

The New Louisiana Voice



RSEA

Working Today for *Your* Tomorrow

Fall 2022 | Volume 30/ Number 4 Digital



RSEA Pays Tribute to Bobby Savoie

Bobby Savoie donates \$500 to St. Vincent de Paul and RSEA Foundation Educational Scholarship

President's Message

Welcome to RSEA's first digital-only newsletter. The Board decided earlier this year to increase our information sharing with members from our usual three newsletters per year to four per year, but to save on increased costs by making the new January newsletter a digital-only newsletter. This edition will be sent via email to all members, posted on the website and announced via social media. This electronic edition will allow for additional space and additional photographs to be published. It is an experimental edition and we will evaluate the effectiveness of this approach. I hope you enjoy it. Please let us know what you think.

RSEA held its annual conference in Marksville at the Paragon Casino on October 11 and 12. It was well attended and I think everyone had a great time seeing each other face-to-face for a change. We had several learning events including the AARP Driving Safety Program, Financial Planning, Alzheimer's update, as well as a Cajun humorist who was quite well received. At our luncheon we recognized the family of Allen Reynolds who was inducted into the RSEA Hall of Fame. A very touching presentation was made by Byron Decoteau, the current Civil Service Director and an RSEA Board member. Thank you to all those who attended and if you could not attend, please consider attending next year. Planning has already begun.

New officers were elected at the October RSEA Board meeting held after the conclusion of the Conference. The new officers are:

President - James LeBlanc, Jr

First Vice-President - Dean Moberly

Second Vice-President - Pennie Babin

Secretary/Treasurer - Shannon Templet

Congratulations to these new officers - I look forward to working with you for the next two years.

Please remember that it is Scholarship Application time. Applications for the RSEA Foundation Scholarship may be found on our website. If you know of an interested student, please encourage him/her to apply.

Chapter Meetings are being planned for the spring. Dates, times and locations are included in this newsletter. It will be great to have meeting in-person this year after a two-year absence.

To further RSEA's outreach and educational opportunities for our members, we are offering periodic one-hour webinars that will be targeted to a single informational area. The first webinar was held in November (the writing of this article precedes the webinar). We already have over 200 registered to attend the webinar entitled "How to Protect Your Nest Egg". We hope to be able to offer additional topics such as: Medicare Basics, Long-term Care, Emergency Medical Transportation, etc. Please let us know if you have any suggestions.

This is my last President's Message in the RSEA Newsletter. I have thoroughly enjoyed my term as President and it has truly been an honor to represent you on the Board. I have learned a great deal over the past two years. There have been a number of successes. I am particularly pleased with the implementation of the RSEA Foundation Scholarship, the ability of the RSEA organization to persist through the pandemic, the success of various digital access meetings and learning opportunities, the increase in membership through several recruitment campaigns, the awarding of a 13th LASERS check, and a return to our annual conference. I want to thank the RSEA Board members for all their efforts and a tremendous thank-you to the RSEA staff - Jimmy Anthony, Susan Jandle and Linda Price. I could not have made it through my term without you!

And of course, a final Dad Joke: At what point does a joke become a Dad Joke? When it becomes apparent!

Thank you for being a member of RSEA and remember that RSEA is "working today for your tomorrow"!



David Thomas

RSEA President

RSEA Legislative & Governmental Affairs Director's Message

This is the latest update on the developments on the Social Security Offsets—the WEP (Windfall Elimination Provision) and the GPO (Government Pension Offset). At this time last year, **U.S. House Bill HR-82 (Rep. Rodney Davis-IL) Social Security Fairness Act of 2021** had 214 co-sponsors. As of RSEA's last quarterly update in September 2022, HR 82 had gathered 305 co-sponsors. This is 15 more signatures than the 290 needed to bring the measure to floor vote prior to the Congressional recess for the mid-term elections. This would have allowed Congress to put the matter on the consensus calendar and bring the matter directly to the House floor for a vote. Unfortunately, in the “wisdom” of the House leadership, the bill was not brought directly to the floor, but was side-tracked to the House Ways and Means Committee. The Ways and Means Committee met and voted on September 20, 2022 and sent the bill (HR -82) without recommendation (or amendments) to the House floor “regular calendar” instead of the “consensus” calendar. This means the House leadership now decides if and when the bill will be brought up for a vote by the full House of Representatives. This has the consequence of slowing the bill down and possibly delaying it until the next session of Congress. Due to the upcoming mid-term election & holiday breaks and other matters, the likelihood of a floor vote is unknown and uncertain for this session of Congress which concludes on January 3, 2023 or just a little over a month away.

In an effort to keep the legislation (HR-82) alive, the lead author, Rep. Rodney Davis filed a “**Discharge Petition**” (**HR-1367**) requiring 218 in-person signatures on the House Floor while Congress is in session. As of this writing on November 29, 2022, only 32 signatures of the required 218 have been obtained! It still seems like an uphill battle at this point. Thus far, Representatives Graves, Letlow, Higgins and Johnson from Louisiana have signed the Discharge Petition (HR-1367). Reps. Scalise and Carter have not signed the discharge petition, as of this writing. Additionally, besides slowing down the process, this subjects the bill to amendments and still further delays. In its current form, the bill is a total repeal of the WEP and GPO. However, the Ways and Means Committee members were concerned about the high cost of the bill's total repeal of the WEP and GPO, and they may look to lower the cost by only implementing a **partial repeal** of either the WEP or GPO only, and **not a total repeal** of both offsets. The bill is now subject to amendments and further delaying tactics, which is a travesty in my view!

