

February-March 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)

### **March 7 Membership Meeting with Rich Frankenfeld from TRS and Larry Newman from AMBA**

#### **President's Message**

I want to share with you one of the concerns I have stemming from the events of the past year. Tom, in his Membership article, poses many of the threats to our system of education that could come from the new president and his proposed cabinet. As an educator and citizen, I'd like to expound upon one of those threats in this message.

At his last press conference, President Obama said the following: "...we've got to think about what's happening to our political culture here. The Russians can't change us or significantly weaken us. They are a smaller country; they are a weaker country; their economy doesn't produce anything that anybody wants to buy except oil and gas and arms. They don't innovate. But they can impact us if we lose track of who we are. They can impact us if we abandon our values...."

One of our values has been that we provide a free public education to all. Granted, there are ways the delivery of that education and the funding for it could be improved. However, in theory, all children have a chance to develop their potential—not just the wealthy. Because of that opportunity, we have been a country of innovators. Face it, much of the manufacturing of products is being done in other countries which use child labor instead of educating their children. The United States has to educate the innovators.

The cabinet pick of Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education, an advocate of privatizing education and "voucher-izing" federal dollars coming to the state, will mean there will be fewer federal dollars for public schools. The public has been led to believe that they will have school choice when, in fact, it is the for-profit school which will do the choosing. Such schools can exclude children simply by making the tuition to their institutions higher than the voucher, making education available only to the wealthy. They can exclude children because transportation to the charter may not be offered. Because they are run by for-profit companies, they spend only about half of their budget on instruction compared to most traditional public schools. They might discourage special-education enrollment. Basically, children with potential—our future innovators—may be denied admission.

In addition, for many of these privatized schools, there is no oversight and transparency because they are not covered by the Freedom of Information Act, making it possible for taxpayers to be funding schools which teach

cult religions. The latter was the case in Minnesota; however, because Minnesota keeps a close eye on charters, the school was closed down. That is not the case everywhere.

When charters open, neighborhood public schools will be closed. If a charter feels it is not making a profit, it too could close, leaving districts with no schools for their children. Lacking oversight, owners of some of the schools may hire less than qualified individuals as instructors who will be given paltry salaries and no job security, not motivation to do well by their students unless those students come from wealthy families who can pay for elite private schools.

Finally, studies have shown that children in charter schools do not do better than those in public schools. The future innovators of our nation could be denied the education which would be beneficial to them and to our country.

As the President says, we can't abandon our values and all the children of our country. It would be devastating to them and to our nation. Please keep vigilant, and voice your protest to your legislators, both state and national, when you fear their policies may threaten our Democracy and values.

My wishes go out to all of you for a less stressful, more peaceful 2017, devoid of the bigotry, hatred, and division that has assailed us over the past several months. **Marge Sucansky**

**IRTA HOTLINE**--Due to the changes in the manner legislative information is transmitted, Jim Bachman proposed that the legislative hotline be discontinued and members advised to telephone the office for information. Motion by Bill Funkhouser to discontinue the Legislative Hotline passed. A message will be placed on the hotline for several months advising that this will be done and asking members to call the office for the latest information—1-800-728-4782. Other helpful numbers: Teachers' Retirement System 1-800-877-7896 and Central Management Services 1-800-442-1300 and [irtaonline.org](http://irtaonline.org)

### Mark Your Calendars 2017

January 25 Wed.	Executive Board Meeting	Plymouth Place	9:30 a.m.
March 7 Tues.	Membership Meeting	Ashton Place	10:00 a.m.
March 16, Thurs	Executive Board Meeting	Plymouth Place	9:30 a.m.
April	Area 3 Conference	Bradley, Illinois	
May 11 Th.	Membership Luncheon	Ashton Place	11:15 a.m.
May 9 Tues.	Executive Board Meeting	Plymouth Place	9:30 a.m.
August 2 Wed.	Executive Board Meeting	Plymouth Place	9:30 a.m.
September 19 Tues.	Membership Luncheon	Ashton Place	11:15 a.m.
October	Special Event—If needed		10:00 a.m.
October	IRTA Convention	Springfield	
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>	<b>Membership</b>	<b>Membership</b>	<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Foundation</b>
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
<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>
Website: <a href="http://www.wlsu.weebly.com">www.wlsu.weebly.com</a>				

## Membership Report

Many of us are not thrilled by the election of Donald Trump to the highest office in our country. His election effectively puts control of all three Federal branches of government in his hands—no more checks and balances. How could this have any effect on our situation as retired Illinois teachers or as friends and relatives of current teachers? Right-leaning, pro corporate groups see his election as a plus for the positions they espouse.

