

Newsletter of West Lake Shore Unit, Illinois Retired Teachers Association



WLSU and IRTA...Your Voice in Springfield

WLSU—OVER 60 YEARS OF SERVICE TO RETIRED EDUCATORS

www.wlsu.weebly.com

President's Message

Today, I'm Not So Sure...

As Nancy Pelosi opened the 117th Congress on January 3, 2021, she retold the old Benjamin Franklin story that you first heard in your high school Civics class, the one that goes...*Dr. Franklin was walking out of the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia when a woman shouted, "Dr. Franklin, what have we got?" Franklin answered..."A Republic, if you can keep it."*

Hmm, can we keep it? Today, I'm not so sure.

Events, mistakes, wrongheaded yet persistent beliefs and lies have eroded our Republic. Americans are bound together by a social contract. Locke and Rousseau philosophized that a social contract helped people in a society gain civil rights in return for accepting the obligation to respect and defend the rights of others, giving up some freedoms to do so. Compassion, empathy, sense of justice, goodwill, shared values all make it easier to accept the rules and responsibilities of living together;...otherwise, the societal fabric frays, stretches at the seams and disintegrates.

Today, I am not so sure how our societal blanket is surviving. The threads are coming loose and those of us trained as educators must help to repair the fabric, bind up the holes and rethread the blanket.

Today, I am not so sure about the planned violence in the future -- militia marches on Washington, D.C, attacks on state Capitols, threats to do harm to our legislators. Voltaire said that "those that can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities." And I am worried that those voices may prevail. I am concerned about the intentions of some of our leaders on both sides of the aisle. I am praying for leaders who are, as Martin Luther King said, "not in love with money but in love with justice, not in love with publicity but in love with humanity. "

However, one thing I am sure of is that educators, especially retired educators, can be of much help in this crisis. Providing a balanced voice to discussions, working to hold the rioters responsible for their actions by identifying and prosecuting them, participating in forums and seminars with those of other political views to find commonalities, tamping down differences, showing compassion and empathy to all, helping classroom teachers with lessons and activities to increase tolerance, striving to lessen racist feelings, and promoting truth and facts.

May we all work to repair and keep our Republic. There is much for us to do.

Kate Singletary

Find Answers to Many Questions on the WLSU Website

The West Lake Shore Unit website is a treasure trove of information which, perhaps, you have not investigated yet. Beginning with this issue of the *Direct Line*, we will highlight some of the information that is available and how to access it. We hope you will continue to explore on your own, but always feel free to ask us any questions which you may have regarding articles on the site or on any other issue of concern to you. Check the contact information box for sources.

Taking a look at the WLSU web site: <http://wlsu.weebly.com>

When you click on the WLSU website link, you will initially see the opening page.



Should you click on the picture, you will be taken to a separate page for an explanation of the benefits of belonging to WLSU:



Clicking the back arrow on your browser will take you back to the "Home" page tab, from which you can then go to one of the links listed below the logo.



Click on the "About Us" tab and you will see links to the following:

- Why IRTA
- WLSU
- Join
- President's Message
- Membership Report



I would invite you to go to the WLSU link @ <http://wlsu.weebly.com> and investigate all of the helpful information that is available to WLSU members. The next issue of the *Direct Line* will continue to highlight the other link tabs on the website and the information located in each link.

Board Elections

Because we cannot hold General Membership Meetings until the COVID crisis is over, all WLSU officers and Executive Board members will continue in their positions until an election can be held at our next General Membership Meeting.



News from IRTA

1099R Form

The 1099R forms will be mailed by January 31, 2021. A duplicate copy of the 1099R form may be obtained by contacting the TRS Call Center.

3% COLA

The 3% Cost of Living Allowance will be paid on the February 1 check. It is first effective January 1 following either your first retirement anniversary or your 61st birthday, whichever is later.

TRS Trustee Election

Terms are expiring for two Active Trustees and one Annuitant Trustee. Petitions are due by January 29, 2021, and voting, if necessary, will occur from April 1 through May 3. Electronic voting for the nominated candidates will be available April 1 through 10 a.m. on May 3. To vote by electronic ballot, please ensure we have your valid email address on file. Paper ballots will only be mailed if we do not have your email address or you request a paper ballot.

Member Account Access

Annuitants may log into their Member Account Access and find Verification letters, benefit reports, and statements regarding their retirement account. The information regarding this account access will be forwarded by the association to members through Constant Contact and the Newsletter.