We will continue to monitor this legislation and stay in touch with our Louisiana state congressional delegation (all of whom are currently co-sponsors of HR -82) and keep you informed of any progress on the measure or any other substitute measures for HR-82. There are numerous other competing House measures for modification of the WEP/GPO, just to name a few: 1) HR-5834 (Kevin Brady-TX) Equal Treatment of Public Servants Act of 2021; 2) HR-2337 (Richard Neal-MA) Public Servants Protection and Fairness Act of 2021; and 3) HR-5723 (John

Larson-CT) Social Security 2100: A Sacred Trust. My realistic appraisal of the situation is that the best we can hope for at this point is a partial repeal of the WEP only and a possibly a partial repeal of the GPO as a longshot. There seems to be more focus on the WEP at this time by the leadership of the House Ways and Means Committee. Turning to other matters of interest to our members, RSEA has been contacted by several of our RSEA members regarding the impact of the LASERS one-time supplement payment on their Social Security Benefits. It was reported earlier that the one-time supplemental payment would not in all likelihood impact the retirees' SSA benefits, since it was a non-recurring benefit. Upon learning of this situation, RSEA contacted LASERS legal section and reported this to them. Since that time, LASERS has filed a "complaint" with the Social Security Administration (SSA) on behalf of our members. We are also staying in contact with LASERS and our members to follow-up on this situation. It is suggested that anyone who receives a letter from SSA about this matter should call Social Security and also appeal the matter to SSA in accordance with the guidelines found in the letter from SSA.

LASERS, along with the other three state retirement systems-Teachers, School Employees and State Police, is "working diligently to improve the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) mechanism for our retirees, as reported by Ms. Cindy Rougeou, LASERS Executive Director. Proposed legislation is being contemplated for the 2023 session that, if successful would provide COLAs on a more consistent, transparent, and predictable basis. RSEA will be actively monitoring the proposed legislation, and participating with LASERS and the other retiree associations in trying to gain passage of this 2023 proposed legislation. Finally, at its September, 2022 LASERS Board meeting, the LASERS Board of Trustees adopted the June 30, 2022 LASERS Annual Valuation Report and its proposed DROP interest rate of 6.55%. The report awaits final approval by (PRSAC) Public Retirement Systems' Actuarial Committee, scheduled to meet on December 15, 2022. If approved by PRSAC, interest will be posted by LASERS to "old" DROP accounts for the time period July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022 in the coming months.



Frank L. Jobert, Jr.,
Legislative & Governmental Affairs Directo

Message from AARP

Bobby G. Savoie, a native of Opelousas and resident of Denham Springs, was selected by AARP, the nonprofit organization for people 50 and older, to receive the 2022 AARP Louisiana Andrus Award for Community Service, the Association's most prestigious and visible state volunteer award for community service.

Bobby was selected for his remarkable service, which has greatly benefited the community, reflected AARP's vision and mission and inspired other volunteers.

Bobby is currently serving in his sixth and final year as state president for the AARP Louisiana State Office. As the lead volunteer and face of AARP, he is passionate about educating and advocating for older adults. He has been involved in almost every program of AARP and has been instrumental in advocating for more funding for home and community-based services so that older adults can stay in their homes with the support of family and friends.

Bobby is also a member of the Speakers Bureau and delivers workshops on a variety of topics like fraud prevention, disaster preparation and response, and caregiving. He is also the lead Fraud Watch Network volunteer, educating Louisianans on how to protect themselves against fraud and scams, and delivering weekly fraud tips via social media.

Prior to becoming president, Bobby spent over four years as a volunteer for AARP's Capital Area Advocacy Team. In this role, he tracked legislation, reviewed bills that had been filed and, during sessions, monitored committee meetings, and testified support or opposition to legislation before committees. Bobby is a dedicated and committed part of the Louisiana team.

"I am honored to recognize Bobby Savoie as the recipient of the 2022 Andrus Award," said Denise Bottcher, AARP Louisiana state director. "In keeping with Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus' legacy of service, Bobby has exhibited leadership, service, and passion through his spirit of volunteerism and contributions to his community."

