

The New LOUISIANA VOICE

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF RSEA

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Conference Grand Prize Winner Shirley Guitreau with (L-R) David Thomas, James LeBlanc and Cliff Melius. She won two State Parks gift cards of \$300 each.

02 RSEA Administration Update

RETIREED STATE EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION • LOUISIANA

RSEA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

One year has passed since I became your President and there are several things I am really proud of that happened while being your president.

First, I am proud of how the administrative office, the RESA Board, and the committees have functioned over the past year. The administrative office has informed us of the different things the association is involved with. The information has been timely and most of the items have been taken care of in a timely manner.

The RESA Board and committees have worked diligently on all and most of the problems were solved in a positive way. It should be noted that several members of the board and committees are active state employees.

Our Director of Legislative and Governmental Affairs has again done and is doing an excellent job. He has kept us informed of the different legislation that the association is supporting and those that we are not.

There is a big "Thank You" to the Conference Committee that was responsible for our very successful yearly State Conference in

October. It was great and to no one's surprise, they are already planning for our conference in 2024.

And lastly, thanks to our Chapter Presidents for our successful Chapter Meetings last year. All the Chapter Meetings were well attended, and we are looking forward to the same in March 2024. We are continuously trying to increase our membership, so do not let up, we are important to all retirees, even the ones who are not members.

James H. Leblanc, Jr, RSEA President



ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The RSEA Foundation will raffle off a beautiful 50" x 65" American Flag quilt as a fundraiser for scholarships. The drawing will be held on Monday, April 15, 2024 at 10 AM at the RSEA office. The flag was made and donated by Patsy Austin of Baton Rouge. Tickets are \$10 each and only 500 tickets will be available. The quilt will be on display at the 2024 chapter meeting locations. You may also visit our office at 9412 Common St., Suite 7 in Baton Rouge to view the quilt. Our office hours are 9 AM – 3:30 PM Monday thru Thursday.

Is Your Address Correct?

It is important that the Office of Group Benefits (OGB) has a current mailing address for all of our members. Throughout the year, OGB sends information to our members by postal mail. OGB wants to ensure these mailings are reaching our members.

Additionally, if you are a retiree with Medicare AND you receive your mail at a Post Office Box, Medicare requires that you also have a street address on file.

If you are unsure that OGB has your correct address, or you need to add your street address, contact OGB Customer Service at 1-800-272-8451.

Wanda Berryman		Barbara Valentine	
Garry Green		John Davidson	
Sharon Scioneaux		Paul Melancon	
Kevin Shannahan		Ivory Williams	
Michael Hoffpauir		Paula Strahan	
Frank B. Ellis, Jr.	In memory of	Mae Ann Hebert	
	Brenda Smith Ellis	Branda F. Taylor	
Earl Guidry		Patricia Wilhite	
Cheryl P. Franklin		Linda Singleton	In memory of Esther Guillory
James H. Vidrine		Elsie Jones-Azare	
Gerard Goar		Whitman Kling, Jr.	
Carol Yarbrough		Jean A. Porte	
Joyce Ben	In memory of Leroy Richard	Donald L. Falcon	
Geraldine Miller		Gainell Roques	In memory of Audrey Louis Jr.
Margaret Gilcrease		Charles Wiesendanger	
Franklin Williams		Barbara Leflore	
Irby Hornsby, Jr.		Clinton Cognevich	In memory of
Joseph Grefer	In memory of Patsy R. Mole		Shannon Bailey
Mary Robichaux		Helen B. Johnson	
Timothy Palmatier		Jimmie H. Butler	
Ronald Schneider		Billy D. Wooden	In memory of James Webb
Emma Jackson		Frank McGee, III	
Kenneth Roy		Lennie Lankford	
Sandra Flemmons		Terry Passman	
John Gilcrease		Fay Nell Wood	In memory of Billy G. Wood
Hansford Shannon		Carolyn T. Kitchin	In memory of
Russell Pease			Phillip W. Kitchin
Alfred Sanders		Shirley T. Burow	In memory of Ed Burow
William Cleveland		Linda P. DuFour	
Martha W. Devillier		Paul Autin	
Delores W. Dyer		M. Dianne Barksdale	In memory of
Betty J. Barras	In memory of Melvin J. Barras		Don Barksdale
Carol Tilley	In memory of David Tilley	Norma L. Thomason	
C. J. Bertrand		Lauren Landry	
David Thomas		Marsha M. Lincecum	In memory of
RSEA	In memory of Denny Carlton		Hubert Lincecum
Patricia Gugliuzza	In memory of	Lorena Williams	In memory of
	Joseph Gugliuzza		Theodore Williams
Robert Taylor		Clothilde S. Hills	

RSEA CHAPTER MEETING SCHEDULE

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<u>DATE</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Meeting Site</u>
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March 5	Shreveport	Northwest Technical College, 2011 N. Market St., Bldg. E.
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March 6	West Monroe	W. Monroe Convention Center, 901 Ridge Ave.
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March 7	Pineville	TBA
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March 12	Lake Charles	TBA
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March 13	Lafayette	Picard Center/Child Development, 200 East Devalcourt St.
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<u>DATE</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Meeting Site</u>
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March 14	Baton Rouge	E. Baton Rouge Parish Library, 7711 Goodwood Blvd.
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March 19	Houma	Terrebonne Parish Library, 151 Library Dr.
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March 20	New Orleans	TBA
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March 21	Covington	Greater Covington Ctr, Bogue Falaya Hall, 317 N. Jefferson
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Meeting times start at 9:30 am except West Monroe and Lake Charles which will start at 9:00 am.

