



August-September 2015 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

September 15 Membership Luncheon, see P. 7

October 14 Special Event Speakers, see P. 6

Be a Delegate at the October 26-27 IRTA Convention see P. 8

President's Message

Someone please help my muddled brain understand the governor's reasoning.

He won't agree to a budget unless his political agenda is met: business-friendly reforms that will "recharge" the state's economy such as killing unions, (By the way, the distinction some legislators and the Illinois Policy Institute tries to make between unions and taxpayers is specious. Union workers are taxpayers.), creating right to work zones, preventing unions from contributing to political campaigns, lowering workman's comp payouts, ignoring the prevailing wage, lowering the minimum wage, and allowing for municipal bankruptcy, etc. Instead of presenting bills that reflect these ideas to the House, the governor is stumping across the state in a divide and conquer move to influence local governing bodies to vote for them. Many of these bodies are not even clear about the repercussions of those ideas for which they are voting. Keep an eye on your local town or village meetings, and voice your concern should the Turnaround (Turnback) agenda come up for discussion.

He says all of these measures and more will make the state more competitive and attract more business and jobs. However, ¾ of the businesses we have in the state already pay no taxes. We are told that the business tax rate is high; however, with loopholes and EDGE credits, many businesses don't pay any taxes. In addition, several businesses get the EDGE, plus are allowed to keep the state taxes they collect from their employees to add to their bottom line, money which should go to pay for services of the state. In addition, retailers are allowed to keep 1.75% of the sales tax they collect on each purchase. Check your register receipts for that 1.75%.

How is this helping the state finances?

So here is the plan as I understand it: Attract more businesses who don't have to pay taxes, can pay less than the prevailing wage, eliminate vacation and sick days for their employees, don't have to pay a fair compensation if their employees get hurt on the job, get to keep the state taxes they collect from their employees, don't have to insure job security, fund private and charter schools to the detriment of public education which serves all students, and enter fund raisers through the back door (as he did in Oak Forest) to avoid being confronted by the people whom his anti-middle class agenda will affect negatively.

Yes! I can see that *might* be a great plan to attract businesses who will provide low paying jobs while collecting big profits, paying little if any tax, and having no accountability. But wait—where does that leave the average middle-class, tax paying, low-wage individual who is trying to make ends meet while paying more for utilities, medical expenses, food, and the services the state is supposed to provide for the vulnerable? What am I missing?

Meanwhile, Minnesota's governor, Mark Dayton, raised the minimum wage, raised taxes on the wealthy by 2%, and guaranteed equal pay for women, among other measures. Despite Republican warnings that businesses would flee the state and take jobs with them, Minnesota's economy is booming. Every time I drive around the Twin Cities, I see new business construction. The state added 172,000 jobs during Dayton's first four years in office. Its unemployment rate is among the lowest in the country, and the Twin Cities have the lowest unemployment rate of any major metropolitan area. Governor Rauner needs a better role model than Wisconsin's Governor Walker whose tenure has brought about a serious decline in the middle class and draconian measures that have demoralized teachers and public workers. He should look a little farther northwest to Minnesota. **Marge Sucansky**

IRTA HOTLINE--For the latest news about pensions, health care, or other vital information, check the IRTA Legislative Hotline at 1-800-660-3326. This site is especially beneficial to those of you who do not have access to the Internet and do not receive Voter Voice calls to action. During times of crisis, call the Hotline to keep abreast of events. WLSU will do our best to keep you up to date concerning events, but don't hesitate to check out the Hotline as well.

Membership Report

The IRTA spent just under \$600,000 defending your COLA and health benefits before the Illinois Supreme Court. Almost before the ink was dry on the decision, the opposition was planning how to get around it. The IRTA has been in the forefront protecting retired teachers' benefits and has pledged to sue again if your pension or health benefits are threatened.