TRS Contact Information

The following contact information was provided:

Email – members@trsil.org

Email updates list – members@trsil.org

Member Services – 877-927-5877

Employer Services – 888-678-3675

Email – employers@trsil.org

Web page – WWW.trsil.org



Undoubtedly, this past year was one none of us will miss. However, as stated in the Scottish Play (*Macbeth*), Act 1, Scene 3: “Come what may time and the hour runs through the roughest day.” Simply put, this too will pass. We all know or have heard of family and friends who have suffered through the coronavirus, and we may know some who have passed away from the disease or complications therefrom. We are now facing 2021 and hoping to return to normalcy, both in daily life and politically. There is much to be done to repair the after-effects of the virus and the political, social, and economic turmoil created during these past four years. We cannot choose all that happens to us, but most of us can vow to not give up, take one day at a time, have faith, and get support by keeping up social contacts with friends and loved ones.

On the bright side, your pension is still intact, your COLA was applied, your health care insurance remains in place, and you are still here to enjoy all the benefits that life offers. With your membership in IRTA and WLSU, you are making an effort to hold onto the promises given to you years ago when you began your teaching career. The strength to hold onto what we have is enhanced by your membership because the old adage, “strength in numbers,” is still true. Certain politicians and those who oppose your pension benefits would be pleased to only have to oppose a small, ineffective organization. It is within our means to not let this happen. However, it takes effort to succeed as noted by Kurt Vonnegut in his 1963 novel, *Cat’s Cradle*, “In this world, you get what you pay for.” Remain a member of both IRTA & WLSU; volunteer to help your local by serving on a committee; and guide a friend, family member, or former school colleague to membership. Signing up is very easy online. Simply Google “IRTA,” go to the website and follow directions under “Association” and “Join Now.” Your spouse need not be a retired teacher to strengthen our organizations. Joining with a LIFE membership as an associate member comes with all benefits except not being able to vote at the IRTA biennial convention.

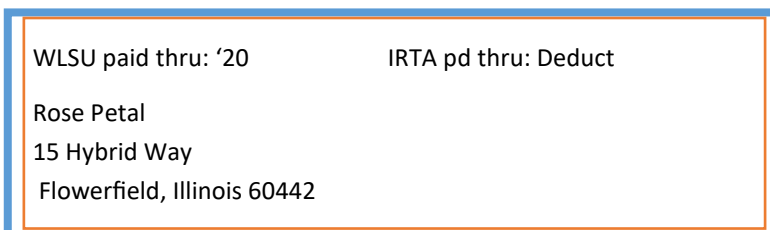
With the New Year here we find we have approximately 140 members who have not renewed membership for 2021. **Members who fail to renew will not receive another newsletter, and all communications will stop this March.** Please send a check made out to **West Lake Shore Unit** and mail to Louise Sterett at 770 57th St. #2, Clarendon Hills, IL 60514. Renewing for more than one year is an enormous help. Dues are \$12 annually, \$30 for 3 years, \$45 for 5 years, and \$125 for Life membership. Check your newsletter label for status. See the Contact Box for email or phone information. Please remember that IRTA dues do not pay for WLSU membership. Our unit must collect its own dues.

It is up to you to protect your financially secure retirement by helping out if you are able. As Abe Lincoln said in 1843, "That 'union is strength' is a truth that has been known, illustrated, and declared, in various forms in all ages of the world." Don't let Abe down.

Happier, Healthier New Year and thank you for being a member of WLSU.

Tom Szot, Membership *Emeritus*

Read Your Label



Check the label on your newsletter to see your dues status or email/call Louise Sterett if you receive the newsletter via email.

Note: Rose will need to send in her WLSU dues for 2021.

Her IRTA dues are paid through dues deduction. This means IRTA dues are deducted from her pension check monthly. She doesn't send any dues or need to reapply annually. **However, payment of IRTA dues does not cover her WLSU dues.**

Please contact Louise Sterett with any questions. See the WLSU Contact Information Box.



May they rest in peace, and may their memory be a blessing.

