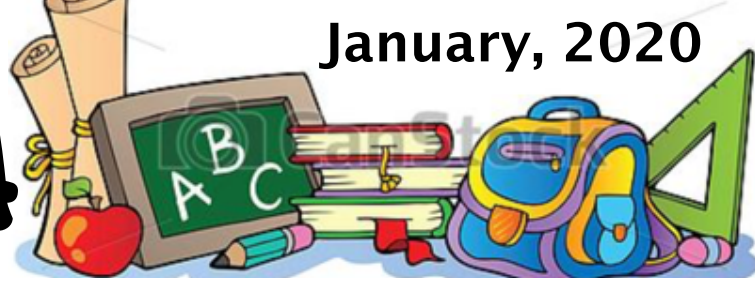


# WCIRTA

January, 2020



The winter WCIRTA membership "breakfast meeting" is scheduled for Friday, February 7th at Crab Orchard Golf Course Restaurant at 9:00 a.m. This will be an opportunity to "meet your legislators." Illinois State Representative Dave Severin and Illinois State Senator Dale Fowler have indicated that they will attend. We extend an invitation for all WCIRTA members and guests to attend and discuss current issues with our legislators. The breakfast cost to be paid by each member is \$7.95 + drink.

2020 yearly membership dues (\$10) can be paid at the February meeting or mailed to WCIRTA treasurer Kent Carrell (311 South 4th Street- Marion, Illinois 62959.)

Seven board members attended the IRTA biennial convention in Springfield in October. Bob Campbell was recognized for his service to education and WCIRTA. John Harland was elected Area Six representative serving the southern-most twenty-two counties. John Flaherty was selected as the incoming IRTA President.

Unlike the Illinois State Government constitutional officers, southern Illinois has strong representation on the IRTA Executive Board. Vice President Bill Funkhouser is from Godfrey, Treasurer Donnie Ostrom is from Mascoutah and Secretary Doris Heaton (of Heaton vs. Quinn fame) is from Benton. John Harland from Marion is our Area Six Representative while Judi Harland is a member of the IRTA Foundation Board of Directors.

In a recent TRS newsletter, Executive Director Dick Ingram wrote that Governor J.B. Pritzker recently signed legislation consolidating 649 police and fire pension systems into two statewide authorities. But little noted was that Governor Pritzker within that bill also: (1) Expanded the TRS Trustee Board from 13 to 15 members adding one elected member and one non-TRS member to be appointed by the Governor; (2) The Illinois State Superintendent of Instruction will no longer be the TRS chairman but the chairman will be appointed from the sitting TRS Board by the Governor; and (3) no more than 4 of 5 active TRS Trustees can belong to the same "statewide teacher organization." The TRS Board was originally formed in 1939 with a 5 member board and the board was last expanded in 2009 from 11 to 13 members.

The IRTA Foundation, in addition to its member assistance program, also sponsors college scholarships for junior and senior teacher education students and also monetary grants for current classroom teachers. Information is available on-line at the IRTA Foundation website.

The WCIRTA will be contacting and hosting a dinner for new 2020 retirees from Williamson County schools on Tuesday, April 21st. Each new retiree will receive a complimentary one year membership for WCIRTA and encouraged to join the state IRTA organization. There were fifteen Williamson County retirees in 2019 which we hope will remain participating members of WCIRTA in 2020.

We would like to extend our appreciation to Don Kragness for his many years of service to the WCIRTA as a board member and treasurer. With Don's resignation from the board, we will be approaching some of our loyal WCIRTA members with the opportunity to join the board. The stipend is not very large (zero) but the service is worthwhile!!!

Bert Gordon. President

The decade-long effort to fix the Tier 2 benefit structure finally may be bearing some fruit. In December, Gov. JB Pritzker signed a new law that consolidates the investment functions of 649 local police and firefighter pension systems into two statewide authorities. This move doesn't affect TRS at all.

While it's disappointing that these Tier 2 fixes are limited in scope and don't affect our members, the good news is that finally – after nearly 10 years – state officials are recognizing the problems Tier 2 created and are taking some first steps to make things right.

The changes enacted in December, unfortunately, do not address the major problem of the financial inequity faced by all Tier 2 members. Fixing the inequity at TRS would likely cost billions of dollars because the solution is to eliminate the Tier 1 subsidy. You either lower the Tier 2 payroll contribution or raise Tier 2 benefits. In both instances, eliminating the subsidy would increase costs for state government.

