

# WCIRTA

Spring, 2017



## Next Meeting

May 9

Mackie's  
Pizza

12:00  
Noon

Spring has sprung! Spring is my favorite time of the year. Everything comes back to life. First the snow crocus bloom and then the daffodils follow. This was the best year for daffodils in my yard and they even withstood the two hard freezes. The Bradford pears were pretty this year until the freeze. Now the dogwoods and redbuds are showing their beauty. On the ground my phlox is in full bloom. From drab winter colors to beautiful spring – and we get to see it every year!

I wish our legislators and governor could start fresh and create a reasonable budget. I know this is not an easy job. Cuts are going to have to be made and taxes will have to be increased. Fortunately Senate President Cullerton and Governor Rauner both agree that current retirees' pensions are not on the table. We do need to stay vigilante though so all of our benefits stay intact. We also need to keep working to increase the numbers in IRTA and WCIRTA so our voices are heard loud and clear. We have a good number of people retiring in Williamson County this year. Hopefully we can get them all to join both IRTA and WCIRTA. I hope to see you all at the next meeting at Mackies on May 9 at noon.

Kent Carrell. President WCIRTA

### Treasurer's Report

Beginning Balance	12/5/2016	\$2,388.10
Income	Dues	380.00
Expenses	Meeting	25.00
Ending Balance	4/4/2017	\$2,743.10

**LOCAL AND STATE DUES ARE DUE IN JANUARY**

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

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

**Mail to: DON KRAGNESS, TREAS.  
14802 POOR FARM ROAD  
JOHNSTON CITY, IL 62951**

**IT'S IMPORTANT.**

**DO IT TODAY!!**

### *Member Benefits*

Two benefits that have been discussed lately are:

- Pet Health Insurance
- AMBA Long Term Care

Pet Health Insurance has 3 plans that are available. Some deductibles apply. For example: an 8 pound Yorkey would cost \$40.77/month for major medical. The wellness basic would cost \$17.75/month.

Another benefit is AMBA Long Term Care. Amba will build a Long Term Care policy to match

your own individual needs: you select the daily benefit amount, and benefit period which best suits

your needs for care. Premiums depend on age and other factors. Call AMBA at 10800-258-7041.

Marge Mangan, Member Benefits Chairman

## **Re: Legislative Update**

**Fr: Anna Morris**

**Around Springfield:** To see Illinois government in a somewhat favorable light, one might view it as a three-ring circus—the executive, legislative and judicial. In the center ring playing is the budget and Grand Bargain. Unfortunately, neither act is playing well. According to Capitol Fax, Senate leader Cullerton and Minority leader Radogno are still attempting to form the deal, with a revised school funding formula the beginning portion of Senate Bill 1 (SB1). Allegedly Gov. Rauner has both Senator Radogno and Democrat leaders fuming by continuing to sabotage their efforts to form the Grand Bargain and balanced budget. The Fax quotes a Rauner source as saying, “What we support the public supports,” as he gears up for next year’s election. In the meantime, Senator Dan Brady blindsided both Senate leaders by introducing his own budget bill which supposedly would cut spending by five billion. It also would preserve health insurance from the collective bargaining process. **Further, a group of House and Senate Democrats unveiled what they call the “Illinois Comeback Agenda” to counter the Governor’s “Turnaround Agenda.”** And, finally, on April 5, **a group of 17 Southern and Central Illinois school districts filed a lawsuit in a St. Clair county court against the state and certain officials for forcing them to cut programs, lay off staff, borrow money, and use “duct tape” in order to keep the doors open.**

**Southern Illinois University:** SIU president, Randy Dunn, recently spelled out a proposed \$30 million cut to the University’s budget if state funding continues to flounder. Although it impacts both campuses as well as the Medical School in Springfield, the greatest damages would be felt in Carbondale. **Continued cuts to the major economic engine for Southern Illinois will be severely felt throughout the region. On April 6, the House passed a bill directing \$817 million to assist struggling universities and human services agencies.**

**Pension Benefits:** Various proposals are being floated around the legislature to allow lump sum pension payments in lieu of regular annuity payments. The upfront payment would be reduced by a certain amount as a condition of the buyout.

**Master Contract:** The Illinois Supreme Court has denied Gov. Rauner’s request to be immediately allowed to impose pay and working conditions to AFSCME, the State’s largest employee union. The Appellate Court, on a suit by AFSCME, barred Rauner from taking action until it rules on the merits of the case. A state labor board had previously declared impasse, allowing the governor to dictate a settlement. **In a related matter (not a part of the Master Contract), the governor announced a plan to layoff 124 unionized nurses who work in state prisons.** They would be replaced by a private medical provider, Wexford. Four Senate Republicans joined Democrats to pass a bill that would prohibit the June 1 layoffs. Senators Fowler and Schimpf, who have prisons in their districts, broke with the governor and supported the bill. It awaits the governor’s action.

**Surprising Tweet:** House Republican Leader Jim Durkin tweeted that “25% of Illinois’ budget is consumed by required pension payments. That’s money that could be going to schools, social service or infrastructure.”

**The State of Illinois now offers a web-based online enrollment platform entitled [MyBenefits Marketplace](#).** All plans administered by the State of Illinois, including the Teachers’ Retirement Insurance Program, utilizes this enrollment platform. **The site is designed specifically for you to streamline your benefit options into a one-stop shop for your insurance needs.** This includes learning more about your current insurance benefits, making enrollment decisions, changing your current coverage and finding contact information for all your plan administrators.

