



February-March 2016  
**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)

### President's Message

I like words—as those of you who read my quarterly blab in the *Direct Line* President's Message section are aware. Some of you may think I like words too much, but be that as it may, I found the two most interesting 2015 words on a website which sends me a new word every day—*bibliotaph* and *kakistocracy*.

I am a bibliotaph—one who hoards books. Just ask my husband and family. Books are all over the house. Even if I have read them and probably won't read them again, there are certain books that I can't bear to give up—my collection of Louise Penny novels, or Charles Todd's WWI novels are a few. Because I am running out of space, I was forced to donate about 300 books to various places over the last three years. But there are still plenty on my book shelves. I am a bibliotaph!

The second word, *kakistocracy*, means government by the worst people; a form of government in which the worst persons are in power. Can you guess why this word struck a chord with me? Perhaps because of the New Year greetings I received from a few legislators. Here are a few examples of how they wish to bring in the New Year:

Representative Jeanne Ives sent the following message:

Happy New Year

“...the most overwhelming problem facing the state and our local communities—Pension Reform. Pensions are bankrupting our state and crowding out our ability to fund safety net programs for the developmentally disabled or fund education with new state dollars in place of ever increasing property taxes.” (She really knows how to use the loaded words.) “...I will not vote for any new taxes until we reform the system that needs to be reformed for this state.” That brightened my New Year!

This is a complete denial of the real issue facing Illinois—for years the legislature has been using the pension funds as a credit card to pay for state services that should have been paid by taxing all the citizens of Illinois rather than double taxing educators—we are Illinois taxpayers and we paid into our pensions while the state did not meet its obligation.

“The United States Supreme Court has made clear that the United States Constitution ‘bar[s] Government from forcing some people alone to bear public burdens which, in all fairness and justice, should be borne by the public as a whole [citations].’ United States v. Winstar Corp, 1996. From blog of Glen Brown.

Apparently, this has not registered with some Illinois legislators and the governor.

And from another legislator, Representative David McSweeney, a New Year’s solution: His cure was submitted in legislation that would allow factory owners to be exempt from the state’s 5.25 percent corporate income tax. He would make 100 percent of income generated by manufacturing to be deducted from tax liability—including LLC’s and LLP’s (ways to incorporate). Now there is a solution to the state’s financial difficulty! Under such plans who will finally pay taxes—those of us in the middle class whose income they want to cut. We hear that Illinois is losing manufacturing, whether that is true or not is moot if we encourage manufacturing by giving welfare to big business while destroying the wages of the middle class and the poor. Who will have the purchasing power to buy what is manufactured?

Where are the real solutions to the problem—increased revenue, restructuring the RAMP, a fair tax? Nowhere in sight. And we will only hear about how educators are to blame for the state’s woes. This will be particularly true now that the Illinois Policy Institute is acquiring the Illinois Radio Network, which has reporters in Springfield and Chicago. People all over the state will be getting the “facts” from IPI.

So my New Year’s resolution and recommendation to you is: Don’t believe all you read and hear. Don’t allow the IPI and other such organizations to make you feel guilty about receiving a pension you earned and paid for while they advocate corporate welfare. If you have concerns or questions, check non-biased sources such as the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability which presents empirical data to support its solutions to the state’s financial problems. Concerned about something? Email or call WLSU or IRTA. Don’t be misled by false statistics and specious, emotionally-laden statements, coming out of some legislators.