At TRS we're going to watch carefully how the Tier 2 fixes for police and firefighters work out, both administratively and financially. These changes to state law could be expanded in the future to cover other Tier 2 members – including teachers.

The new statute also makes a change to the TRS board president. For more than 80 years, the state superintendent of education by law has served as the TRS board president. Under the new law, the governor will appoint the TRS board president from among the sitting trustees. The current state superintendent, Dr. Carmen Ayala, will continue to serve as "ex officio" member of the board.

The main TRS office in Springfield has earned an Energy Star certification from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for significantly reducing energy use over the course of the last year

In the last five years, the annual energy cost of the TRS Springfield office fell by more than \$67,000 from \$197,057 to \$129,605.

The Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) awarded a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting to TRS for its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2018. This was the 30th consecutive year that the System has achieved this prestigious award.

If you received a TRS benefit in 2019, the Office of the Comptroller will mail an IRS Form 1099-R to you by Jan. 31, 2020. This form will report your income received from TRS during 2019.

The information above was condensed from the 2020 Winter - Topics and Report Newsletter.

Information Services  
Loren Taylor

**WCIRTA TREASURER'S REPORT**

Date: 1/15/2020

<b><u>BEGINNING BALANCE</u></b>	<b>12/3/2019</b>	<b>\$2,605.71</b>
<b><u>INCOME</u></b>		
<b>Dues</b>	\$20.00	
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$20.00</b>
<b><u>EXPENSES</u></b>		
<b>Reimburse Convention Room</b>	\$126.56	
<b>Form 990 Filing</b>	\$39.95	
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$166.51</b>
<b><u>ENDING BALANCE</u></b>	<b>1/15/2020</b>	<b>\$2,459.20</b>

**IT'S TIME TO PAY YOUR 2020 LOCAL DUES**

**LOCAL DUES ARE NOW \$10.00 PER YEAR**

Please make your LOCAL dues check to: **WCIRTA**

MAIL TO: KENT CARRELL, Treasurer, 311 South 4th Street, Marion, IL 62959

## **Legislative Information**

Submitted by John Harland

Since our last newsletter there is nothing that is new legislatively that applies to retired educators. Our State Representative and our State Senator are planning on attending our next Williamson County Retired Teachers meeting at Crab Orchard Golf Course on February 7th at 9:00 a.m. I would encourage you to attend to ask questions and to hear information.

## **Area 6 Information**

Submitted by John Harland

I officially begin as the Area 6 Representative on January 28th. I, specifically, want to thank Williamson County Retired Teachers for their support, and generally, want to thank the units in District 18 for their support when I ran for the Area 6 Representative position.

I want to share with you the following information . 1) I will never apologize for the pensions that retired educators receive. Retired educators followed the guidelines prescribed by the State of Illinois every paycheck. The State of Illinois failed to follow the guidelines for the pension payments. The failures by the State created the financial problems that the State faces. 2) I will never support negotiation to reduce the benefits that retired educators receive. The Illinois State Constitution clearly addresses the fact that educators benefits cannot be reduced. 3) There was a time that I did not think that as retired educators that we needed to be politically active. That time has passed. I support IRTAPAC that is the political action arm of IRTA and I encourage all members of IRTA to support IRTAPAC financially. You may do this by have \$1/month donated to IRTAPAC by having TRS take out \$1/month out of your annuity check. If you have a question about how to do this I will be happy to assist you. 4) I am supportive of the IRTA Legal Defense Fund. Presently, we are not involved in any legal action against the State of Illinois. But I donate to IRTA Legal Defense Fund annually so if the time comes, IRTA has financial resources to immediately respond. 5) Finally, I am supportive of IRTA Foundation that helps retirees, future teachers, and active teachers with financial support. In the last 13 years IRTA Foundation has helped retired teachers, future teachers, and active teachers by contributing \$1,276,338 in form of stipends, financial payments, scholarships, and grants. That amounts to almost \$100,000/year. The funds for this assistance comes from charitable donations by IRTA members.

I will represent you and the other retired educators in Area 6 for the next four years to the best of my abilities. I thank you for allowing me to serve you as your Area 6 Representative.

## **WCIRTA Membership Report, January, 2020**

An updated list from IRTA indicates that Donna Ayers, Karon Bauernfeind, Jean Barwick, Linda Brandon, Jetta Chiaventone, Carolyn Grant, Alice Hrocatic, Phyllis Ozment, James Parker, Denise Peas, Sue Ella Rhine, Marilyn Schild, Gary Schurz, and Jan Starnes paid their 2020 dues. The WCIRTA ended 2019 with 155 dues paying local members with 6 of those members having paid thru 2025. Retirees with unpaid dues for the prior 3 years will be removed from the list of members receiving the quarterly newsletter emails during January 2020.