Last year the organization initiated a new membership drive, "**One-Bring-One**" which aims to increase membership in IRTA up to 40,000. IRTA is proud to claim about 35,628 of an estimated 100,000 Illinois retired teachers. But, we need more retirees involved in IRTA if we are to succeed in overcoming the challenges ahead. **One-Bring-One** is a membership activity. Personal contact is the most effective tool in recruiting new members. That is why we need your help. We are asking you to bring one new member to join IRTA before year's end. How?

1. Contact **active teachers** from your former school district. If they are in the pipeline to retire, they can join IRTA free for up to four years. They must commit to dues deduct on the application.
2. Contact a **retiree** who is a **nonmember** and invite him/her to join, and/or attend a WLSU meeting or luncheon. Retirees are eligible for free, current-year membership by choosing dues deduction on the application.
3. If you cannot recruit a new retiree or bring in a retired nonmember to meet your One-Bring-One obligation, please consider signing up your spouse or significant other as an **Associate Member** of IRTA. Many of our WLSU Board members have done this. Associate Membership is available to noncertified individuals and is only \$25.00 per year or Life Membership for \$125.00. Associate Members are also eligible for all benefits offered through AMBA, our Member Benefits provider. If a surviving spouse is already an Associate Life member, he/she may continue as an Active Life member without further dues payment.

Please consider one or more of these options to help us create a strong voice for retired educators. Our future depends on your help. An IRTA-WLSU application is on Page 4 of this newsletter.

The August-September issue of *Direct Line* begins our renewal process for 2016. 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 telling exactly what is owed and how to proceed. Check the address label on this issue of the newsletter; it will tell your current dues status. A '15 behind IRTA and/or WLSU tells dues are owed for next year. Any questions about membership, renewals or dues status should be directed to Darlene McNamara, 773-429-1779 or darcmac@aol.com or Tom Szot, 630-852-3138 or jtszot@comcast.net. Please help us out by renewing quickly and for multiple years. **Darlene McNamara & Tom Szot, WLSU Membership**

Reminder to Members

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

Read Your Label

Dues notices will be sent the first week in October. Check the label on your newsletter to see if you'll be getting a notice. Your current dues status is indicated.



Note: Marjorie will need to send in her WLSU dues for 2016.

Her IRTA dues are paid through dues

deduction. This means her IRTA dues are deducted from her pension check monthly. She doesn't send any dues or need to reapply annually.

If at any time you have questions regarding your dues, please feel free to call Louise Sterett at 630-325-6470, Tom Szot at 630-852-3138, or Darlene McNamara at 773-429-1779.

WLSU/IRTA Welcomes These New Members

Claudia Murdock
Steve Eckert
Linda Dixon
Eddie Ward
Carol Breese
Esther Kiefer
John Sucansky
Marcia Anderson
Pamela Wiese
Gary Riskin
Elayne Innchak

Jim Gowlett
Norman Parker
Katherine Guerra
John Stebbins
Theresa Hennessy
Martin Zelisko
Martha Abbate
Karen Pleticha
Elayne Innchak
David Kuhr
Sandy Buller

Diane Gallik
Daphne Lecesne
Fran Alcantara
William Noll
Janet Vitt
Roxanna Faulds
Christine Worley
Marjorie Steadman
Irene Keleminic
Kathleen Collins
Carmen Woodring

Regina Johnson-Cook
Maureen Cason
Michael J. Rosanova
Lorentta Hooks
John Passarella
Susan Odelson
Linda Casey
Mary Jane Jameson
Marie Dwyer
Susan Ponzio
John Zachari, Jr.

All New Members are invited to attend the Fall Luncheon. Reservation form on page 7

In Memoriam

For each of our recently deceased members, WLSU donates \$25 to the IRTA needy teachers fund.

Rita "Charlotte" Doyle Leavitt

Richard Crohn

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

LEGAL DEFENSE FUND

The main reason IRTA exists is to protect your benefits, and IRTA will continue to do so.

The leaders in the lawsuit against SB1 were our attorneys. DeVito is an advisor to the Supreme Court.

The Legal Defense Fund was started in 2012; as of April 2014 IRTA has collected \$584,683; it has spent \$523,506, leaving a balance of \$61,177.