It’s January, and Illinois still does not have a budget because the governor is unwilling to give up his plans to destroy the middle class. But never fear, 237 new laws were passed, and you will be glad to know that HB208 made it through the hopper. Illinois now has a state pie—pumpkin. I guess the important issues do get resolved. Happy 2016 **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.**

Mark Your Calendar

January 13, Wed.	Executive Board Meeting	Plymouth Place	9:30 a.m.
March 9, Wed.	Executive Board Meeting	Plymouth Place	9:30 a.m.
March 29	Special Event Legislative Forum	Plymouth Place	10:00 a.m.
April	Area 3 Conference	Bradley, Illinois	
May 5, Th.	Member Lunch/Monuments Men	Ashton Place	11:15 a.m.
May 10, Tues.	Executive Board Meeting	Plymouth Place	9:30 a.m.
August 3, Wed.	Executive Board Meeting	Plymouth Place	9:30 a.m.
September 13, Tues.	Membership Luncheon	Ashton Place	11:15 a.m.
October 12, Wed.	Special Event—	Plymouth Place	10:00 a.m.
October 12, Tues.	Executive Board Meeting	Plymouth Place	1:00 p.m.
December 2, Fri.	Membership Luncheon	Ashton Place	11:15 a.m.

**Reminder to Members**

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

**WLSU WANTS YOU!**

Now is the time to get involved. 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. Please attend a board meeting and become familiar with the various positions. There is one that is just right for you. Contact Marge Sucansky for more information.

## Membership Report

Winter drags along, but the end is within sight. The same may not be said of the impasse regarding an Illinois state budget for 2016. If Governor Rauner does not get his turnaround agenda, he doesn't seem willing to support a new budget. If you have forgotten, the turnaround agenda is his plan to limit the power of organized labor in the state.

Organized labor includes active teachers, retirees and organizations such as IRTA, IFT and IEA who represent them. Organized labor stood united against Senate Bill 1 and got a vote of confidence from the Illinois Supreme Court when it decided that the bill was unconstitutional. Does this court affirmation of the pension protection clause mean that the constitutionally guaranteed rights of active and retired teachers are now fully protected? Unfortunately, the answer is "No." State policymakers will try other ways to get around our constitutional protection. Blogger and IRTA/WLSU member, Glen Brown, in a past blog, alluded to possible strategies that may be used to undermine the court ruling. Near the top of their list would be to free the state of future pension costs by shifting payment to cash-strapped school districts. Also getting some thought is a plan to again attempt to amend the Pension Protection Clause. This was defeated in a referendum vote in November 2012. Another possibility would be to allow Tier II teachers to continue to contribute an unfair amount to their pensions, which would pay them at retirement less than they put in. All this will occur while teachers and public employees continue to be blamed for the state's economic woes. However, corporate welfare continues for the wealthy while budget cuts will be seen as necessary for the poor and the middle class. There is always the chance that the state may try to negotiate another bill like Senate Bill 2404 in which retirees were to pick either a COLA or subsidized health insurance. Fortunately, the IRTA refused to be part of the deal and threatened to sue if it passed. The bill subsequently stalled in the House. We all need to recognize that there will continue to be a long, protracted battle to protect our pensions and health benefits.

Your part in the battle is to stay informed through your continued membership in IRTA and WLSU, to help recruit new members, and to be ready to make calls and write letters to legislators. Unfortunately, a number of our members have not renewed their membership for 2016. If you are unsure of your dues status, check your newsletter label or call/email Darlene Mc Namara or Tom Szot. See the WLSU Contact Information box contained in this newsletter. Plus, an email reminder was sent in the middle of January to all those who owe dues. Please be aware that dues paid for IRTA membership do not cover WLSU membership. Our WLSU unit must collect its own dues. **Finally, for those who fail to renew, this will be your last newsletter, and all other communication from our organization will stop in March 2016.**

The WLSU Membership Committee handles much of the record keeping for our unit of 1220 members, beside recruiting new members and attempting to retain current members. We also help the IRTA with record keeping, reporting and recruiting. Two individuals currently do all this work. We urgently wish to add another member to help us. A computer is necessary for communication and data keeping, while about an hour or two a week would be necessary to complete membership tasks. A list of duties is available from Darlene Mc Namara or Tom Szot. Please email one of us for details. The success of our unit, our state organization, and possibly our pension relies upon people being willing to volunteer some of their time. Retirement is precious to all of us, and we are all busy, but we must still find time to fulfill a need and help safeguard our pensions. Please volunteer a small portion of your time now.