One such group in our state is the Illinois Policy Institute. Diana Sroka Rickert in a *Tribune* article on 12/13/16 titled, “What Trump, Congress can do for Illinois in 2017,” is excited at the prospect of change for Illinois. She writes of three things that can be done to “improve” the state. First, in an attempt to further privatize education, she hopes the new Congress and new Secretary of Education will “voucher-ize” federal dollars coming to the state. The plan is for families to receive “scholarships” that can be spent on educational programs of their choice. Naturally, there will be fewer federal dollars for public schools.

Secondly, she wants Congress to amend federal bankruptcy law to help states, such as Illinois with massive pension debt, declare bankruptcy. She feels just the option to declare bankruptcy may spur “opponents of reform,” in her view the IRTA and other like organized groups, to make accommodations such as pension reduction, COLA changes and abolishment of or greatly reduced subsidized health care.

Finally, she wants a U.S. Supreme Court that will dismantle public unions in Illinois. She wants the new President to appoint a justice who will rule in favor of public sector right-to-work laws. She feels Illinois workers deserve the same right to not join a union as counterparts in Michigan, Indiana and Wisconsin. The Republican legislatures and governors in these states did not allow the public sector workers to choose or negotiate if they wished a change. It was forced upon them under the subterfuge that choice is good and fair for all involved.

Back in May of 2015, Ms. Rickert in another article reacted to the Illinois Supreme Court’s decision to strike down the state attempt at pension reform. She said Governor Bruce Rauner should lay off the entire state workforce and close down the pension system. He should then work with the General Assembly to come up with a 401(k) pension plan for public employees and afterward offer to rehire state workers under the new retirement pension plan.

Currently this could not occur because the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) is strict in following work rules. According to Robert Bruno, a professor of labor and industrial relations at the University of Illinois at Chicago, employers, public and private, can’t get out of labor agreements through some artifice they create, plus many public employees have civil service protection. Donald Trump will be able to name three of the five NLRB members, and next year he will also get to appoint the all-important general counsel. The general counsel decides which cases the board hears. As many political pundits say, “elections have consequences.” We could be in for some tough battles. The years ahead will see many attempts to alter or change your pension rights. The IRTA, as always, will be on your side in any battle to diminish or impair your constitutionally protected pension rights. The last court battle against Senate Bill 1 cost IRTA members nearly \$600,000. Currently the IRTA is already preparing for the next battle by accepting donations for the IRTA Legal Defense Fund. Donations can be made by sending a check to the IRTA at 828 S. Second St., 4th Floor, Springfield, IL 62704. The check should be made payable to the IRTA, and “Legal Defense Fund” should be written on the memo line. As always we stand with current educators and organizations that represent them. Together we hope to blunt any attempt by those looking to blame educators for the sins of past and present lawmakers.

The IRTA and WLSU are counting on you to retain your membership, seek out new members and stay informed. If you have not yet renewed your membership in IRTA and/or WLSU, please do it now. You may check the label on your newsletter to see if you owe dues for 2017. If you have your newsletter emailed to you and wish to know your dues status, call/email Tom Szot, Darlene Mc Namara or Louise Sterett. See the WLSU Contact Information box in this newsletter. Also, those members with email who need to renew received a dues reminder in middle January. The original dues notice was mailed to all members on October 1.

