From the President

Happy New Year!

Connie Carlton

I want to thank all of you who voted in the LASERS' Board of Trustees election. Again this year, a far greater number of retirees voted in this election than active employees and the percentages are remarkable. 62,292 ballots were mailed to active employees in this very important election yet only 6,881 (11.05%) ballots were returned by either mail, telephone, or internet while 31,143 ballots were mailed to retired members and 9,570 (30.73%) were returned. In other words, there are roughly half as many retirees as active employees, yet the retirees out voted the active employees by 2,689 votes!

The year begins with a new Governor and new leadership in the legislature and state agencies. RSEA also has new leadership with the appointment of Anne Tillman as Executive Director. In 2007, Anne was appointed as an At-Large RSEA Board member and she is, therefore, very familiar with our organization. We welcome her vast experience in human resources as an asset to RSEA. And our best wishes to Darlene Richard, who has worked tirelessly in this position for the past two years. She will be missed.

The annual RSEA Meeting dates and locations are finalized. Please refer to the schedule on page 2 and be sure to mark your calendar to attend the informative meeting in your area.

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The New Louisiana Voice

Official Journal of the Retired State Employees Association of Louisiana

January-February-March 2008 **Volume 16/Number 1**

Pictured are: (1st row, l-r) Fern Foster, Connie Carlton, Cheryl Smith, Anne Tillman, Frank Jobert, Barbara McCann and Russell Culotta. (2nd row, l-r) Anita Wooley, Marshall McKenzie, Allen Reynolds, Benny Harris, Sona Young, Louis Quinn and Kathy Singleton. Not present: Dianne Guillot.

2008 RSEA Board of Directors Is Seated

Connie Carlton, Baton Rouge, is the 2008 President of the Statewide RSEA Board of Directors for the second consecutive year. Carlton retired as Assistant Director of the Louisiana State Employees' Retirement System (LASERS), and represents retirees on their Board of Trustees.

Other reelected officers for 2008 are:

- Fern Foster, Lake Charles, Ist Vice President. Fern retired from McNeese State University, where she was Director of the MSU Bookstore, Post Office and Switchboard operations
- Kathy Singleton, Greensburg, 2nd Vice President. Kathy retired from the Amite Office of Community Services, Department of Social Services, where she was a Social Services Specialist
- Benny Harris, New Orleans, Secretary-Treasurer. Benny is the retired Warden, Bridge City Correctional Center for Youth, Department of Public Safety and Corrections/Corrections Services
- Sona Young, Lake Charles, Immediate Past President. Sona is retired from the Regional Office, Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development

All returning At-Large, Ex-Officio and area chapter leaders were seated at the January meeting.

New RSEA Executive Director Announced

The RSEA Board has appointed Anne Tillman as new Executive Director of RSEA beginning in mid-January 2008. This follows Darlene Richard's announcement that she planned to leave this position to spend time with her family, especially her grandchildren. She had been with RSEA since early 2005.

Anne Tillman

Darlene Richard

Richard retired from the Department of Economic Development (DED) in August of 2004, serving in state government for 28 years. She began in state

(Continued on Page 3.)

Annual Meetings Scheduled for '08

Below in date order is RSEA's 2008 annual meeting schedule. Be sure to mark your calendar now for these very important meetings. All times, dates and locations have been confirmed:

Shreveport - Tuesday, March 11, 2008, 10 a.m., LA. Technical College, 2011 North Market St., Bldg. E; President: Marshall McKenzie, 318-797-4356.

Monroe - Wednesday, March 12, 2008, 9:30 a.m., West Monroe Convention Center, 901 Ridge Ave.; President: Dianne Guillot, 318-396-6275

Alexandria - Thursday, March 13, 2008, 10 a.m., Community Center, 708 Main Street, Pineville; President: Anita Wooley, 318-473-2936.

New Orleans - Friday, March 14, 2008, 10 a.m., VFW Post #6640, Malta Room, 3314 Richland Ave, Metairie; President: Benny Harris, 504-888-7638.

Lake Charles - Tuesday, March 18, 2008, 10 a.m., Contraband Room, Lake Charles Civic Center, 900 Lakeshore Dr.; President: Fern Foster, 337-477-5250.