### **Darlene Mc Namara and Tom Szot, WLSU Membership Chairs**

#### WLSU/IRTA Welcomes These New Members

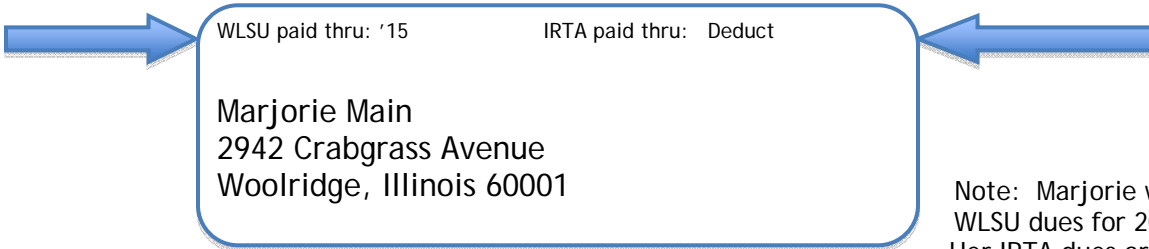
Cynthia Broughton	Sue Gossey	Jim Delach	Thomas Berry
Lawrence Broughton	David Dalgaard	Mary Berg	Carol Rudy

# State Membership Representative Member Resignation

Thanks to Darlene McNamara who has served as the Region 4 representative to the IRTA Membership Committee. Darlene has represented us for 3 years and brought many valuable ideas to the committee about increasing membership and has shared with us the plans made in Springfield. She will now devote her time to maintaining and increasing WLSU membership. We appreciate her service to all of us.

## Read Your Label

Dues notices were sent the first week in October. Please check your newsletter label. 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. Please contact Louise Sterett, Darlene McNamara, or Tom Szot with any questions. See the WLSU Contact Information Box.



### IRTA State & Local Unit Membership Form

828 S. Second St., 4th Floor • Springfield, IL 62704 • 1-800-728-4782  
 e-mail: [irta@irtaonline.org](mailto:irta@irtaonline.org) • webpage: [www.irtaonline.org](http://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
PHONE ( )	E-MAIL	UNIT West Lake Shore	SCHOOL DISTRICT
		RETIREMENT YEAR	RETIRED FROM

Please mail to IRTA.

### 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

### In Memoriam

For each of our recently deceased members, WLSU donates \$25 to the IRTA needy teachers fund.  
**Andrew Bossieux   Mari Ann Chambers   Charles Coletta   Richard Guerra   Helen Kosinski**  
**Marjory Ruth Long   Eunice Singfeldt   Robert Soucek**



At the December 4 luncheon WLSU celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary with wonderful music and a delicious cake. Thanks to Sharon Kman and Marie Trankina for planning this lovely event.



Guests at the luncheon included Dr. Troy Whalen, Superintendent of the district in which Walker School, our adopted school, is located, and Principal of Walker, Amanda Deaton. Also pictured are Julie Jeter who coordinated the adopt a school project, and WISU president, Marjorie Sucansky. The venue was Ashton Place.

### NO More Mail Reminders for Car Stickers:

Because of the Illinois Budget stalemate the Secretary of State's office has stopped sending reminders through the mail for expiring car stickers. This measure will save the Department \$450,000 per month. Many people remember their expiration month because it's often the same month as their birthday. But others, like me, who got new license plates when they bought a new car may now have a different expiration date.

The Secretary of State's office has noticed an approximate 30% decline in timely renewals since the measure began. There is also a \$20.00 late fee and the ticket for an expired plate may be \$120. There is a 30 day grace period.

Here are some alternatives for you to try:

1. Renew by mail by mailing a COPY of your current registration along with a check payable to the Secretary of State to: Secretary of State, 501 South Second St., Room 500, Howlett Building, Springfield 62576
2. Renew by phone or online. You will need the numbers that are on your registration form.
3. Go to a Secretary of State Facility or a currency exchange and buy your license sticker there.
4. And for the future sign up for an email renewal reminder at [www.ilsos.gov/greenmail/](http://www.ilsos.gov/greenmail/) Source: *Daily Herald*, Marni Pyke.