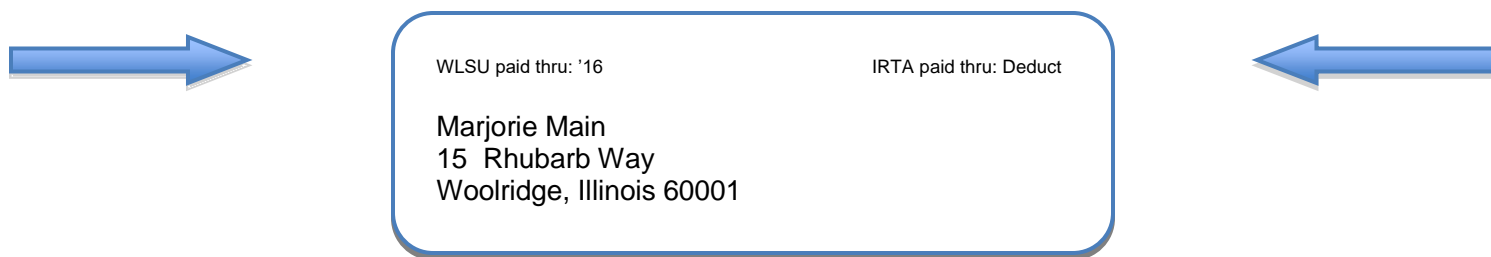
Those members who fail to renew will not receive another newsletter, and communications from our organization will end March 2017.

Please stand with us. Since there is strength in numbers, you are only strengthening our opponents by weakening our ranks through not renewing. This New Year our WLSU executive board added two new board members. It is heartening to see that we have members willing to spend a little time helping defend our pension and health benefits. However, our membership committee still needs help. Is about one hundred hours of work per year too much to handle? The membership related tasks only require a computer for communication and record keeping. This is not a hard or stressful job. None of us wish to see our unit grow weaker due to a lack of volunteers to help share the load. We are all busy, and retirement time is precious to us all, but as Andrew Carnegie once said, “Anything in life worth having is worth working for.” It’s your pension and health benefits that we are working to protect. Call or email Tom Szot or Marge Sucansky for information.

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

## Read Your Label

Check the label on your newsletter to see your dues status



Note: Marjorie must send in her WLSU dues for 2017.

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 IRTA dues or need to reapply annually. However, payment of IRTA dues does not cover her WLSU dues.

Please contact Louise Sterett, Darlene McNamara, or Tom Szot with any questions. See the WLSU Contact Information Box in this issue on Page 1.

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### WLSU/IRTA Welcomes These New Members

<b>Alice Martin</b>	<b>Frank Zarate, Jr.</b>	<b>Julie Gabreleski</b>	<b>Kathryn Gedvilas</b>	<b>Judy Whalen</b>
<b>Lorene Neal</b>	<b>Barbara Lucente</b>	<b>Joyce Booker-Thomas</b>	<b>Patricia Pesce</b>	<b>Robin Vesely</b>

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### **Request from IRTA Director of Membership & Marketing**

Nathan has suggested that we contact people in the districts from which we retired--

“I would encourage you or your members to contact the individuals in your unit directly and introduce yourself. You can share your personal story and what retirement has meant to you. Please encourage these individuals to join IRTA by filling out” the form in this newsletter.

“You may also write a letter or a postcard to these new retirees. You can address it to their attention and mail it to the district office.

“ The more people who contact these individuals and encourage them to join IRTA, the more likely they will sign up. Let’s make them feel welcome!” **Nathan Mihelich**

WLSU has also begun a campaign to encourage educators to join IRTA via the Pipeline or as soon to be retirees. We have printed posters with the pertinent information about IRTA/WLSU and are asking our members to take a poster to the school or district from which they have retired and ask that it be posted in a teacher cafeteria or workroom. At our December luncheon 50 posters were taken by members. If you would like to get involved, please contact Marge Sucansky, Tom Szot, or Darlene McNamara about how you can get some posters.

### **Reminder to Members**

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

**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. Contact Darlene McNamara or Tom Szot. See WLSU Contact Information box.**

### **WLSU NEEDS YOU!**

Thanks to Simonette Urbain, Nancy Sullivan, and Moira Dowell for stepping up as corresponding secretary, recording secretary, and vice-president, respectively. We still need someone on the membership committee. Please consider offering a few hours of your time to keep WLSU a vibrant organization.