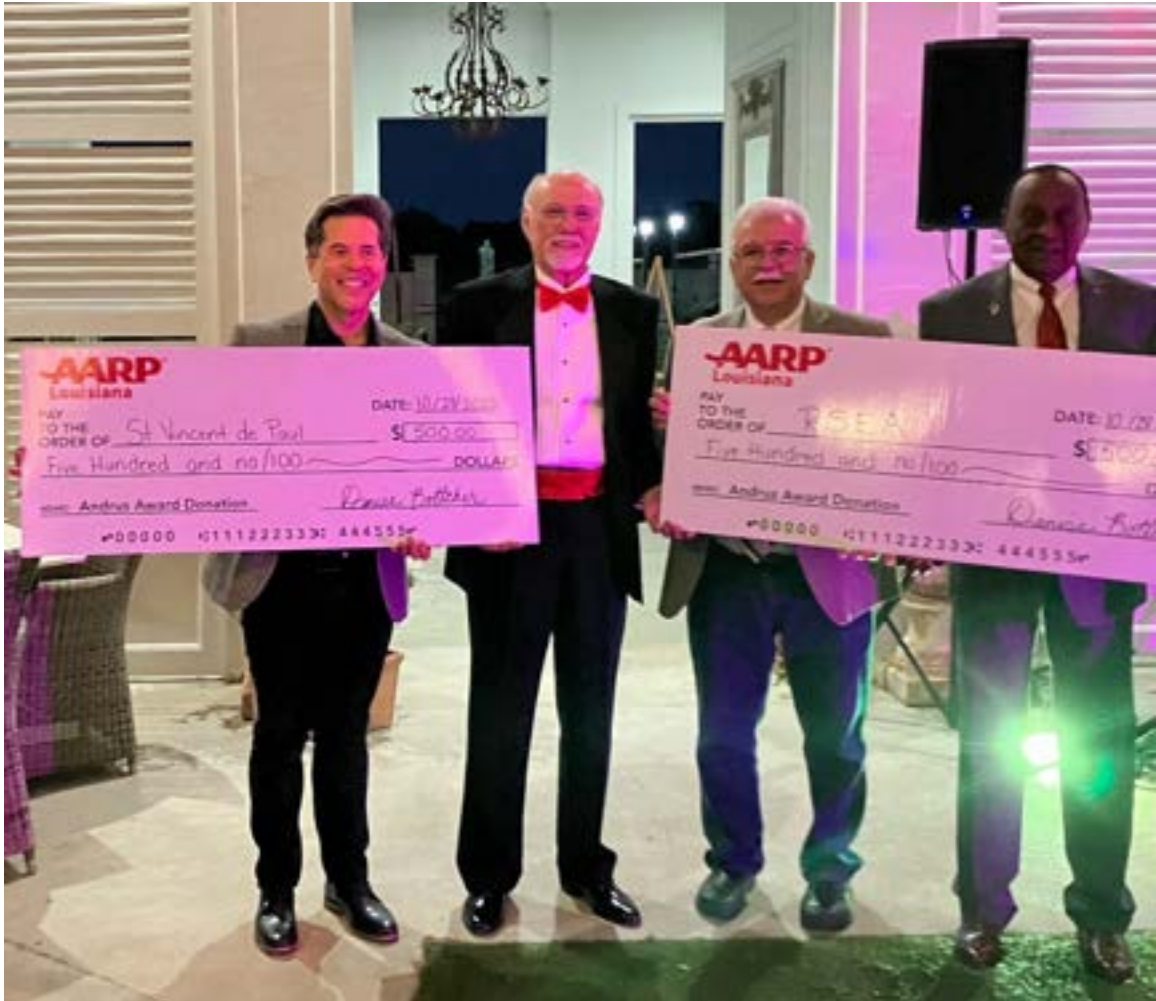
Bobby was honored at a ceremony on Friday, Oct. 28, 2022.

AARP Louisiana donated \$500 on behalf of Bobby to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Baton Rouge, a non-profit organization with a rich history of service to the needy, and \$500 to the Retired State Employees Association of Louisiana (RSEA) whose mission is to advance the quality of life for current and future retired state employees.

Recipients across the nation were chosen for their ability to enhance the lives of AARP members and prospective members, improve the community in or for which the work was performed, and inspire others to volunteer.



Bobby Savoie
Louisiana State President AARP



Michael Acaldo, Bobby Savoie, Frank Jobert and James Leblanc hold the donation checks by AARP in Bobby Savoie's name.

[LASERS Updates](#)

Mailing Soon: Form 1099-R for 2022

Form 1099-R for 2022 will be mailed to retirees no later than January 31, 2023. You can check your mailing address online in myLASERS. Please allow up to two weeks for delivery of your 1099-R. If you have not received it by February 7, or if you need to request a duplicate copy, you may access your 1099-R information online through myLASERS. To report an error or request a duplicate be mailed to you, please call LASERS at 225.922.0600 or 1.800.256.3000. Should you have questions regarding your 1099-R, we suggest that you contact your tax advisor.

A Power of Attorney May be Right for You

What is a Power of Attorney (POA)? A POA is a legal document that allows an individual to act on behalf of another person. For many, having a valid POA provides peace of mind in knowing that if you are unable to make decisions for yourself, someone you know and trust will be able to make those decisions on your behalf. Please note that a POA typically includes your financial interests, allowing the designated individual to act on your behalf in the event of your mental or physical incapacity.

There are several types of POAs and various degrees of responsibility that can be delegated. LASERS is unable to speak to anyone other than you regarding your account or accept documents signed by anyone but you unless we have an approved POA on file. Further, LASERS does not accept strictly Medical POAs, as those relate only to healthcare decisions.

We strongly encourage you to contact your attorney as you plan ahead to determine if a POA is right for you. Once you have your POA documents, send in the **original, notarized document** to LASERS to be reviewed and approved by our legal team.

2023 Election Year for LASERS Board of Trustees

Five seats on the LASERS Board are up for a vote in 2023. Two seats are open for retired members and three for active members.

Nominations will open on March 1 and close on July 11. Voting occurs in September and October, and the Board certifies election results and announces newly elected Trustees in November. If you are interested in being a candidate in the Board election, nominating petitions and additional election information will be available on the LASERS website soon.

