

# WCRTA



Winter, 2014

Dear Fellow Retiree,

## Dates to Remember!

**Feb. 14**  
**9:00 a.m.**  
**Crab Orchard Golf Club**

**May 7**  
**Mackie's Pizza**  
**12:00 noon**

**Aug. 14**  
**Marion Lions Depot**  
**1:00 p.m.**

My last communication with you in this space suggested that the coming weeks would be crucial to our pensions and to our futures. I wish that I could say that I was wrong . . . but I am unable to do so. The passage of Senate Bill 1 as amended on December 3 changed things for us both now and in the foreseeable future. When Gov. Quinn signed the bill and it became Public Law 98-0599 it affected not only retired educators like us but also those still teaching and looking forward to retirement someday. It also impacted retirees and participants in four of the five state pensions systems—only the judges were omitted from the legislation.

I quoted Capitol Fax blogger Rich Miller's assessment that old-fashioned politics would rule the process and, in the final analysis, that proved to be true. With the 2014 election season fast approaching Speaker Madigan stormed to the front and dictated what he wanted. What he wanted—and got—was a pound of flesh from state employees and retirees. You know the specifics as well as I do. Madigan flexed his muscle and his minions dutifully responded. Our own Rep. John Bradley was the sole Southern Illinois lawmaker to vote for the passage of the bill. The other five—Sen. Gary Forby, Rep. Brandon Phelps, Sen. David Luechtefeld, Rep. Mike Bost and Rep. Jerry Costello II—voted against the bill.

I for one am looking forward to Rep. Bradley's attempt to justify his vote when he appears at our annual breakfast meeting in February where we invite our legislators and ask them to address pension and insurance issues of interest to retirees. I also anticipate his comments about the fact that the IRTA has already entered a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the law. I hope you are planning to join us for our breakfast with legislative representatives on Friday, February 14, 2014. The meeting will be in the restaurant of the Crab Orchard Golf Club in Carterville. Cost of the meal will be in the vicinity of \$10.00

Regardless of what transpires at our February 14 meeting, IRTA will continue to fight for us as this issue winds its way through the legal system. And that costs big bucks! If you have not yet sent a contribution to the Legal Defense Fund of the IRTA, please do so soon. If every member gives only \$10.00 we will raise well over a quarter of a million dollars for our fight. Remember that this money is dedicated to the legal battle related to our pension benefits and cannot be used for any other purpose. Will you help?

Bob Campbell  
WCRTA President &  
IRTA Region 18  
Legislative Liaison

### **Board of Directors Meeting Dec. 11, 2013**

Present: Bob Campbell, John Harland, Marge Mangan, Don Kragness, Anna Morris, Tom Oates, Steve Maxwell and Mary Lou Gander. Prospective board member Loren Taylor was also present. Minutes approved; Treasurer's balance showed \$2,155.74.

Tentative calendar for 2014 meetings was discussed and assignments made to contact locations and presenters. Decision to repeat the successful 2013 New Retirees Dinner in April of 2014.

Future meetings: February 14, 2014; April 24, 2014 (Only for new retirees.); May 7, 2014; August 20, 2014. Directors reported on member benefits, finance, membership and legislative. Dates for Winter Newsletter: Jan 10, 2014 articles to Tish Koontz; Jan 17, 2014 newsletter to ROE; Jan 24, 2014 John to pick up and mail.

Board discussed inviting Dianne Ozment, widow of our late President, Dee Ozment, to be present at a future meeting and receive the throw that was provided by IRTA to honor Dee.

Meeting adjourned at 3:15 P.M.

### **Board of Directors Meeting January 8, 2014**

Present: Bob Campbell, John Harland, Don Kragness, Anna Morris, Tom Oates, Steve Maxwell and Mary Lou Gander. Also present was Loren Taylor, who has agreed to serve as Information Services chair. He was unanimously approved for the position by the board. Minutes approved and Treasurer's Report showed a balance of \$2155.74.

Meetings for 2014 were confirmed: Feb. 14, 2014 at Crab Orchard Golf Club in Cartersville at 9:00 AM with Legislators as invited guests; Apr 24, 2014 at Mackie's Pizza in Marion at 6:00 PM for New Retirees Dinner with program to be information sharing about IRTA and WCRTA; May 7, 2014 at Mackie's Pizza in Marion at 12:00 Noon with Cynthia O'Neill (TRS Board Member) as the program; Aug 14, 2014 at Marion Lions Depot at 1:00 PM with Rich Frankenfeld (TRS Staff Member) as the program; Oct 20, 2014 at St. Paul Catholic Church Recreation Center in Johnston City at 1:30 PM with a representative from United Healthcare as the program. IRTA Area and Regional Directors and AMBA personnel and ROE personnel will be invited to make comments at various meetings.