### **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.

Bruce Lavenau

Michael Kennedy

Adele Vacek

Rose Marie Princ

Virginia Flanagan

Donna Kociara

Rosemarie Sawosko

### **Plan to Attend the March 7 Membership Meeting**

WLSU will host Rich Frankenfeld, TRS Director of Outreach, who will provide information about what is going on with your pension. In addition, Larry Newman of AMBA has some new benefits to which you are entitled as an IRTA member. Finally, we hope to meet Larry Pfeiffer, the new TRS Trustee. See you at Ashton Place, 341 75<sup>th</sup> Street, Willowbrook, just west of Route 83, at 10 a.m.

### **New License Plate Design**

Beginning in January 2017, the Secretary of State's office will begin releasing a newly designed license plate at no additional cost to taxpayers. The state will begin replacing the oldest plates first and each year will continue to replace older plates with the newly issued plate. When your plate is up for replacement, you will be notified by mail. You will then receive a temporary sticker with your registration renewal and will receive a new plate in the mail within 60 days with your registration sticker already attached. If your plate has been manufactured after 2001 but shows signs of wear and is difficult to read, you can apply for a replacement at no cost at [www.cyberdriveillinois.com](http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com). Additionally, if you would like a new plate but do not yet qualify for the new design, you can purchase the new design for \$29 through the Secretary of State's Office. If you have any questions about the program, please visit [www.cyberdriveillinois.com](http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com) or reach out to our office. From Representative Carol Sente's newsletter.



### **Please Take the Time to Give Us Some Feedback**

The WLSU board is constantly in search of programs for our membership meetings that will be informative and interesting to members. If you know of any speakers or programs that would be of interest, please let us know.

## **FYI-- Ed Wollet, Legislative Chair of IRTA, provided this information recently.**

Today, January 6, 2017, Governor Rauner signed SB 2912. Here is a summary of the bill:

**SB 2912** (Luechtefeld/Crespo), Public Act 99-0920. The bill:

- Reduces substitute teaching license fees from \$100 to \$50.
- Creates a one-year grace period for retired teachers with lapsed licenses to bring their license into good standing without fines or coursework, allowing them to substitute teach.
- Prevents educators who retire mid-cycle from lapsing their licenses, allowing them to substitute teach.
- Allows educators licensed in other states to obtain an Illinois license through a more streamlined process.
- Creates a one-year provisional in-state endorsement on a provisional educator license with stipulations to allow candidates that have met all other requirements except passage of the edTPA examination.

For the exact language of the bill --

<http://ilga.gov/legislation/fulltext.asp?DocName=&SessionId=88&GA=99&DocTypeId=SB&DocNum=2912&GAID=13&LegID=96235&SpecSess=&Session=>

Illinois General Assembly –Full Text of SB2912

Ilga.gov

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## **Giving Back...Adopt a School...School Partnership**

Julie Jeter is hard at work already planning this year's school adoption. She will be sending out letters to the 39 districts in our unit's area. We hope to have a school chosen by the May luncheon so we can start collecting supplies.

**Julie Jeter**

## **Vice President retires**

Thanks to Sharon Kman for her years of service as vice-president to WLSU. She has worked hard to bring members interesting, informative, and entertaining speakers. We appreciate her time and efforts.

## **IRTAPAC**

The Illinois Retired Teachers Association (IRTA) is an organization of over 37,000 retired educators. The IRTAPAC is a way to protect our benefits. It provides financial support to legislators who support us. If members go to fundraisers for their legislators, they should contact their local president to get donations that can be presented to the legislators at the fundraiser.

The IRTAPAC Committee has a process to determine whom we support and endorse through a questionnaire that helps it assess the positions of Illinois legislative candidates. That questionnaire has been sent out to legislators, asking them to fill it out and return it by July 5 if they would like to be considered for endorsement by IRTA. If you are interested in viewing the questionnaire, please contact IRTA legislative member for WLSU, Vic Corder at 773-857-2161 or [vcorder@rcn.com](mailto:vcorder@rcn.com). There is currently \$110,000 in the PAC Fund. The goal is to increase the number of people who participate via deduct for the PAC Fund. Deduct takes \$1 a month from the pension check. Look for the form on the website [www.irtaonline.org](http://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](mailto:irta@irtaonline.org) • webpage: [www.irtaonline.org](http://www.irtaonline.org)

- ☐ **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.

### 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



## 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"

MARCH 7 MEMBERSHIP MEETING AT ASHTON PLACE