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

**William Vanderberg Diane Fator Carmelita Scott Katherine Simanovsky Richard Treadway
Robert Dvorak**



WLSU/IRTA WELCOMES THESE NEW MEMBERS

**Susan Vanderberg Linda Fowlkes Lynne Beauprea Ruben Acevedo
Julie Brenson Dawn Deaton Janet Nendze Amy Cleff-Holic
Julie Dunne Laura Font Everett Dunne Barbara Dahly**

WLSU Contact Information

--- Website: www.wlsu.weebly.com

President

Kate Singletary

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singletarykate@gmail.com

Membership *emeritus*

Tom Szot

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Treasurer

Louise Sterett

630-325-6470

lasterett@yahoo.com

Foundation

Fran Pettersen

630-985-7508

narfp@sbcglobal.net



There were 247 applications for the 2020 Excellence in Education Active Teacher Grants. Nineteen of those applications came from Area 3. The final judging was completed on December 15 and 16, 2020. Sixty-five grants will be awarded for a total of \$36,489. The names of those receiving grants are not yet available.

Information and the application for the 2021 Illinois Retired Teachers Association Scholarship Program is now available on the IRTA website under Foundation Information and an application can also be obtained by contacting Fran Pettersen at narfp@sbcglobal.net or 708-302-2129. This \$1500 scholarship is available to students who are a junior or senior in college and have been accepted into an accredited Teacher Certification Program. The applicant must be a resident of Illinois but may attend a school in any state. Also, an applicant must have and maintain a 3.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale.

Currently seven annuitants are receiving monthly financial assistance. There are also two annuitants who received financial aid on a one time basis. The yearly total for this assistance is \$39,650.

Fran Pettersen, Foundation Chair

Driver's License Offices Reopening

Many area Driver's License Offices are reopening after having shut down in December because of the increase in the number of coronavirus cases.

People only have to visit an office in person to renew their license if it has been suspended, if the license has been expired for more than year, or if they have to pass a written or road test.

Secretary of State, Jesse White, has extended the expiration dates for driver's licenses and ID cards to June 1, 2021, so that those who have to visit an office may wait for warmer weather. The offices are marked off for social distancing so there is not the usual amount of waiting space inside buildings, and lines may get long outside.

Those qualifying for online renewal will receive a letter with a unique pin number about 90 days before the expiration date and are encouraged to renew online.

Drivers can also renew license plate stickers online.

Drivers over 75 whose licenses expired in 2020 should have received a letter stating that their expiration dates were moved to the corresponding month in 2021.

The deadline for getting a REAL ID to use for domestic travel purposes was extended to Oct.1, 2021. With conditions still in a state of flux because of the virus, it's best to check online for the most up-to-date information at www.cyberdriveillinois.com. **Barbara Grabowski, FYI Committee**



Beware of Stimulus Payment and Corona Vaccine Scams

With the second round of stimulus checks in process of being delivered and the Corona virus vaccine being administered to first line defenders and those living in group settings, once again scams regarding them are on the rise. Here are some warnings, gathered from a variety of sources, that you should take note of:

Second Round Stimulus Scams



1. Be aware of offers to help you get the stimulus check quicker, especially if there is a “fee” involved. You do not need to apply or pay anything to get your stimulus funds. (Always be wary of anyone asking for an online payment to be made in gift cards, pre-paid debit cards, etc.) Also, at this time you will see offers and ads for “cash advance” loans with high interest rates.
2. Do not respond to any “urgent” request to verify personal information. The IRS will never call, text, or email you to verify information!
3. Bogus check scam. This is for people who do not use direct deposit for their stimulus checks. When you receive your check in the mail, take care that it is real! Scammers often make up the name of agencies. If you deposit a bogus check, the scammers may call and tell you the amount is incorrect and you need to return some of the funds. If you’re to repay using gift cards or pre-paid cards, beware!

If you think your personal information may have been compromised, you can go to the website [identityTheft.gov](https://www.identitytheft.gov) for help in developing a recovery plan.

You can check the IRS Get My Payment page to keep track of the status of your payment*.

*Up to \$600 per individual, including dependent children under age 17, if you earned less than \$75,000 (\$150,000 for those married filing jointly) in 2019. Payments phase out if you earned more than that, stopping completely for those with adjusted gross incomes of \$87,500 or more (\$174,000 for married couples).