Reports by committee chairs essentially the same as in December of 2013, except that Member Services Chair Mary Lou Gander reported updates to existing programs and the availability of participation in a new program, Medi-Pendant. She will prepare an article for the newsletter and share this information at the next few general membership meetings.

Since no one has as yet agreed to become Vice President, the decision was made to go with a vacancy in the Vice President position until a new prospect, Bert Gordon, is able to join the board in the spring.

Meeting adjourned at 2:55 PM

## Something to Think About!

There are about 700 retired educators in Williamson County. Members of the Williamson County Retired Teachers Association number about 276. Due to all the support and effort provided on behalf of all teachers, in regards to political action and education related activities by our local Williamson County Chapter, we strongly encourage and desire for each current member to become actively involved in recruiting others to join the WCRTA.

This will not take much time or effort if each WCRTA member will follow through on an initiative called, "One by Two". This basically is a concept that each one contact two retirees that you know who do not belong to WCRTA. Contacts may be made face to face, through social media sites, e-mail, telephone contacts, etc. Our goal is to reach all 700 retirees and for all to become members of our local chapter.

We know now with new healthcare reforms and the strong possibility of pension changes, that it will require more and more involvement on the local level to make our voice be heard. Strength is exponentially enhanced with an increase in the numbers of individual support given. We are presently making a difference but can do even more in the future.

If you are not a member of the Williamson County Retired Teachers Association, then consider this a personal invitation to join and to help us reach out to other retirees to become members. This will enable us to do even more for ourselves as retired teachers and for those presently teaching.

Loren Taylor, Chairman of Information Services

## Membership Report

January 2014

As of December 2013 the WCRTA has 380 retirees on our retiree list. This makes us one of the largest retired association south of Springfield. We continue to gain membership throughout the year. While many new members select the annual due deductions from their pensions, other forms include a one-time lifetime membership or annual payments for 5 year payments.

Our next general membership meeting is 9:00, February 14 at the Crab Orchard Gold Course. Come enjoy the breakfast buffet and retiree fellowship. Our local political leaders have been invited. A complete calendar of our 2014 meetings has been posted on our website at: <http://williamsoncountyrta.weebly.com/meetings.html>. We continue to post the WCRTA newsletters on our website in an effort to save costs. This newsletter will be emailed to the active email addresses we have on file.

The IRTA and others have filed suit against the recent legislation affecting our pensions. More information on the law suit can be found at the IRTA website: <http://www.irtaonline.org/>. The IRTA has made it easy to donate to the legal defense fund on their site as well.

Steve Maxwell  
WCRTA Chairman

### **New Benefit: MEDIPENDANT—FOR AS LITTLE AS \$1 A DAY FOR STATE IRTA MEMBERS.**

Safeguard your independent lifestyle with peace of mind. The first Medical Alarm Device that allows you to speak and listen directly. 1st monitored (with EMT certified professionals) medical alarm/alert system that gives users access to help at the press of a button—24 hrs a day, 365 days a year. Speak and listen to operator thru pendant. Do not need a home phone line. Operates up to 600 ft in and around home. Water resistant. May be worn in bath or shower. Battery—up to 6 hrs talk time—one yr. standby time.

IRTA and the member would receive a monetary benefit for each MediPendant acquired by an IRTA Member.

If interested, call 1-800-262-4239 to talk to an agent.

NOTE: AT&T DISCOUNT HAS BEEN TAKEN OFF THE LIST F BENEFITS BECAUSE OF DIFFICULTIES OF SO MANY AT&T STORES NOT OFFERING THE DISCOUNT.

COLLETTE VACATIONS HAVE HAD LITTLE RESPONSE. THERE IS A TRIP PLANNED TO TRAVEL WITH BOB PINKERTON, STATE PRESIDENT ON OCT. 20-29, 2014. IT IS TITLED "REFLECTIONS OF ITALY."