Answers to Your Questions Regarding the One-Time Supplemental Payment Potentially Impacting Social Security Benefits

Act 656 (SB 5) passed in the 2022 General Session of the Louisiana Legislature authorizing a **one-time only** supplemental benefit payment for eligible retirees and beneficiaries. LASERS made payments to eligible members on August 15, 2022. We were subsequently made aware that the Social Security Administration (SSA) has corresponded with retirees who receive SSA benefits regarding the impact of the one-time supplemental payment. As such, LASERS has provided answers to your questions regarding this potential impact.

1. What are the federal offsets?

Employees who receive a government pension from employment in positions that are not covered by Social Security may have their Social Security benefits reduced under federal provisions called the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO). The WEP is a reduction to your **Social Security retirement benefit** because of the pension earned from your LASERS-covered employment. The GPO is a reduction to your **Social Security spousal or survivor benefits** because of the pension earned from your LASERS-covered employment.

2. Will the one-time supplemental payment impact my Social Security benefit?

Potentially. While LASERS stands by its belief that the one-time supplemental payment should not impact your WEP or GPO reduction, some members have received letters from the SSA informing them of a potential change to their reduction. The letters indicate that the impact of the one-time payment will be amortized over the life expectancy of the member. Presumably, this would result in a minimal impact; but LASERS agrees that any reduction, especially one beyond a person's already reduced benefit, is too much.

3. What has LASERS done regarding this issue?

We understand your frustration and have filed a complaint with the Social Security Administration on behalf of our members.

4. What should I do if I receive a letter from the SSA regarding my one-time supplemental payment?

Call the Social Security Administration. If the letter gives you the option to appeal, we suggest you do so.

5. Can I return the one-time payment to LASERS?

If you would like to return your one-time supplemental payment to LASERS, you may do so. However, we strongly suggest you reach out to Social Security to get a better understanding of what your potential reduction is prior to returning the money to LASERS.

You are also invited, as always, to contact your representative in Congress. **Any change to the WEP and GPO reductions must be done on the federal level.** Our System is continuously working with elected officials to reduce or eliminate the federal offsets and we encourage you to contact them as well.

OGB Updates

Caremark/SilverScript Resources

Effective January 1, 2023, Caremark/SilverScript became the Pharmacy Benefits Manager (PBM) for the Office of Group Benefits (OGB) Pelican HRA1000 and Magnolia health plans. Here are some important facts our members need to know:

1. Active employees and non-Medicare retirees:

- a. You can continue to use your current pharmacy; if it is in the Caremark network. You **DO NOT** have to use a CVS pharmacy. You can check to see if your pharmacy is in the Caremark network by visiting: <https://info.caremark.com/oe/ogb> and scrolling down to *Find a Pharmacy in Your Area*.
- b. You can check to see if your prescription is covered and what the cost will be by visiting: <https://info.caremark.com/oe/ogb> and scrolling down to Drug Lists.
- c. If you have questions about the pharmacy network or your prescription coverage, please contact the Caremark Customer Service team at 1-877-300-1906. The Caremark Customer Service team is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

2. Medicare retirees:

- d. You can continue to use your current pharmacy, if it is in the SilverScript network. You **DO NOT** have to use a CVS pharmacy. You can check to see if your pharmacy is in the SilverScript network by visiting: : <https://info.caremark.com/oe/ogb> and scrolling down to *Find a Pharmacy in Your Area*.
 - a. You can check to see if your prescription is covered and what the cost will be by visiting: <https://www.caremark.com/portal/asset/SilverScriptMedDFormulary.pdf>
 - b. If you have questions about the pharmacy network or your prescription coverage, please contact the SilverScript Customer Service team at 1-888-996-0104. The SilverScript Customer Service team is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If you need other assistance, please contact OGB Customer Service at 1-800-272-8451.



What's even better than summertime travel adventures? Saving big on your summertime travel adventures, of course! And with AMBA Passport from MyAMBA discounts, you can get in shape get out to sea. Whichever you choose, we can help you can save hundreds!

Whether it's golf packages and vacations from Golf breaks or scenic North American hikes with Active Adventures, you can have fun and fitness at the same time. You can also explore Canada, Iceland, and even the Galapagos. All of our partners are committed to providing you amazing times and great memories with excellent service and expert guides!

Of course, not everyone's idea of a vacation is to be on their feet all day. Some of us prefer to kick back and relax. Our cruises are the perfect answer. Our partners include Carnival Cruise Line, Royal Caribbean International, Disney Cruises, and more. All promise to give you rest and relaxation on the high seas with plenty of entertainment, nightlife, ad

stops to explore new lands!

Prefer an all-inclusive resort or a family vacation package? We've got those too. You've earned the right to relax your way – and we're committed to helping you do it! And what about discounts on the means to get to your destinations? We've got discounts for you on airfare, rental cars, and hotels.

There are so many more savings available to you through your Passport membership. Once you start exploring, you won't be able to stop! Dining? Check! Entertainment? Check! Electronics? Check! And here's the best part – **your AMBA Passport membership is absolutely FREE!** **Start taking advantage of all the savings available through your association and AMBA. Just go to myAMBAdiscounts.com, enter your email, activation code, and basic information, and sign up for email alerts. To learn more, call AMBA at 866-979-0497 or visit myAMBAdiscounts.com.**



BENEFITS STILL FIT?

TIME TO EXPAND YOUR COVERAGE.