RSEA would like to take advantage of the leadership change in the U.S. House of Representatives to advance our cause of repealing the unfair Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset (WEP and GPO). The WEP and GPO negatively affect hundreds of thousands of our fellow state employees, school employees, firefighters, police, etc., and their spouses. We now have Louisiana representatives as Speaker of the House, House Majority Leader and sponsor of H.R.82 that would provide full repeal!

Please take a few minutes to utilize the following sample text. Send it to the Legislative Directors of Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, and CC House Majority Leader, Steve Scalise, and H.R. 82 sponsor Garrett Graves. **Don't forget to add your name, city and state at the end.**

Here is the sample *text* to use to contact the U.S. Congressional staffers:

Send to: Speaker Mike Johnson (garrett.fultz@mail.house.gov)

Cc: Rep. Steve Scalise (holly.hendrix@mail.house.gov)

Rep. Garrett Graves (logan.delabarrehays@mail.house.gov)

Dear Speaker of the House Johnson,

Congratulations on your election as Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives! Louisiana is proud to see our representatives serve in top leadership roles for the first time in U.S. history! As such, we are hopeful that this is the time to see action taken to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset that penalizes hundreds of thousands of Louisiana public servants.

. I know you are aware of this unfair law that has deprived state employees, school employees, teachers, as well as other public servants, of their (or their spouse's) earned Social Security benefits for over 40 years, because you are a co-sponsor of H.R. 82, the Social Security Fairness Act.

Louisiana has the unique opportunity to have **OUR** representatives lead the effort to see **H.R. 82** by Rep. Garrett Graves pass through the House of Representatives in **this** session. As speaker of the house, you have the power to move the bill to the floor, or to at least have it heard in the Ways and Means Committee. This should not be difficult since H.R. 82 has 300 cosponsors, which includes the entire Louisiana Congressional delegation. The Louisiana Legislature is also in favor of repeal of WEP and GPO, since State Representative Mike Johnson (District 27-Pineville) authored a House Concurrent Resolution that passed unanimously this past Louisiana Legislative session.

Louisiana's public servants are suffering because of the denial of their earned benefits. The state is also suffering from the loss of spending money denied these already low-paid employees who devoted their lives to taking care of our citizens.

Speaker Johnson, please do everything you can **NOW** to help me and my fellow retired state employees obtain the Social Security benefits we've earned! You have the support of Louisiana as well as the millions of affected public servants across the country. **THE TIME IS NOW!**

Sincerely,

(Insert your name)

Retired State Employees Association (RSEA)

(Insert your city and state)

UPDATE ON U. S. HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE WEP/GPO ACTIVITY:

Late last week RSEA was contacted by staffers from House Ways and Committee Chairman Jason Smith's Office to furnish the names and contact information of some of our members impacted by WEP and GPO Social Security Offsets. Ways and Means still wants to hear personal stories about the adverse impact of WEP and/or GPO on select individuals, to personalize this matter and connect it with Louisiana individuals and their families.

RSEA and the Louisiana Retired Teachers Association (LRTA) provided the requested contact info and several of our members have been contacted to provide testimony. I'm also told that a closed-door meeting of our associations' staff and Ways and Means staff is still being planned for the near future to receive live testimony from our members. RSEA will provide any new information via our email "blasts" and future articles in the Voice newsletter.

PROPOSED ELEVANCE HEALTH ACQUISITION OF BLUE CROSS OF LOUISIANA:

As you are probably aware, there is proposed merger/acquisition of Blue Cross of Louisiana pending between BC/BS of LA. and Elevance Health. I have since been asked by many OGB members how this might impact their Office of Group Benefits (OGB) health insurance coverage. First of all the acquisition was not finalized in time for the 2024 OGB plan year, as the matter is still pending before the Louisiana Department of Insurance (LDI), who must approve any such acquisition. It appears the matter is being pushed back until later in 2024 after the new Governor and Insurance Commissioner are sworn into office in January, 2024. There will also be further public hearings by LDI and possibly Legislative Oversight Committees to gather additional information and take public testimony before the acquisition can be finalized.

For members of OGB, please be aware that OGB is your insurance provider, and NOT Blue Cross of Louisiana. BC/BS is a Third-Party Administrator (TPA) for OGB, but OGB is your insurer, as BC/BS only processes our claims and OGB utilizes the Blue Cross network of providers (doctors, hospitals, and other medical service providers). Therefore, OGB provides the actual insurance coverage, sets premiums, and authorizes payment of claims and benefits in accord with OGB guidelines. In fact, OGB has recently approved the 2024 contract with BC/BS and they are bound by the terms and conditions of that 2024 contract until December 31, 2024. Furthermore, if the contract terms are not adhered to, OGB can cancel the contract with BC/BS. OGB also has the option of renewing the contract for an additional year through the calendar year 2025.