Realistically there will be further challenges to our benefits. Please send a check to help build up the fund.

Here is the address for sending donations to the Legal Defense Fund:

IRTA, 824 S. Second St., 4th Floor, Springfield, IL 62704. *Please make your check payable to IRTA and write "Legal Defense Fund" on the check memo line.* Or Donate on the IRTA website: www.irtaonline.org.



IRTA State & Local Unit Membership Form

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

(Only required for Dues Deduction)

Please print or use your return address label.

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.

Teaching Behind the Cheddar Curtain--Will our State Become the Next

Wisconsin?

Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner has been described as Governor Scott Walker on steroids by his backers on the right. Forces, who would like to control your pension monies, fully support the agenda of the two governors. Will Governor Rauner achieve what Governor Walker has achieved in Wisconsin? Let's hope not. Read the excerpt of an email below from a cousin of one of our WLSU board members, received this past May. You decide if you want our state to become a clone of Wisconsin.

The consequences of Act 10 five years ago: "We have no collective bargaining, and have received about 1.3% raise each year with no 'steps' to reflect experience. Six unpaid days were added to our school year 4 years ago, and there's nothing we can do about it.

We tried to fight it by protesting at the capitol building and in the courts. The WI Supreme Court judge was appointed by Walker, so it was determined that there is nothing in the WI Constitution that states you can't discriminate against certain groups of public employees. (The state police, sheriffs and firefighters are not bound by Act 10; they are the 3 groups who supported Walker's first campaign.) He is now talking about going after our pension, turning all of it into 401k plans after removing millions of dollars in interest. He claims that money belongs to the taxpayers, not the teachers.

Walker has removed the Secretary of State, head of Dept. of Natural Resources, and head of the Treasury, and he is now in charge of all decisions made in all of those departments. It's a dictatorship here, and... it's particularly disturbing that this precedent is even being considered a model for other states.

We were cut to \$75 per student from the state when Walker first took office, and with his reelection, he has cut public schools to \$0 per student, while giving \$1500 per student to private charter and voucher schools. I have all the requirements to be certified as a reading specialist, but they will only give me the license if I **don't** work for a public school. Whenever a teacher leaves, he/she is not replaced. I am averaging 70 hour work weeks this year, and [my husband] and I had a long discussion about whether I should sign my contract for another year. However, it's 5 more years until I can retire, and though our health insurance costs have risen, it's still one of the better plans out there.

We have a 190 day contract (including 6 unpaid days), and work until the end of the 2nd wk. of June every year. Spec. Ed. teachers start August 17th this year...again with no pay until August 24th....

...It's difficult to keep working so hard and be treated so poorly and with disrespect. The latest projections in WI are that only 5% of graduating high school seniors are choosing teaching as a career. I am hoping the Democratic legislature in Illinois will block all Republican plans to emulate WI. ...I am very much looking forward to summer break, but we have been assigned a book to read over the summer as a book study. That would be funny if it wasn't true! ...Take good care, Mary"

Legislative Update July 2015

WRITE THE GOVERNOR!

Our best advice from state legislator visits in the last two months may be surprising. When we ask, “What is the most effective thing we could do as retired teachers to help you protect our pensions,” the unified answer has been, “It would help if you all would speak directly to the Governor.”

Our first response to the suggestion was not positive—“Well what good would that do? He doesn’t listen, seems unaware of our needs, openly argues his anti-labor, anti-union, anti-collective bargaining stance and he is ignoring the recent Illinois Supreme Court decision overturning Senate Bill 1— so why would letters from individual retired teachers (or police or firefighters) make any difference?”

Because---The Governor needs to hear your voice; he needs to hear our voices-- one and many. If we are silent, we have failed in our advocacy. In this case writing your congressperson isn’t the right choice—contacting the Governor is. Hearing from us individually, not through our union reps or our sympathetic congressperson lends a new level of pushback to the debate over the unbalanced budget and the Governor’s 500+ page plan to again attack our pensions and ask us to take a diminished benefit.