Acadiana/Lafayette - Wednesday, March 19, 2008, 10 a.m., Fezzo's III, 100 Lions Club Road, Scott; President: Cheryl Smith, 337-237-8634.

North Shore - Thursday, March 20, 2008, 10 a.m., Bogue Falaya Hall, Greater Covington Center, 317 North Jefferson; President: Kathy Singleton, 225-222-6567.

Baton Rouge - Tuesday, March 25, 2008, 9:30 a.m., Marriott Hotel, 5500 Hilton Ave.; President: Allen Reynolds, 225-622-3770.

Notices will be sent to all members with current mailing address. Please update your address with LASERS, if you moved in the past several months.

COLA Is Proposed for Third Year

For a third consecutive year, the Board of Trustees for the Louisiana State Employees' Retirement System (LASERS) recommended a cost of living adjustment (COLA) for eligible retirees, survivors and beneficiaries.

This recommendation has been forwarded to the President of the State Legislative Senate, and the Speaker of the Louisiana House of Representatives. Based on returns for the year ending June 30, 2007, there are sufficient funds in the Experience Account (about $275,000,000) to provide a COLA of 3%, the maximum allowed by law. It will cost approximately $156,600,000.

The COLA, if approved by the Legislature, will be effective July 1, 2008, subject to the one year receipt of benefits restrictions described below. The restrictions below are effective July 1, 2007.

- All retirees who have attained the age of 55 and who have received a benefit for at least one year;
- All non-retiree beneficiaries if benefits have been paid to retirees or their beneficiaries, or both combined for at least one year and in no event before the retirees would have attained the age of 55; and
- All disability retirees, or benefits based on a disability retiree's death.

The percentage of each recipient's cost-of-living increase shall be based on the first $87,359 of the annual benefit, and increases in the consumer price index for previous years.

This recommendation goes to the State's Public Employee Retirement System Actuarial Committee, known as "PERSAC", and if endorsed by them, is forwarded to the Louisiana State Legislature for approval during the upcoming legislative session scheduled to begin March 31, 2008.

Connie Carlton, 2008 RSEA State President, emphasized that COLA passage is a top RSEA priority. **In addition, it is critical that all retirees contact their state senators and representatives and urge approval of the proposed COLA.**

A legislator list is on our website (www.rseala.org, click on News & Updates), or contact the RSEA office at 1-800-256-1818, in Baton Rouge—344-5448.

Internet Fraud Tips

(National Consumer League's Internet Fraud Watch http://www.fraud.org/tips/internet/phishing.htm)

√ **Watch out for "phishy" emails.** The most common form of phishing is emails pretending to be from a legitimate retailer, bank, organization, or government agency. The sender asks to "confirm" your personal information for some made-up reason: your account is about to be closed, an order for something has been placed in your name, or your information has been lost because of a computer problem. Another tactic phishers use is to say they're from the fraud departments of well-known companies and ask to verify your information because they suspect you may be a victim of identity theft! In one case, a phisher claimed to be from a state lottery commission and requested people's banking information to deposit their "winnings".

√ **Don't click on links within emails that ask for your personal information.** Fraudsters use these links to lure people to phony Web sites that look just like the real sites of the company, organization, or agency they're impersonating. If you follow the instructions and enter your personal information on the Web site, you'll deliver it directly into the hands of identity

(Continued on page 3.)

SHIIP Covers Long Term Care Insurance

(Editor's Note: Last of a Series on this important and timely topic.)

The Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) of the Louisiana Department of Insurance is funded by a grant from the Health Care Financing Administration. The program was implemented in April of 1993 to provide counseling and assistance to seniors who need health insurance information. SHIIP volunteer counselors provide counseling, free of charge, on a variety of topics regarding health insurance, including:

- Long Term Care Insurance
- Medicare
- Medicare Supplement Insurance
- Medicare+Choice
- Medicaid
- Other Health Insurance Options

Long term Care Insurance Comparison Guide:
This guide, available from http://www.ldi.la.gov/Health/SHIIP/index.htm, contains information for individuals shopping for long term care insurance. The LDI SHIIP Division, has prepared this publication to assist you in your understanding of long term care insurance.