As your life changes, consider some of these benefits and discounts from

RSEA & AMBA:

- Dental & Vision Insurance
- Long-Term Care
- Home Health Care
- MASA (Air and Ground Ambulance Plan)
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- Accident Policy
- Medicare Supplement Policy
- Easy Issue Life Policy
- Tax Deferred Annuity
- Hearing Benefits
- Discounts on Travel, Dining & more

Learn more: **1-877-556-4582**

myambabenefits.info/rsea

**RETIRED STATE EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION OF
LOUISIANA**





Meet with your local retirement plan advisor

Empower is the service provider for several Louisiana retirement plans including the **Louisiana Deferred Compensation 457(b)** and the **LASERS Self-Directed 401(a) DROP** plans and offers ongoing support as your career and life change.

Throughout your retirement, you have the option to keep your assets in your plan(s) and can continue to take advantage of the financial guidance and resources provided. Local retirement plan advisors are available to meet with you one-on-one to review your savings, investing strategy and income sources, and can provide personalized advice based on your complete financial circumstances with actionable next steps to take toward your goals. They can also help answer any questions you may have, including:

- Have I saved enough for my future?
- When do I begin and how much should I be withdrawing?
- How do I minimize the impact taxes have on my savings?
- Does my investment strategy align with my withdrawal strategy?

These meetings are part of the service you receive from the Louisiana Deferred Compensation 457(b) and LASERS Self-Directed 401(a) DROP Plans and are complimentary to all eligible, participating and retired members of the plan.

Find your local retirement plan advisor at LouisianaDCP.com > *Contact us* or visit louisiana_default.empowermytime.com to schedule a meeting online. You can also email LouisianaDCP@empower.com or call the participant services center at **800-937-7604** for additional information.

Senior Discounts at Retailers in Louisiana

1. ALBERTSONS

Age for discount: Varies Senior discount is available at select stores throughout the country. Customers are encouraged to reach out to their store to confirm if there's a senior discount.

2. BROOKSHIRE'S FOOD & PHARMACY

Age for discount: 60+ Every Tuesday and Thursday, customers 60 and older can save 5 percent off their grocery purchase when they use their Brookshire's Thank You Card. Eligible adults need to ask for the discount at checkout. The discount doesn't apply to milk and other dairy products and a host of other things including fuel, tobacco and prescription drugs.

3. WALGREENS

Age for discount 55+ 20% off eligible in-store merchandise on the first Tuesday of each month. Must have a Balance Rewards card.

4. THE SALVATION ARMY THRIFT STORES

Age for Discount 55+ Up to 50% off on senior discount days (varies by location).

For a complete list of other retailers that offer senior discounts use this link. [2022 Biggest List of Senior Discounts \(Restaurants, Retail, Travel & More\) \(theseniorlist.com\)](#)

RSEA 2023 Chapter Meetings Schedule

The following is the schedule for RSEA's 2023 annual meetings IN DATE ORDER. Mark your calendar to attend one of the chapter meetings below.

SHREVEPORT: Tuesday, March 7, 2022, 9:30 A.M. (doors open at 8:30 A.M.)
Location: North West Technical College,
2011 North Market St., Bldg. E, Shreveport, LA; President: Bonita Hearne, 318-746-1924

MONROE: Wednesday, March 8, 2023, 9:00 A.M., Location: West Monroe Convention Center, West Monroe Hall,
901 Ridge Ave., West Monroe, LA; President: Dianne Guillot, 318-376-6275

ALEXANDRIA: Thursday, March 9, 2023, 9:30 A.M., New Location: Kees Park Community Center, 708 Main St.,
Pineville, LA; President: Victor Dennis, Jr., 318-623-4547

LAKE CHARLES: Tuesday, March 14, 2023, 9:00 A.M., New Location: Trinity Baptist Church, 1800 Country Club Rd., Lake Charles, LA; President: Gwen Thompson, 337-912-9373

ACADIANA/LAFAYETTE: Wednesday, March 15, 2023, 9:30 A.M., Location: Picard Center for Child Development,
University of Lafayette at Lafayette, 200 East Devalcourt Street, Lafayette, LA; Pennie Babin, 337-247-0569

BATON ROUGE: Thursday, March 16, 2023, 9:30 A.M., Location: East Baton Rouge Parish Library, Large Meeting room, Main Library, 7711 Goodwood Blvd., Baton Rouge, LA; President: James LeBlanc, 225-284-9447

COASTAL: Tuesday, March 21, 2023, 9:30 A.M., Location: Terrebonne Parish Main Library, 151 Library Dr., Houma, LA;
President: Mary Mahoney, 985-791-7599

NEW ORLEANS: Wednesday, March 22, 2023, 9:30 A.M., Location: Milne Recreation Center, 5420 Franklin Ave., New Orleans, LA; President: Benny Harris, 504-858-2585

NORTH SHORE: Thursday, March 23, 2023, 9:30 A.M., Location: Greater Covington Center, Bogue Falaya Hall, 317 N. Jefferson Avenue, Covington, LA; President: David Thomas, 985-290-2107



ANNUAL MEETING – SHREVEPORT CHAPTER

TUESSDAY, MARCH 7, 2023 – 9:30 A.M.

DOORS OPEN AN HOUR PRIOR TO THE MEETING TIME
-VENDORS WILL BE AVAILABLE ON SITE FOR QUESTIONS -

IMPORTANT NEWS ABOUT YOUR RETIREMENT:

- ***Current information from LASERS***
- ***News from the Office of Group Benefits***
- ***Updates from EMPOWER Retirement***
- ***Door Prizes and Refreshments***

MEETING LOCATION:

**North West LA Technical College
2011 N. Market Street
Auditorium, Building E
Shreveport, LA 71107**

It's vital that retirees, present and future, stay informed and involved. Invite a fellow retiree or active state employee to join you at the meeting!