Your letter does not have to be long or full of research. It does have to be heartfelt in your defense of your contract with the State of Illinois to provide you with the pension you worked for and contributed toward all those working years.

I encourage you to send Bruce Rauner a letter at:

GOVERNOR BRUCE RAUNER

207 State House
Springfield, Illinois 62706

GOVERNOR BRUCE RAUNER

James R. Thompson Center
100 West Randolph 16-100
Chicago, Illinois 60601

Actually, send two letters—one to each office! The aides must read and count each letter that arrives and report to the Governor on the subject matter.

Questions: Please contact: Kate Singletary, WLSU Legislative Chair, 508-737-1336, singletarykate@gmail.com

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	630-985-7508
sucansky@comcast.net	jtszot@comcast.net	darcarmac@aol.com	Lsterett@joimail.com	narfp@sbcglobal.net
Website: www.wlsu.weebly.com				

Foundation Announces 2014-2015 Scholarship Winners

Each year the Foundation awards six \$1500 scholarships, one in each of the six IRTA Areas. This year, there was a total of 27 applications statewide for the scholarship. Five of those applicants were from Area 3.

The Area 3 recipient is Ashley Sheets who attends Eastern Illinois University and is pursuing a degree in Elementary Education with plans to obtain middle school endorsements in language arts and social sciences. Ashley, who is from Bismarck, IL, is a member of the Mark Twain Mentoring Program and also does volunteer tutoring at the Newman Center. Ashley received an Associates of Science and Arts degree from Danville Area Community College.

In addition to the scholarships, the IRTA Foundation is currently assisting ten retired teachers with monthly checks that range from \$300 to \$650. The total assistance for 2014 was \$48,400. This amount also includes several annuitants who received one-time payments because of a special need. The application for assistance can easily be downloaded from the IRTA website. The link to the Foundation is at the top of the website page. Click on it and then click on PROGRAMS. The link to Financial Assistance will appear. The application can be found in this link. If you are aware of a retired teacher who might need financial assistance, the IRTA Foundation is here to help him/her even if the person is not an IRTA member. Retired teachers from non-public schools are also eligible for assistance. **Fran Pettersen**

Mark Your Calendars 2015

September 15	Luncheon—Martire Speaker	William Tell	11:15 a.m.
October 14	Meet Your IRTA	Plymouth Place	10:00 a.m.
October 14	Executive Board Meeting	Plymouth Place	1:00 p.m.
October 26-27	IRTA Convention	Springfield	
December 4	Membership Luncheon	Ashton Place	11:15 a.m.

Come to the First WLSU Special Event—October 14

In light of the fact that the popularity of bus trips has diminished, the board sought another method of serving members. We have decided to try a Special Event Informational Lecture Series, the first of which will occur on **October 14 from 10 a.m. till 1 p.m. at Plymouth Place in Dole Hall.** WLSU will host a “Meet and Greet Your IRTA”: Jim Bachman, Executive Director of IRTA; Mary Shaw, Government Affairs Director; and Bob Pinkerton, IRTA President. They will bring us up to date on what is happening in Springfield, regarding your pension, health benefits, and other issues that affect you. Future events in the series will include speakers of interest in the areas of cultural, artistic, and political topics. If you have suggestions for possible speakers, let us know. All events will be underwritten by WLSU.

Giving Back

This year WLSU is celebrating 60 years of being an active voice for retired educators. In coordination with this milestone we have taken on a project that connects us with a local school within our Unit’s boundaries. Since the spring, I have been in contact with Amanda Deaton, the Principal of Walker School in Bedford Park. She responded to our initial outreach, expressing a desire to work with us in providing school supplies for her school. Walker School services children in grades K-4 and has a student body of just over 200. At our Spring luncheon I learned that a number of our members had connections to both Walker School and District 104. This has made our drive even more personal and significant.

Ms. Deaton provided a list of supplies that her school needs for the 2015-2016 school term.