Corona Virus Vaccine Scams

State and federal officials want the public to stay vigilant about COVID-19 scams related to vaccines, treatments, test kits, and clinical trials. Here are five points the public should understand:

1. **People should turn to trusted sources—their doctor or local health department—for guidance.**
2. **People should not buy any corona virus vaccine or treatment on the internet or from an online pharmacy.**
3. **Doses of the vaccine will be provided to patients at no cost. Providers may charge an administration fee and have that fee reimbursed by private and public insurance companies.**
4. **People should not respond to any solicitations about the vaccine. “Fraudsters are using telemarketing calls, text messages, social media platforms and door-to-door visits to perpetrate COVID-19 related scams.”**
5. **People should not give cash or any other form of payment to suspicious callers, nor should they divulge personal, medical, or financial information.**

This information is from an online article by Katherine Skiba, AARP, updated Dec. 15, 2020

Barbara Grabowski, FYI Committee

Bylaw Revisions

WLSU bylaws were reviewed in 2020, and recommendations for changes were approved by the Executive Board. Major changes included consolidating the duties of the vice presidents and establishing a Program Committee. Because of COVID no membership meeting was held in 2020. Therefore, bylaw change recommendations will be presented to members for their approval by vote at a future membership meeting, hopefully in 2021. A complete set of WLSU bylaws with the proposed changes is available at www.wlsu.weebly.com.

Barbara Grabowski



As you may be aware from other organizations to which you belong, it is getting difficult to find members to take leadership positions. Currently WLSU is in need of a recording secretary and a few people to fill the Membership Committee. Tom Szot has been doing the job officially for 13 years and unofficially for the last 4 years. Thanks to him we have grown from 400+ members to over 1300 members; we are one of the top 4 locals, regarding membership in the state. Those memberships and your continued membership in IRTA matters when our lobbyists in Springfield talk to legislators on our behalf, regarding our pensions, COLA, and health insurance. We need to maintain and continue to grow our membership.

We have attempted to streamline the board positions as much as possible and hope some of you will find a few hours a month to help fill these positions. Some, such as membership, can be done from home. If you have computer skills and are familiar with Excel, please consider helping with membership. Or why not attend a board meeting when the COVID situation is over and become acquainted with procedures and board members who are constantly trying to make WLSU an organization that offers information, socialization, and support to retired educators.

If you do not have time to participate in a leadership position, please help us in our efforts to make each of the positions more efficient and less time consuming. For example, if you have an email address which you have not shared with us, please do so. We do not give that information to anyone and only use it to communicate to you when necessary. With that in mind please resubscribe if you have unsubscribed. To do that, contact Marge Sucansky at sucansky@comcast.net. Also, please **open and/or respond to emails when we do send them which only occurs during periods when there may be legislation affecting your pension or health benefits or a **renewal notice for your membership**. Also, consider going **Green with the newsletter delivery**. Contact Marge.**

We are, also, going to try to automate our renewal process to cut down on the work of the membership committee. We will do this by sending emails when you owe dues. Please watch for those, especially in October of each year. You can determine your status by looking at the label on your newsletter or contacting Louise Sterett at lasterett@yahoo.com.

Mark Your Calendars

Tuesday, March 9: March Membership Mtg. Legislative Forum	10 a.m.	On ZOOM
Tuesday, March 30: Exec Bd.	10 a.m.	TBD
Thursday, May 6: Spring Luncheon: Greek Islands	11 a.m.	Greek Islands, Lombard
Tuesday, June: Area Conference		ZOOM
Tuesday, June 8,: Exec Bd. Mtg.	10 a.m.	TBA
Tuesday, June 22: Frida Kahlo Exhibit Trip	11 a. m.	College of DuPage
Tuesday, August 3: Exc Bd. Mtg	10 a.m..	TBA
Tuesday, September 14: Membership Mtg: Antiques Road Shoow	10 a.m.	Hinsdale Community House
Tuesday, October 12: Exec Bd. Mtg	10 a.m.	TBA
Mon/Tues, October 18, 19: IRTA Convention		Springfield Crowne Plaza
Friday, December 3: Holiday Luncheon	11 a.m.	Holiday Inn/Countryside

Details to follow

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: 800-728-4782

ALERT: 90 Years Old and Above—You qualify for free Life Member-

IRTA HOTLINE—Members who wish to hear the latest information about legislation regarding pensions and health insurance should telephone the IRTA office at 1-800-728-4782, irtaonline.org.

“Democracy is the worst system devised by the wit of man, except for all the others.” Winston Churchill



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

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

- 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

(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.

Truth has a certain buoyancy—it makes its way to the surface in time.

***In This Grave Hour* by Jacqueline Winspear**

Try going GREEN with your next newsletter.



West Lake Shore Unit
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DIRECT LINE

“Investing in the FUTURE of retired teachers”