*Bonita Hearne – Telephone: (318) 746-1924
Shreveport Chapter President*



ANNUAL MEETING – MONROE CHAPTER
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 2023 – 9:00 A.M.

***VENDORS WILL BE ON SITE**

RSEA HAS IMPORTANT NEWS ABOUT WEP AND GPO

- *Current information from LASERS*
- *News from the Office of Group Benefits*
- *Updates from EMPOWER Retirement*

MEETING LOCATION:
West Monroe Convention Cent
West Conference Hall
901 Ridge Avenue
West Monroe, LA 71291

It's vital that retirees, present and future, stay informed and involved. Invite a fellow retiree or active state employee to join you at the meeting!

Dianne L. Guillot – Telephone: (318) 376-6275
Monroe Chapter President



ANNUAL MEETING – ACADIANA CHAPTER
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15, 2023 – 9:30 A.M. @ PICARD CENTER

IMPORTANT NEWS ABOUT YOUR RETIREMENT:

- *Current information from LASERS*
- *News from the Office of Group Benefits*
- *Updates from EMPOWER Retirement*
- *Door Prizes and Refreshments*

**DOORS OPEN AN HOUR PRIOR TO
THE MEETING TIME
VENDORS WILL BE AVAILABLE ON
SITE FOR QUESTIONS**

MEETING LOCATION

**Picard Center
University of Lafayette
200 East Devalcourt Street
Lafayette, LA 70506**

It's vital that active members stay informed and involved. We encourage you to invite a retiree or active state employee to join you at the meeting!

*Pennie Babin – Telephone: (337) 247-0569
RSEA 2nd Vice President and Acadiana Chapter
President*



ANNUAL MEETING – BATON ROUGE CHAPTER

THURSDAY, MARCH 16, 2023 – 9:30 A.M.

- *DOORS OPEN 30 MINUTES PRIOR TO THE MEETING TIME***
- VENDORS WILL BE AVAILABLE ON SITE FOR QUESTIONS -**

PLEASE BRING A MONETARY DONATION FOR LOCAL FOOD BANK

IMPORTANT NEWS ABOUT YOUR RETIREMENT:

- *Current information from LASERS***
- *News from the Office of Group Benefits***
- *Updates from EMPOWER Retirement***
- *Door Prizes and Refreshments***

MEETING LOCATION:

**East Baton Rouge Main Library
LARGE MEETING ROOM
7711 Goodwood Blvd.
Baton Rouge, LA 70806**

*It's vital that retirees, present and future, stay informed and involved. Invite a fellow retiree or active state employee to join you at the meeting!
James LeBlanc- Telephone: (225) 930-0961
RSEA President and Baton Rouge Chapter President*



ANNUAL MEETING –COASTAL CHAPTER
TUESDAY, MARCH 21, 2023 – 9:30 A.M.

- VENDORS WILL BE AVAILABLE ON SITE FOR QUESTIONS -

FOOD DRIVE – BRING ONE NON-PERISHABLE ITEM TO DONATE TO LOCAL FOOD BANK

IMPORTANT NEWS ABOUT YOUR RETIREMENT:

- ***Current information from LASERS***
- ***News from the Office of Group Benefits***
- ***Updates from EMPOWER Retirement***
- ***Door Prizes and Refreshments***

MEETING LOCATION:

Terrebonne Ph Main Library
151 Liberty Drive
Houma, LA 70360

It's vital that retirees, present and future, stay informed and involved. Invite a fellow retiree or active state employee to join you at the meeting!

Mary Mahoney– Telephone: (985) 791-7599
Coastal Chapter President
(Email: gray_24133@ymail.com)



ANNUAL MEETING – NORTH SHORE CHAPTER

THURSDAY, MARCH 23, 2023 – 9:30 A.M.

DOORS OPEN AN HOUR PRIOR TO THE MEETING TIME
-VENDORS WILL BE AVAILABLE ON SITE FOR QUESTIONS-

IMPORTANT NEWS ABOUT YOUR RETIREMENT:

- ***Current information from LASERS***
- ***News from the Office of Group Benefits***
- ***Updates from EMPOWER Retirement***
- ***Door Prizes and Refreshments***

MEETING LOCATION:
Greater Covington Center
Bogue Falaya Hall
317 N. Jefferson Avenue
Covington, LA 70433

It's vital that retirees, present and future, stay informed and involved. Invite a fellow retiree or active state employee to join you at the meeting!

David Thomas – Telephone: (985) 290-2107
RSEA Past President & North Shore Chapter President
(Email: dathomas@charter.net)



ANNUAL MEETING – NEW ORLEANS CHAPTER

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22, 2023 – 9:30 A.M.

FOOD DRIVE – BRING ONE NON-PERISHABLE ITEM
or CASH TO DONATE TO LOCAL FOOD BANK

IMPORTANT NEWS ABOUT YOUR RETIREMENT:

- **Current information from LASERS**
- **News from the Office of Group Benefits**
- **Updates from EMPOWER Retirement**
- **Door Prizes and Refreshments**

MEETING LOCATION:

Milne Recreation Center
5420 Franklin Ave.
New Orleans, LA 70122

It's vital that retirees, present and future, stay informed and involved. Invite a fellow retiree or active state employee to join you at the meeting!