The new website is [MyBenefits.illinois.gov](http://MyBenefits.illinois.gov) . You can access this website via your computer, smartphone or tablet. Of course, you also have the option **to call a customer service representative for further assistance or enrollment over the phone, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.—6 p.m. at 1-844-251-1777 or TTY at 1-844-251-1778.**

The WCIRTA held a membership meeting at the Crab Orchard Golf Club in Carterville, Illinois on March 3, 2017. Special guests were Representative Dave Severin and Senator Dale Fowler.

**Welcome:** President Kent Carrell welcomed all present. He led the members in a blessing prior to the breakfast buffet.

**Registration:** Treasurer Don Kragness accepted dues from members.

**ROE Report:** Matt Donkin addressed the group and shared the following information:

a. In light of the shortage of substitute teachers, a bill was signed by Gov. Rauner revising licensure/ fees and renewals. Contact Elaine Little at the ROE office for questions regarding this process.

b. Urged members to encourage young people to go into the field of education.

c. Will participate in the 101st distribution of the sales tax for schools taking place March 3, 2017.

d. Thanked all present for what they do for the young people in education.

**Introduction of Speakers:** President Carrell introduced the speakers for the meeting, Senator Dale Fowler representing the 59th District and Representative Dave Severin, representing the 117th District. Senator Fowler began by relaying information to the group about his and his family's involvement in education and his rationale for wanting to be a legislator. He highlighted several priorities as he begins serving the people of Southern Illinois: a balanced budget, full funding for education, economic development, create a better tourism initiative, working with the juvenile justice system.

He ended his presentation by promising to work for the people in his district. He provided his email, senatorfowler59@gmail.com and encouraged any concerns or comments be directed to him.

Representative Dave Severin also highlighted his background in the field of education. He introduced Sue Hamilton, District Director, who runs his office in Marion. He stated it is a privilege to represent the 117th district and will work hard on the issues impacting this district. His priorities involve education, agriculture, balanced budget, and being a servant to his district.

**Q and A:** Both legislators fielded several questions from the members regarding such topics as: 401K for active teachers, health insurance, the Grand Bargain, and HB 2759. They concluded their presentation with a promise to continually represent the people of Southern Illinois focusing on education, social agencies, cutting costs, raising revenue, and working towards a balanced budget.

**Introduction of Board Members:** President Carrell introduced the WCIRTA board members.

**Correspondence:** A thank note was received from the families of Mary Jean DeMattei, Mavis McDonough for donations made to the IRTA Foundation.

**Business:** There was discussion regarding raising WCIRTA dues from \$5 to \$10. **Motion: To raise WCIRTA dues to \$10 to become effective at the next general membership meeting. Motion carried.**

**Those members who have paid in advance will be grandfathered in and the raise will not take effect for them until their dues are payable. Dues for year 2017 will remain \$5 until the start of the next general membership meeting scheduled for May 9, 2017. All dues for 2018 and beyond will be assessed at the \$10 rate.**

President Carrell made the following announcements:

The IRTA Scholarship deadline is March 7, 2017. Southern Illinois junior or senior college students going into the field of education are encouraged to apply. There was a winner from Williamson County last year.

Encouraged the continued support of the IRTA Legal Defense Fund.

Announced \$35,000 in grants for active teachers available through the IRTA Foundation.

Twenty-four people are retiring in Williamson Co. this year. Members are encourage to contact the retirees and urge them to join WCIRTA.

**Lee Rogers**, Goreville, Regional Representative on the Legislative Committee briefly spoke to the group encouraging members to continue to support IPAC. He explained the purpose of IPAC is to help prevent bad legislation from becoming bad law. Members can join online. Forms are also available from Treasurer Don Kragness.

**Next Membership Meeting:** The next membership meeting will be May 9, 2017 at Mackie's Pizza at 12:00 p.m.

**Next Board Meeting:** The next board meeting will be April 6, 2017 at 1:30 p.m. at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church.

A motion was made by Tom Oates and seconded by Gary Troxel to adjourn the meeting at 10:50 a.m.

Betsy Murphy, Secretary

### WCIRTA Membership Report

Thanks to all who continue to support our retirees association. The WCIRTA continues to be one of the larger retiree associations in southern Illinois. Treasurer Don Kragness and I get monthly updates from the IRTA on changes in addresses, phone #s, email addresses and more. Our quarterly meetings provide for informative sessions from varying speakers, times to renew past friendships, get legislative updates and enjoy a meal or refreshments. Our quarterly newsletters reach out to those with online internet access as well as mailings to those who don't. A special thanks to new members Dennis Smith, Steve Robinson, and Sue Hamilton who joined the WCIRTA at the last membership meeting. Dues were received from 13 members since the last meeting.

Sadly, we got notice from the IRTA that retiree Ruth Berger had passed away in March of 2017. A memorial donation will be made on her behalf.

I continue to try and keep our website up and active. Feel free to browse the website here: <http://williamsoncountyrta.weebly.com/> for association membership information, officers, meeting dates, and more.

We have a number of new retirees from throughout Williamson County and are having our new retiree's dinner again at Mackie's Pizza on April 26 at 6:00 pm. Feel free to come out and congratulate the retirees. Our next general membership meeting will be at 12:00 noon at Mackie's Pizza on May 9.

Steve Mawell, WCIRTA Membership