Given the tremendous changes in long term care insurance policy design within the last few years (for instance, elimination of prior hospitalization requirements, expansion of available benefits and coverage of additional sites), buyers today are clearly receiving more benefits for their premium dollars.

Long term care insurance is a complex product, with many variations among companies. Properly comparing any two policies is a challenge. Complicating the process even further, many companies offer more than one comprehensive plan or offer riders that effectively convert a basic comprehensive plan into an integrated plan. Compiling information from many companies, no matter how careful the data compilation, is still a process that produces inconsistencies and possible errors in the data displayed. Please keep this in mind when you draw your own conclusions when using this guide.

Once you have selected a company, you should consult with the insurance company or its representative to determine policy specifics and review the options that are available with the company. If a company you are checking on is not listed, please contact the SHIIP office at toll-free 1-800-259-5301 for further information. Consumer brochures explaining other insurance policies are available from the Louisiana Department of Insurance, P.O. Box 94214, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804-9214, Web site: www.ldi.state.la.us

From the President

(Continued from Page 1.)

We are delighted that for the third consecutive year LASERS' Board of Trustees has recommended a cost of living adjustment (COLA) for eligible retirees. The full story is on page 2.

The new year is well underway--and I want to thank all RSEA members paying their dues on a timely basis--with special appreciation to those who made additional donations. Your dues are very important to continuing RSEA's work. Thank you, also, to those of you that voted to re-elect me to represent you on LASERS' Board of Trustees. I look forward to the next four years of service on the Board along with serving my second consecutive year as your RSEA State President. My best wishes to you for a very happy and healthy 2008.

Connie

RSEA Selects New Executive Director

(Continued from Page 1.)

government in 1975, working for the Department of Corrections. She became their Chief Budget Analyst before accepting a position at DED. She started there in 1984 as Fiscal Officer, working her way to be Undersecretary and Chief Financial Officer.

Tillman, who retired from state government early in January 2008, was appointed an At-Large member of the RSEA Board in 2007.

She grew up in Metairie and received a Bachelor of Arts degree in art history from LSU. She went to work for the Department of Corrections Human Resource Office in 1978, later becoming a Human Resource Manager with the responsibility for employee benefits and operations. In September of 1998, she was selected as Human Resources Director for the Department of Natural Resources.

She was active in the State Human Resource Managers Association (SHRMA), serving as president for five years. Tillman also chaired the Louisiana State Personnel Council and worked on various committees for human resource program initiatives and enhancements on a departmental and a statewide level.

"I look forward to this challenge as a new retiree, working on behalf of the RSEA membership," Tillman stated.

Internet Fraud Tips

(Continued from Page 2.)

thieves.To check whether the message is really from the company or agency, call it directly or go to their Web site (using a search engine).

√ **Never enter your personal information in a pop-up screen.** Sometimes a phisher will direct

(Continued on Page 6.)

WEP-GPO Issue

Members of Louisiana's congressional delegation are fighting to repeal the Social Security Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset.

They joined with a group of representatives who cosigned a letter to House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Charles Rangel, urging him to support H.R. 82. This is legislation that seeks to repeal these two Social Security offsets.

The Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO) reduce the amount of Social Security benefits received by retired public employees or their dependents and spouses.

Newly resigned Rep. Richard Baker, a co-sponsor of the legislation to eliminate these offsets, joined Louisiana Representatives Boustany and Alexander (as well as over 30 other House Members) who signed a letter urging Chairman Rangel to move this legislation forward. To view the letter, go to: http://www.baker.house.gov/files/10-18-07RangelSocialSecurityLetter-FINAL.pdf

Rep. Baker's office has indicated it will be difficult to have this issue scheduled by the Committee Chair, and urges RSEA members and other interested parties to contact Rep. Rangel using the information below:

The Honorable Charles Rangel, Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
1102 Longworth Building.
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-3625; Fax: (202) 225 2610

Advisory - New regulations require the irradiation of all mail delivered to congressional offices in Washington D.C. Please note that this process will delay your correspondence by at least one week. Feel free to expedite a response by contacting Rep. Rangel via Fax at (202) 225-2610 or Email: http://waysandmeans.house.gov/contact.asp.