In the past both a husband and wife had received mail and emails, our email and mailing lists have been revised to avoid duplicate mailings.

The website had been updated with the 2020 meeting calendar. It is now possible to click on the calendar link and download the calendar for your records. The WCIRTA officers and director's page has also been updated.

You will see that there are 2 vacant board positions. We currently are searching for a Vice President. We are also needing to fill the Member Benefits position. Retiree Don Kragness resigned from the Board of Directors in December 2019 after many years of service. We thank Don for his contributions and wish him and Janice well in their travels. If you have any interest in volunteering your services to WCIRTA you may contact President Bert Gordon at (618) 942-6938 Email Bert at [bajegordon@frontier.com](mailto:bajegordon@frontier.com) or contact any of the other board members.

I have been maintaining the files of newsletters, board and membership minutes, state, and the local membership updates since I became your membership chair. I spent the past holidays sorting thru and indexing the files. I am in the process of printing and assembling the years of newsletters into a single folder. I think our newsletters are excellent and archiving them in a folder highlights all of the work our members have made over the years.

I would like to introduce a "Member Minute" section into our general membership meetings. I would use this minute to highlight and acknowledge individual members, ask audience participation questions, etc. I'd also like to tract attendance at our membership meetings so they can be acknowledged/rewarded at our end of the year meeting. Our next membership meeting is Friday, February 7, 2020 at 9:00 am. It will be held at the Crab Orchard Golf Course in Carterville. Let's try an improve last year's attendance by "Inviting a Retiree Friend". If each attendee can get 1 of their retiree friends to the meeting, we will probably break an attendance record. We've planned this legislative meeting around our local legislators Dave Severin and Dale Fowler.

# VALUABLE MEMBER BENEFITS AVAILABLE TO ALL MEMBERS OF IRTA

*IRTA members who are also members of WCIRTA just received an email from IRTA and Association Member Benefits Advisors (AMBA) encouraging them to assess their need for additional benefits available through AMBA. It is a brief but important email that I think ALL WCIRTA members need to see even if it duplicates information already received. Thus, I have included it as my article for this issue.*

*Bob Campbell, Member Benefits Chair*

IRTA partners with AMBA to offer members valuable benefits. In addition to working for you in the Legislature, endorsed benefits and discounts are available to Illinois Retired Teachers Association (IRTA) members....We would like to encourage all members and potential members to review this information and learn more about it. AMBA has a long history of working with association members and providing valuable benefits. If you've had trouble getting supplemental insurance at a reasonable rate, here's your chance!

Members of IRTA get special group rates on the following benefits:

- Cancer Heart and Stroke Policy
- MASA (Air & Ground Ambulance Plan)
- Home Health Care
- Long-Term Care
- Final Expense Whole Life Policy
- Accident Policy
- Tax-Deferred Annuity
- Dental Insurance
- Vision Insurance

You can learn more about your endorsed association member benefits by giving AMBA a call at 1-866-684-5267.... Absolutely no obligation!

We encourage you to give this information careful consideration.

WCIRTA Membership Chair and Webmaster

## FOUNDATION REPORT

Judy Harland  
IRTA Scholarships

The 2020 IRTA Foundation Scholarship application and current guidelines are available on the IRTA website. Just go to [www.irtaonline.org](http://www.irtaonline.org) and the information is located under the Foundation tab/programs. Applications can also be obtained by calling IRTA Administrative Assistant, Susan Goetz at the IRTA office. (1-800-728-4782)

One \$1,500 scholarship is available in each of the six IRTA Areas of the state. Our area, Area 6, has an additional \$3,000 scholarship available this year due to a very generous donation from an IRTA member. These scholarships are only available to incoming JUNIORS OR SENIORS in COLLEGE majoring in EDUCATION (2020-2021 school year). The deadline to postmark applications is March 7, 2020.

## Excellence in Education Grants for Active Teacher

We have Excellence in Education Grants for Active Teachers for 2020. The grants are offered statewide every year. The program has a total of \$36,500 to be distributed. The selection process will be by the six Foundation At Large members reviewing all applications and selecting winners from all six areas each year. Efforts will be made to equalize grants for each of the six areas as much as possible. Applications will be made available in the early Spring and the deadline to postmark applications will be towards the end of the school year.