

**Frank L. Jobert, Jr.**

**June 8, 2019**

**Director of RSEA's Legislative & Governmental Affairs**

The 2019 Regular Louisiana Legislative Session is in the books! This year's Regular Session ended (*sine die*) at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 6<sup>th</sup>. Since the session was officially termed as a "fiscal session" and only five (non-fiscal) bills could be filed by each legislator, it was expected to be a relatively quiet and non-controversial session. The biggest and most controversial matters that ended up being debated had less to do with budget and fiscal matters, and more to do with other things. The state's revenues are now stabilized, and actually resulted in a recent budget surplus, making the task of balancing the 2019-2020 budget easier.

With 2019 being an election year for the entire 144 members of the legislature, the governor, and other statewide elected officials, no one was expecting any new taxes to be proposed, further minimizing the opportunity for anything "controversial" to pop up. In fact, one measure (HB 599) by Rep. Lance Harris proposed to reduce state sales taxes, but it did not pass! Fantasy Sports Betting (HB 459) by Rep. Kirk Talbot and Sports Wagering (SB 153) by Senator Danny Martiny, both failed to gain passage, thereby reducing the potential for additional state revenues.

Some legislators even suggested, that since the state ran a budget surplus last year, there should be a "roll-back" of some previously approved taxes. The legislature was not, for the most part, inclined to accept this notion after the recent 2018 tax compromises, enacted last year, have just begun to show up on the state's revenue stream. Finally, on the infrastructure front, nearly \$700 million in Gulf oil spill recovery money, given to the state by British Petroleum (BP) to account for economic damages caused by the spill, will pay for a list of road, bridge and infrastructure projects in just about every corner of the state.

There were basically five (5) retirement bills impacting LASERS that were pre-filed by the February 22nd pre-filing deadline. Additional measures:

HCR 20 (Rep. Sam Jones) and SCR 34 (Senator Beth Mizell) and HB-392 (Rep. Cameron Henry) were added along the way. All of these measures will be detailed elsewhere in this newsletter with RSEA's recommended positions and the outcome of each piece of legislation.

Of special note, was House Bill 28 by Rep. Barry Ivey which called for the establishment of a "hybrid retirement plan" (part defined benefit and part defined contribution) effective July 1, 2020, which was opposed by RSEA, was voluntarily deferred by the author in the House Retirement Committee. I expect to see a version of this measure reintroduced in the 2020 legislative session next year!

The latest updates on the Social Security Offsets (WEP/GPO) are as follows: U.S. Senate Bill (S.521) was introduced by Senator Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) **now has 30 co-sponsors up from 7** in my last report. However, as of this writing, **neither of Louisiana's Senators, Cassidy or Kennedy has co-sponsored this measure!** The U. S. House of Representatives "Social Security Fairness Act of 2019" (H.R. 141) has been filed by Congressman Rodney Davis (R-Illinois) and now **has 182 co-sponsors, as of this writing, up from 140 co-sponsors** on my last report. Also, all six of Louisiana's Congressmen are now co-sponsors, **including Rep. Steve Scalise**. These measures appear to be truly bipartisan efforts and are also known as the "Equal Treatment of Public Servants Bills". We need 290 co-sponsors to force a vote in the House of Representatives.

**Please contact your U.S. Senators, Bill Cassidy (202-224-5824 [www.cassidy.senate.gov](http://www.cassidy.senate.gov) ) and John Kennedy (202-224-4623 [www.kennedy.senate.gov](http://www.kennedy.senate.gov) ) and ask them to co-sponsor Senate Bill (S.521).** Also, contact your friends and relatives in other states, and ask them to contact their U.S. Senators and U.S. Representatives in their states, and request they too co-sponsor the above proposed legislation.

Finally, remember this is an election year and all 144 of Louisiana's Senators' and Representatives' seats in the Louisiana legislature are up for election. And all statewide elected officials, including the Governor,

are also up for election. **So always remember to exercise your right to vote and vote for the candidate(s) that pledge to protect your retirement and healthcare benefits!**

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