Tax Sheltering Health Insurance Premiums

Many active state employees choose to have their health insurance premium deductions tax sheltered under what is commonly known as the "cafeteria plan," which is available through their employing agency. This allows them to pay fewer taxes and to have more "take home pay." Unfortunately this tax sheltering option has not been available to retirees, because they do not meet the definition of "employee" as defined in Section 125 of the Internal Revenue Code (federal law).

However, when Congress passed the Pension Protection Act of 2006, it allowed only retired public safety officers to make a tax free distribution of up to $3,000 per year for accident, health or long term care insurance. Hopefully this action will allow other groups of retirees to qualify to do the same thing through **future** comparable legislation.

It is the intention of RSEA to support expanding this exemption to allow all retirees to tax shelter their health insurance premiums. RSEA has discussed this with the Louisiana congressional delegation. However, it is important that retirees contact their congressmen to request legislation to make it a reality for all retirees. Below is a list of contact information for the Louisiana congressional delegation.

United States Senate

Sen. Mary Landrieu
724 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-5824
(202) 224-9735 fax
http://landrieu.senate.gov

Sen. David Vitter
516 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-4623
(202) 228-5061 fax
http://vitter.senate.gov

United States House of Representatives

Rep. William Jefferson—2nd District
2113 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-6636
(202) 225-1988 fax
http://www.house.gov/jefferson

Rep. Charlie Melancon—3rd District
404 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-4031
202) 226-3944 fax
http://www.house.gov/melancon

Rep. James O. McCrery—4th District
2104 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-2777
(202) 225-8039 fax
http://www.house.gov/mccrery

Rep. Rodney Alexander—5th District
316 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-8490
(202) 225-5639 fax
http://www.house.gov/alexander

Rep. Charles Boustany, Jr.—7th District
1117 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-2031
(202) 225-5724 fax
http://www.house.gov/boustany

Information on Email

You can send email to each of the above members of Congress through their individual special contact forms located on their web sites.

Take the AARP Driver Safety Program

- Learn how to avoid driving hazards
- Minimal course fee
- No tests!
- Auto insurance discounts in most states–consult your insurance agent

AARP Driver Safety Program

Call toll-free: 1-888-227-7669 (1-888-AARP-NOW) www.aarp.org/drive

Louisiana State Employees' Retirement System (LASERS) Update

2007 LASERS Board of Trustees Election

One new trustee and four reelected incumbents were sworn in when members of the 2008 LASERS Board of Trustees took their seats in late January.

Connie Carlton

Barbara M. McCann

Retired member trustees Connie Carlton and Barbara McManus McCann were also re-elected to the board. Carlton is a former assistant director of LASERS, and serves as President of RSEA. McCann is retired from the Louisiana Office of Family Support.

Charles Castille, Undersecretary of the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, was elected to his first term as an active Trustee in this election.

Active-member incumbents Sheryl M. Ranatza and Trudy M. White were re-elected to their second terms on the board. Ranatza is Deputy Secretary, Department of Public Safety and Corrections/Corrections Services. Judge White is a Baton Rouge City Court judge.

There are 12 members on the LASERS Board of Trustees. Nine trustees are elected by active and retired members of the system. Three trustees serve in an ex officio capacity: the Louisiana State Treasurer; the Chair of the Louisiana Senate Committee on Retirement; and the Chair of the Louisiana House of Representatives Committee on Retirement. The next LASERS Board of Trustees election takes place in 2009.

DROP/State Income Tax

Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP) funds can be rolled over into a Deferred Compensation account without incurring a tax liability. According to state law, this optional benefit is exempt from state and municipal taxes during any such transfer. However, funds distributed from a Deferred Compensation account are subject to state and federal income taxes.

Direct Deposit

If the first day of the month falls on a weekend or holiday, your retirement benefit funds might not be available immediately, depending on the business calendar of your financial institution.

LASERS benefit payments made through Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT), also known as direct deposit, always take place by the last day of the month. However, the deposit might not register with your bank or credit union if the

(Continued in next column.)

