and website address this summer** in order to improve service and reduce technology costs in the administration of the System.

### **New Email Addresses**

In June, all TRS staff  
Email addresses will change to  
[@trsil.org](mailto:)

### **New Telephone Numbers**

Also in June, all direct-dial and toll-  
free TRS telephone numbers will  
change.

### **News Website Address**

In July, the internet address  
of the TRS website will change.  
TRS will also launch a newly  
redesigned website that will  
feature easier navigation and  
enhanced services for members.

### **NEW email**

[members@trsil.org](mailto:members@trsil.org)

### **NEW Member Services toll-free number**

877-927-5877 or (877) 9-ASK TRS

### **NEW website address:**

<http://www.trsil.org>



## **West Lake Shore Unit *Direct Line* Newsletter**

Marjorie Sucansky, President  
2942 Crabtree Avenue  
Woodridge, Illinois 60517

*Direct Line* mailer: Simonette Urbain

### ***DIRECT LINE***

“Investing in the FUTURE of retired teachers”

September 19 Membership Meeting—Jim Bachman and Nathan Mihelich

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