### Real ID Act May Impact Travel:

State IDs issued by Illinois are not in compliance with the Federal Real ID Act which was implemented after 9/11. However, Illinois fliers who don't have the latest drivers' licenses will have a two year reprieve before their IDs are rejected at airport security checkpoints. This month the Department of Homeland Security said passengers could continue using their current IDs until January 22, 2018. Some would have until October 1, 2020. After those dates, passengers without the proper drivers' licenses would have to use other federally approved forms of ID such as a passport. (source: AP article in *Daily Herald*.)

Entrance to FEDERAL buildings or military bases may be another matter. Representative Scott Drury's office issued the following *caveat*:

“It is my understanding that the US Department of Homeland Security is allowing individual facilities to determine acceptable alternative ID requirements. If you need to go to a federal building, we’ve suggested contacting the facility in advance to learn their requirements.”

To head off any difficulty with travel or entry to federal facilities you may want to 1) make sure your passport is up to date, or 2) call the federal facility to see what ID they require for entry. (source: Rep Drury’s newsletter)

**PS. Scam reminders:**

Remember that the IRS will not contact you via email regarding your income tax.

Remember that a computer pop-up saying your computer is infected by a virus and that you should call a certain number for help is more than likely a scam too. Barbara Grabowski, FYI Committee

<b>WLSU Contact Information</b>				
<b>President</b>	<b>Membership</b>	<b>Membership</b>	<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Foundation</b>
<b>Marjorie Sucansky</b>	<b>Tom Szot</b>	<b>Darlene McNamara</b>	<b>Louise Sterett</b>	<b>Frances Pettersen</b>
<b>630-985-2620</b>	<b>630-852-3138</b>	<b>773-429-1779</b>	<b>630-325-6470</b>	<b>630-985-7508</b>
<a href="mailto:sucansky@comcast.net">sucansky@comcast.net</a>	<a href="mailto:jtszot@comcast.net">jtszot@comcast.net</a>	<a href="mailto:darcarmac@aol.com">darcarmac@aol.com</a>	<a href="mailto:Lsterett@joimail.com">Lsterett@joimail.com</a>	<a href="mailto:narfp@sbcglobal.net">narfp@sbcglobal.net</a>
<b>Website: <a href="http://www.wlsu.weebly.com">www.wlsu.weebly.com</a></b>				

**IRTA Foundation Scholarships Available** Applications are now available for the IRTA Foundation scholarship program for 2016. Six scholarships worth \$1500 each will be awarded to one full-time student in each of the six IRTA areas. The applicant must be a resident of Illinois or have graduated from an Illinois high school. The applicant may attend any school in any state as long as the school attended maintains an accredited Teacher Training Program. General information about the scholarship and an application can be found on the IRTA website by going to "itraonline.org." Click on the IRTA Foundation link at the top of the home page and follow the link to scholarship information. Applications may also be obtained by contacting Fran Pettersen at 630-985-7508 or [narfp@sbcglobal.net](mailto:narfp@sbcglobal.net) and by visiting the WLSU website at [www.wlsu.weebly.com](http://www.wlsu.weebly.com). Applications are due in the IRTA Springfield office on or before March 7, 2016. Recipients of the scholarships will be notified by April 21, 2016.

The IRTA Foundation is currently assisting ten retired teachers on a monthly basis. One additional retiree is being assisted during the summer months. Also, real estate taxes are being paid for two retirees.