Items Needed:

Back Packs	Pencils	Crayola Crayons (24)	Liquid glue	Glue sticks
Student Scissors	Student Boxes	Clorox wipes	Pocket Folders	Erasers
Spiral notebooks (wide ruled)	Gallon and quart size Ziplocks			

I have met Ms. Deaton, and we have discussed an August delivery of the supplies we have collected. Both she and her staff are excited and appreciative of our efforts. Since spring the sun porch of my house has been the depository of the supplies we have collected thus far. Initially, the supplies were arriving in a steady stream. We picked up quite a few at the Spring luncheon, as many attendees brought bags filled with the requested items. With a delivery date of August, we are into the final push for collecting supplies. Please look over the list and make a donation. Items can be dropped off at my home, 427 N. Waiola, La Grange Park, or bring them to any WLSU gathering where one person might collect them for delivery to a Board member. My personal hope was that I would need two cars to make the delivery; as of right now I, think my Honda CRV would be sufficient. Remember as the fall approaches, school supplies will be on sale throughout the area. That would be a great way to stretch your dollar and enhance your donation.

As always, thanks for your continued commitment to education and your participation in this project!

Julie Jeter, Member Benefits Chair

WLSU Fall Luncheon Welcomes All New Members!

Ralph Martire, Speaker

Tuesday, September 15

At Holiday Inn/ William Tell Banquets

6201 Joliet Rd., Countryside, 708-352-1101

Return this form and a check for \$25 members and \$30 for guests to Marie Trankina, 10 Algonquin Drive, Unit 2, Indian Head Park, Illinois 60525. Reservations must be received by September 8, 2012. No telephone reservations. Make Checks payable to West Lake Shore Unit.

Member Name (s)

BRING A GUEST OR TWO TO JOIN IRTA/WLSU & GET A \$10 COUPON TOWARD A FUTURE EVENT!

Guest Name (s)

email address _____

Phone _____ Total \$ _____

Member Entree Choices:

Chicken Breast Limon

Tilapia Florentine

Roast Sirloin of Beef

Guest Entrée Choices:

Chicken Breast Limon

Tilapia Florentine

Roast Sirloin of Beef

NO ENTREE' SUBSTITUTIONS AT THE LUNCHEON

PLEASE BRING AN ITEM OR TWO FROM THE SCHOOL SUPPLIES LIST ON PAGE 6 TO FINISH UP OUR 60TH ANNIVERSARY PROJECT: ADOPT A SCHOOL

WLSU Fall Luncheon

Tuesday, September 15, 2015 11:15-2:15

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

Program:

Speaker: **Ralph Martire of the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability** will bring us up to date regarding the fiscal condition of the state and what should be done about it.

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

William Tell is located at 6201 Joliet Rd, Countryside, 708-352-1101

WLSU WANTS YOU TO ATTEND THE IRTA CONVENTION

We still have 15 delegate spots to fill for the October 26 and 27 IRTA Convention in Springfield. WLSU will pay for your registration and meals; you are responsible for your transportation and hotel. We will be staying at the Crowne Plaza with a special rate. This is a good way to find out what your IRTA officers have planned and what is going on in Springfield with regard to pensions. Please contact me asap if you are interested. My contact information is in this newsletter.

Now is the time to get involved in another way. Many of our board and committee members have served for multiple years. We are looking for additional people who are willing to spend a few hours of their time providing our membership with the service and information they have come to expect. The few cannot do it all. It is time for others to step up. We are looking for co chairs for Membership. Perhaps, you would like to serve an apprenticeship to determine what a position requires. Please feel free to attend a board meeting and observe your board in action. In addition, the following offices will be up for election: president, treasurer, corresponding secretary. Marge

The world is a dangerous place to live; not because of the people who are evil, but because of the people who don't do anything about it. Albert Einstein



West Lake Shore Unit *Direct Line* Newsletter

Marjorie Sucansky, President
2942 Crabtree Avenue
Woodridge, Illinois 60517

Direct Line mailer: Moira Dowell

DIRECT LINE

"Investing in the FUTURE of retired teachers"

September 15 Luncheon with Ralph Martire