Benny G. Harris - Telephone: (504) 858-2585
New Orleans Chapter President



ANNUAL MEETING – ALEXANDRIA CHAPTER

THURSDAY, MARCH 9, 2023– 9:30 A.M.

DOORS OPEN ½ HOUR PRIOR TO THE MEETING TIME

IMPORTANT NEWS ABOUT YOUR RETIREMENT:

- ***Current information from LASERS***
- ***News from the Office of Group Benefits***
- ***Updates from EMPOWER Retirement***
- ***Door Prizes and Refreshments***

MEETING LOCATION: (NEW)

Kees Park Community Center
708 Main Street
Pineville, LA 71360

It's vital that retirees, present and future, stay informed and involved. Invite a fellow retiree or active state employee to join you at the meeting!

Victor B. Dennis, Jr. Telephone: (318) 623-4547
Alexandria Chapter President
(Email: vdennisj@bellsouth.net)



ANNUAL MEETING – LAKE CHARLES CHAPTER
TUESDAY, MARCH 14, 2023 – 9:00 A.M. (PLEASE NOTE A NEW LOCATION)

DOORS OPEN AN HOUR PRIOR TO THE MEETING TIME
-VENDORS WILL BE AVAILABLE ON SITE FOR QUESTIONS -

- **IMPORTANT NEWS ABOUT YOUR RETIREMENT:**
 - ***Current information from LASERS***
 - ***News from the Office of Group Benefits***
 - ***Updates from EMPOWER Retirement***
 - ***Door Prizes and Refreshments***

LOCATION (NEW):

Trinity Baptist Church
1800 Country Club Rd.
Lake Charles, LA 70605
Phone: 337-480-1555

It's vital that retirees, present and future, stay informed and involved. Invite a fellow retiree or active state employee to join you at the meeting!

IF YOU NEED INFORMATION ABOUT THE NEW LOCATION, CALL:

Gwendolyn Thompson - Telephone: (337) 912-9373
Lake Charles Chapter President

Administrative Director's Message - January 2023

Welcome to RSEA's first only Digital Newsletter. This newsletter will not be printed, but will be emailed to all members that we have email addresses for, and we only have emails for about half of our membership. There will also be an announcement posted to our Facebook page with a link to our website where you can download the newsletter. This newsletter will serve as a bonus newsletter and we will still print and mail our Spring, Summer and Fall editions as usual.

Well, we all made it to a New Year! Congratulations! I would like to take a few moments to reflect on our past year's accomplishments.

1. Unfortunately, our in-person Chapter meetings were canceled in March due to COVID concerns, but we were able to meet virtually via a webinar hosted by our great partner, Access2Day Health. The live event was well attended by members as well as potential members from the actively working state employees. A variety of issues and concerns were discussed and our panel of experts were there to answer questions from the attendees. If you were unable to be there you can still see the recorded version posted to our website at <https://www.rseala.org>.
2. In April we awarded a \$1,000 educational scholarship to Ethan Deshautelle of Marksville, LA. Ethan graduated from Avoyelles Public Charter School in May. Ethan is currently attending LSU majoring in Biology with a minor in Microbiology. He will then pursue a Doctorate in Orthopedics at either LSUS or UNO. Let's all wish him well on his academic journey. This \$1,000 Scholarship was made possible by the many RSEA members who generously donated money to the Scholarship Fund. There were six other candidates, all of whom had similarly impressive credentials, which made the decision very difficult. Please donate to the Scholarship fund when you pay your dues next year and just maybe we will be able to make two awards next year. Please pass on information about our scholarship to anyone who might meet the criteria for next year. You can find information on our Scholarship on our website, <https://www.rseala.org> or you can call us at the office at 225/930-0961 or you can email us at janthony.rsea@gmail.com.

Thanks to all of our members who donated to the Scholarship Fund.
Here is the list of donors since our last newsletter.

2023 DONATIONS

Kaitlyn C	Tidwell	None
Lennie	Lankford	None
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RSEA Foundation Scholarship winner Ethan Deshautelle with his sponsor and grandmother Jeanette Martin Dodge

3. RSEA and the WEP/GPO Rally in Washington DC

I traveled to Washington D.C. to participate in the WEP/GPO rally. We began on Tuesday afternoon (May 17th) meeting in the Lutheran church in the Capitol Hill district. As we gathered and greeted one another, it was a happy occasion since most had been meeting remotely for the past two years. We shared personal stories of how WEP-GPO affects either us or the people we support. On the rally day we began gathering around 8:00 a.m. on Wednesday in the church, for coffee and nutrition bars, distributed visors, repeal buttons, maps of the Senate and House buildings and outlined plans for the day. A brief overview of plans for Wednesday was reviewed. Then we went on our way to lobby visits. Appointments had been made ahead of time, so it was relatively easy to get to appointments on time.

The Rally from 12:00-1:00 was the highlight of the day. The spot was in a shady outdoor space near the Capitol. About 50 people were gathered. Suzie Dixon (CA) and Bette Marafino shared the introductions, while Roger Boudreau (RI) interspersed repeal WEP-GPO chants between speakers.