The IRTA Foundation Excellence in Education Active Teacher Grants were awarded to twenty-four teachers in Areas 3 and 4 for a total of \$15,068.53. **Fran Pettersen, Foundation**

...and so it continues, a cautionary tale

**In our Aug.-Sept. Direct Line we published an email from a board member’s cousin, living in Wisconsin and teaching Spec. Ed. Here is another report from behind the Cheddar Curtain:**

We start progress monitoring testing next week (1/11/16), and every student on my caseload has accommodations for 1:1 testing. Then we move right into Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System to complete running records to determine progress in reading levels. Gr. K-2, besides taking the progress monitoring test in Reading and Math, are also then tested with PALS, which is Phonemic Awareness Literacy Screening.

I also got 2 new referrals today. From the start of evaluations to writing reports, developing goals and meeting with parents, it is at least 12 hours of work per student. I have also been assigned to mentor a new Spec. Ed. teacher at the 6th grade level because of a cognitively disabled student on his caseload with whom I worked for 3 years. His "real" mentor (the one who gets paid \$750 per year to attend a monthly 45-minute meeting after school) doesn't have any experience with kiddos with CD, so I was assigned by my supt. to work during my prep times (and then after school if more time is needed) for at least 3 hours per month at no additional pay.

I was given a Tier 2 reading intervention group a month ago, which consists of 5 boys who are in need of just some extra support in reading. The curriculum I have to use requires 45 min. of prep per week. Because I am a spec. ed. teacher, I can't teach a Tier 2 reg. ed. group unless a spec. ed. student is part of it. So I have a 3rd grade, Tier 4 student as part of the group, for whom I need to differentiate quite a bit. (But he's doing better.) I was told the group was going to be with me because our regular reading specialists only take students all reading at the same level and don't differentiate.

Due to Act 10, our raise cannot exceed the COLA for the year. In the past 5 years, that hasn't exceeded 1.6%, but at least it was something. This year, for the first time in 40 years, there was no raise in COLA due to lower gas prices. We were informed right before Christmas break that there will be no raise at all this year. Keep fighting back in Illinois!

Current TRS Pension Benefits		
Benefit Range	Members	Percent
Under \$50,000	49,881	47.80%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	47,221	45.20%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	6,721	6.40%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	435	0.42%
\$200,000 - \$249,999	77	0.07%
\$250,000	16	0.01%

Annuitant benefits as of December 1, 2015. The average annuitant pension is \$52,752. To lower that number, add survivors and disabled to the annuitants and the average drops to \$48171. The combined percent over \$100,000 is 6.9%.

**BOB LYONS**



## 2016 WLSU LEGISLATIVE FORUM

WLSU welcomes Illinois Legislators to (location to be determined) on Tuesday, March 29, 2016, from 10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. to discuss major issues of the 2016 national and state elections.

This event is a **FRIENDRAISER**. All invited legislators are considered friends of retired educators. They have shown through their District constituent work and their votes on the floor that they understand and respect the values and opinions of retired educators. This is an event where we all can learn more about the issues, and also build better relationships with our friends in the legislature.

Come and...

**MEET YOUR LEGISLATORS.** We hope to have representatives from the U.S. Congress, State Senate, and State House of Representatives.

**LISTEN TO THEIR VIEWS.** We will hear individually from each legislator on his/her assessment of the situation in Washington and Springfield.

**ASK THEM A QUESTION.** We will be using a variety of question and answer techniques, including questions and comments from the audience.

**VOLUNTEER TO HELP IN VARIOUS CAMPAIGNS.** These legislators are friendly to our issues and concerns. We need to assist them in remaining in office. Learn how you can help.

Please join us on March 29!

Questions? Contact: Kate Singletary, Legislative Chair, [singletarykate@gmail.com](mailto:singletarykate@gmail.com), 508-737-1336  
Sharon Kman, Vice President, [sharonkman@gmail.com](mailto:sharonkman@gmail.com), 630-988-5266

## WLSU State Legislative Committee

WLSU board member, Vic Corder, has been asked by President Davison to serve on the Legislative Committee for another term. Thanks to Vic for accepting this responsibility once again and for bringing our members the up-to-date information about what is going on in Springfield.



## 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"