Therefore, there is no need to worry or fret over anything at this juncture, and we will once again keep you informed of further developments in this on-going matter through email blasts and future LA. Voice Newsletter Articles.

Frank Jobert
RSEA Legislative & Governmental Affairs Director



I hope that everyone had a great Thanksgiving, a memorable Christmas and a wonderful New Year's celebration. I look forward to this next year and what our newly elected Governor and statewide officials have in store for us. As always RSEA will be ever vigilant for any attacks on our retirement benefits.

The RSEA Foundation is announcing it's fourth round of educational scholarships to be awarded to any member, or their children or grandchildren. Last year we were able to award three scholarships worth \$1000 each, thanks to the generosity of our members. Donations have been coming in at an accelerated rate since this October, so thanks to all of you. Check out the donor list on page 4. The deadline for applying for a scholarship will be April 26, 2024. The application and policy and procedures are posted on our website, www.rseala.org. Or you can call us at 225-930-0961 and we can mail it to you.

We have begun planning for the statewide Chapter meetings for March of 2024. Check out the meetings schedule on Page 5. We will be displaying the Flag Quilt that we are raffling off at the Chapter meetings. Remember that all money raised will go to fund the scholarships. Hope to see you all there.

10 *Administrative Director's Message (cont)*

RETIRED STATE EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION • LOUISIANA

RSEA CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

The RSEA statewide conference was held again at the Paragon Casino and Resort in Marksville, La. on October 10-11, 2023. Over 100 participants received updates from LASERS (Tina Grant), OGB (David Couvillon), RSEA (Frank Jobert and Jimmy Anthony). Presentations were made by Ellen Dunn with Alzheimer's Association, Jon Green with AMBA and Cliff Melius with State Parks. Entertainment was provided by Maw Maw Thibodeau;x and Tante Mae Mae (Cajun Humorists) and music was spun by DJ Skylar Taylor. We had informational tables manned by AMBA, OGB, LASERS, La Dept. of Insurance (LASHIIP), AARP, Empower, Access2Day Health, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Humana, Peoples Health, Alzheimer's Association, CVS Caremark/Silverscripts, New Horizons Independent Living Center.

Marshall McKenzie was inducted into the RSEA Hall of Fame for his service to the Association. He served as state president of RSEA for 2004-2005 and was chapter president for Shreveport for six years. And in a complete surprise Benny Harris was also inducted. Benny currently is a Board of Directors member and Chapter president for New Orleans. Please go to our website to view the complete list of accomplishments of these fine two gentlemen.

2023 LASERS Board of Trustees Election Results

LASERS is pleased to announce the results of the 2023 Board of Trustees Election. Five Trustees were elected to serve four-year terms on the LASERS governing Board.

The three active member candidates elected are:

Pam Diez, Undersecretary, Louisiana Department of Health
Cortny Jarrell, Human Resources Analyst, Louisiana House of Representatives
Laura Lapeze, Undersecretary, Louisiana Department of Revenue

The two retired member candidates elected are:

Virginia Burton, Retired from Louisiana Department of Revenue
Beverly Hodges, Retired from Louisiana Department of Natural Resources

Election results were certified by the Board of Trustees at its November 16 meeting and the new members will be sworn in prior to the January 2024 regular meeting.

The 13-member policy-making Board has fiduciary oversight over LASERS. Members include six elected by active members, three elected by retired members, and four ex officio members. The next Board Election will be held in 2025. Congratulations to our newly elected Trustees!

Form 1099-R Mailing in January

Form 1099-R for 2023 will be mailed to retirees no later than January 31, 2024. 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 to be mailed to you, please call LASERS at 225.922.0600 (local) or 1.800.256.3000 (Toll-

free). Should you have questions regarding your 1099-R, we suggest that you contact your tax advisor.

--Search for Unclaimed Property Online

The LASERS Unclaimed Property listing was recently updated on our website at www.lasersonline.org/retirees/unclaimed-property/. You can search the listing to help determine if we may be holding funds belonging to you or your beneficiary. These funds could consist of unclaimed benefit checks or contributions left at LASERS by deceased members. If you see your name on the listing, fill out the form on the webpage to begin the process of claiming funds.

Elder Care Solutions

Are you surprised by how expensive care is for your aging loved one? Are you struggling to pay for their care? We have partnered with Elder Care Solutions to help you!

Elder Care Solutions provides thoughtful support that connects you to real answers. Their CarePay Tool reveals all your financial options for tackling the costs of long-term care. It's

FAST - only takes 10 mins to use and answers are delivered right away,

Easy - simple navigation,
Helpful - you can make more thoughtful financial decisions when you know all your options!

Get started by using this link:
www.eldercaresolutionsinc.com/rsea



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