Senator Whitehouse (D-R.I.), Congressmen Larson, (D-CT), David Cicilline, (D-R.I.) and Seth Moulton (D-MA) spoke about the necessity to repeal WEP-GPO now. A touching highlight to the Rally were the personal stories of the following people: Suzie Dixon (retired teacher- CA), Jane Roth (current teacher- CT), Patrice Earnest- (federal worker-GA), Dicky Wrufel (retired firefighter- ME), Bonnie Ceidel, (retired teacher, spouse- CA), Penny Whitney Asdourian (government employee- ME), Gene Sokolowski (PSAI- VA). The Rally was live-streamed and photographers took pictures of attendees. Press releases were also sent.

Each of the Congressmen and Senators who spoke made a large point of thanking us for our work and helping to get these bills on committee agenda.

Lobby visits continued after the Rally. Because some congressional

offices were not accepting in-person visits, several Zoom meetings were arranged and included participants in D.C. and those back home. Zoom visits to both CT Senators' offices (Blumenthal and Murphy) garnered over 50 participants.

Later in the afternoon, a debriefing was held in the church. We had a chance to talk about our visits. All agreed that the day was successful and continuing work in our respective states needs to be done to make the WEP-GPO repeal a reality in this 117th Congress. Special thanks to the planning committee for their diligence and commitment, Bonnie Ceidel, Suzie Dixon, Dennis Cox, Mary Elia, Dicky Wrufel, Paula Cooper, Roger Boudreau, Julie Horwin, Patrice Earnest, Dianne Winsor and Jane Roth. We are reorganizing and building a stronger coalition. We will keep you updated and ask for your continued help.

For the latest updates on WEP/GPO, please read Frank Jobert's article in this newsletter.

To access the Rally Video, use the link below that will take you to the California Retired Teachers Association website. Once there click on More, then Video, <https://www.facebook.com/CalRTA>.



4. RSEA was proud to lobby the legislature for passage of SB 5 this year. Since the last LASERS' COLA (cost of living adjustment) was in 2016 and there were insufficient funds in the LASERS Experience Account to fund a COLA this year, the LASERS Board of Trustees sponsored **SB 5 by Senator Ed Price (Primary Author)**. This measure provided for a one-time supplemental lump-sum payment that was equal to the lesser of \$2,000 or the retiree/beneficiary's monthly retirement benefit. To be eligible for this payment, LASERS' retirees must have been at least 60 years of age and must have been receiving a retirement benefit at least one year as of June 30, 2022. The lump-sum benefit payment was made by LASERS to eligible retirees/beneficiaries by September 15, 2022. Of special note, this bill received unanimous support in the Senate (35-0) and in the House of Representatives (96-0)! On behalf of RSEA and its members, I wish to extend our heartfelt thanks and gratitude to the LASERS Board of Trustees and Staff, Senator Ed Price and the entire Louisiana legislature, and Governor John Bel Edwards for their unanimous support of this measure!



First row, left to right: Tina Grant, LASERS Executive Counsel; Cindy Rougeou, LASERS Executive Director; Governor John Bel Edwards Second row, left to right: Senator Ed Price; Jimmy Anthony, RSEA Administrative Director; Charles Castille, LASERS Legislative Chair; David Thomas, RSEA President; Victor Dennis, RSEA Legislative Chair

RSEA and LASERS executives witness Governor John Bel Edwards sign Senate Bill 5 authored by Senator Ed Price becoming Act 656 of the 2022 Legislative Session. Act 656 grants eligible LASERS retirees an historic 13th check.

5. RSEA Protecting your Nest Egg Webinar

On November 29th, RSEA partnered with AMBA (Association Members Benefits Advisors) to host a live webinar to provide members with information on how to protect their savings in today's unsettled markets. If you are like most retirees, you worry about having enough savings to live comfortably in your retirement. Experts were on hand to offer alternative methods to not only save your money during a market downturn, but also grow it during the upturns. We had good participation from membership, but we had a terrific turnout from active state workers (our future retirees). If you missed the webinar, don't worry, we have the recorded version on our website. Here is the link to the webinar.

https://youtu.be/NFKKcq_ZIO0

We are planning to have other live webinars in the future. Possible topics include Membership Perks, The Basics of Medicare, Long Term Care 101, Long Term Care 102, Emergency Medical Transportation, Financial Wellness, The Impact of a Heart Attack, Stroke or Cancer, Dental and Vision, Aging in Place, Pre-Retirement, and Life Insurance 101.

6. After a 2-year hiatus, RSEA hosted our Annual Conference at the Paragon Casino Resort in Marksville on October 11-12. We had 168 members register for the event. Gerber Porter was on hand to certify members in the Driving Safety Program. Rich Massingill and Shannon Wheeler informed members of their investment options for their tax-deferred savings. Ann Roeling of the Alzheimer's Association gave a very informative talk about caring for Alzheimer's patients from real-life experiences she has had. Without a doubt, Kent Gonsoulin's Cajun humor was the hit of the show. He had folks laughing from start to end. During our luncheon, we recognized our RSEA Foundation Scholarship recipient and sponsor, Allen Reynolds, our RSEA Hall of Fame inductee, and our Chapter Members of the Year (Mary Ginn- Baton Rouge Chapter, Michael Sawrie-Alexandria Chapter, and Virginia Lee-Monroe Chapter).

Please take time to look at some of the photos from the conference and see if you are in them or recognize someone who is. Everyone seems to have a great time, especially when the DJ was playing and everyone began dancing.



























Thank you to the following sponsors. Their continued support and generosity makes this conference possible!!

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