Flag Salutes

Congress recently passed a bill that allows veterans to salute the flag, whether they are in or out of uniform, instead of putting their hand over their hearts. It is S. 1877 by Senator Jim Inhofe (Oklahoma), passed on July 25, 2007.

It states, *"Members of the Armed Forces and veterans who are present, but not in uniform, may render the military salute. All other persons present should face the flag and stand at attention with their right hand over the heart, or if applicable, remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart."*

START Deductions

LASERS retirees can now have START account contributions withdrawn directly from their benefit checks.

The Louisiana Student Tuition and Revenue Trust (START) program is a tax-deferred plan that allows you to save for your children's or grandchildren's college educations today.

To set up benefit check deductions to a START account, complete the *Payroll Deduction Authorization* form available at www.startsaving.la.gov, the website of the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA).

Upon receipt of your authorization form, LOSFA will forward the information to LASERS, and we will set up your deductions.

Amendment #3 Passes

RSEA supported passage of Constitutional Amendment #3, which prevents future legislation from reducing the fiscal soundness of the state's retirement systems.

This amendment was a result of Act No. 484, passed by the legislature during the 2007 Regular Session.

With this statewide approval, any future proposed legislation resulting in the creation of additional unfunded accrued liability (debt) for the retirement system has a new requirement.

An additional funding source also must be provided that will completely eliminate the created unfunded accrued liability within ten years of such creation.

Direct Deposit

(Continued from previous column.)

first day of the month is not a business day. In that case, your funds might not be available until the second, third, or even fourth day of the month. LASERS has no control over the business calendar of your bank or credit union. If you have questions, please contact them directly.

Office of Group Benefits Update

Small Steps to Better Health

Your colleagues at the Office of Group Benefits want you to feel as good today as you did 20 (or more) years ago!

According to the American Academy of Family Physicians, if we adopt one or two new good health habits, we might be able to feel even better than we did. Even small changes can improve our health. One small change we can make is to add some activity to our daily life. Another is to eat more fiber.

Physical activity is good for people at any age, because it makes our bones and muscles stronger. So, we're less likely to fall and our bones are less likely to break. Regular physical activity is good for our brains, too.

Most of us find that walking is one of the easiest activities for us to do. Experts recommend at least 30 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week. One helpful tip is to get a dog that needs to be walked. If walking isn't your cup of tea, you might try gardening, dancing, fishing or swimming.

Why should we eat more fiber?
Fiber can improve our health in 3 ways:

1. It helps our colon work better.
2. It reduces the risk of heart disease and cancer.
3. It is associated with lower cholesterol levels.

We don't have to change our diet all at once. We can try making one small change at a time. For example, if we eat two slices of white toast for breakfast, we should try to substitute one slice of whole wheat toast.

How active we are and what we eat are *habits*, and starting two new healthy habits can be challenging. We should start small and reward ourselves for each step we take. We will find it easier to be more physically active and eat more fiber if we think of every day and every meal as a chance to do something good for ourselves.

OGB wishes you and your family health and happiness in 2008. **Source: *familydoctor.org***

Retired State Employees Association of Louisiana
The New Louisiana Voice
is the official RSEA publication. The mission of the Association is to advance the quality of life of state employees who have given generously of their talents to the State of Louisiana. The name and distinctive logo of the publication are registered with the Louisiana Secretary of State. Permission is hereby granted for the use of any materials within these pages, provided proper acknowledgment is made.
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Frank Jobert--Slidell--985/643-8393
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Sona Young--Lake Charles--337/439-9529

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Barbara M. McCann--Lake Charles 337/433-8910
Louis Quinn--Baton Rouge 225/766-3245
Russell Culotta--Baton Rouge 225/766-1733

Internet Fraud Tips

(Continued from page 3.)

you to a real company, oganizational or agency Web site, but then an unauthorized pop-up screen created by the scammer will appear, with blanks in which to provide your personal information. If you fill it in, your information will go to the phisher. Legitimate companies, agencies and organizations don't ask for personal information via pop-up screens. Install pop-up blocking software to help prevent this type of phishing attack.

See http://www.fraud.org/tips/internet/phishing.htm for more information.

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