MARY LOU GANDER, MEMBER BENEFITS

### WILLIAMSON COUNTY RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION TREASURER'S REPORT 1/20/14

|                         |          |            |
|-------------------------|----------|------------|
| DATE: BEGINNING BALANCE | 12/30/13 | \$2,155.74 |
| .....                   |          |            |
| INCOME Dues             | \$30.00  | \$30.00    |
| EXPENSES                |          | \$0.00     |
| ENDING BALANCE          | 1/20/14  | \$2,185.74 |
| .....                   |          |            |

**WILLIAMSON COUNTY RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION**  
**Minutes of Board Meeting on January 8, 2014**

(Minutes prepared by Bob Campbell in absence of Secretary Marge Mangan.

The Board Meeting of the Williamson County Retired Teachers Association was held on Wednesday, January 8, 2014, at the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Marion, Illinois. Those present were: Bob Campbell, President; Don Kragness, John Harland, Tom Oates, Anna Morris, Mary Lou Gander, Steve Maxwell, and Loren Taylor. (Marge Mangan sent regrets from sunny Southern California.)

Minutes of previous meeting – Tom Oates moved to accept Minutes; Mary Lou Gander seconded. Motion passed. Treasurer's report showed a balance of \$2,155.74. Report was filed for audit on motion by Steve Maxwell and second by Anna Morris. Passed.

**Newsletter Date Changes:** Since the February meeting has been changed to February 14, the dates for preparing and sending the next newsletter were changed to January 17 for items to be sent to Tish Koontz, January 24 for completed copy to go to ROE and January 31 for pick up, preparation of mailing and delivery to post office.

**February 14, 2014, Meeting:** At Crab Orchard Golf Club at 9:00 AM. Annual legislator session. John Bradley has confirmed attendance (or staffer); Gary Forby is unable to attend; Sheila Simon has not yet responded. Bob will contact Forby's office to secure a staffer and will follow up with Lt. Gov. Office. Meal cost will be \$9.00. Loren Taylor agreed to contact Dianne Ozment to come to the February meeting for the presentation of the IRTA "throw" received at the Convention to recognize Dee Ozment as Unit Honoree for 2013.

**April 24, 2014 New Retirees Dinner Meeting:** To be held again at Mackie's in Marion; same format for information sharing by board to new retirees; lists of retirees to be requested from Crab Orchard by Marge, Johnston City by Don, Carterville by Anna, Marion and WCSED by John (Herrin was sent to Tom.)

**Standing Committee Reports:** Reports and discussion concerning member benefits with Verizon, Sam's Club discount, and a new benefit—Medi-Pendant to be covered in newsletter; updated member list with emphasis on securing dues payments for 2014; new chair for information services is Loren Taylor; legislative concerns about stance of Illinois Policy Institute and their influence on the legislative process; finance recommendation to leave dues at \$5.00 annually (agreed to by consensus.)

**Other business:** Still no commitment on VP after several contacts. Don reported that Bert Gordon will take the position in the spring after completion of a job he is doing. Board agreed to continue without a VP until Bert can join us. The meeting schedule for 2014 was confirmed as follows:  
May 7 meeting at Mackie's in Marion and Cynthia O'Neill as the program;  
August 14 at the Marion Lions Depot (rental is \$125.00) with Rich Frankenfeld as the program and the board to prepare homemade ice cream and cookies for refreshments;  
October 20 at St. Paul's Center in Johnston City with United Healthcare as the program and pies and coffee for refreshments. Next board meeting is April 9, 2014. Meeting adjourned at 2:55 PM.

## Legislative Update: Anna Morris

**Any day now we should be** receiving thank-you notes from **Governor Quinn, House Speaker Madigan,** and the **Chicago Civic Federation** for having sacrificed our future, solved the pension problem, and put Illinois on a sound financial basis. Another myth busted—only our sacrifice part is true.

**As you are likely aware,** the pension bill was debated and passed in a single day in December. All of our local legislators opposed the bill except **Representative Bradley** who voted in its favor.

**To date, three suits have been filed** to challenge the law. The first was filed by IRTA in Cook County, followed by the Retired State Employees Association and the Illinois State Employees Association-Retired (both filed in Sangamon Co.). Select employees of each of these groups are co-plaintiffs. Each group asserts the supremacy of the Constitution's pension clause. However, differences include a request for a jury trial, violation of the Equal Protection Clause (since Judges' pensions were excluded), violation of contract law to many taking early retirement offers, and requests that "savings" under the law be escrowed until the suits are resolved. Some of these distinctions might create an appeal path to the Federal courts if the Illinois Supreme Court upholds the law. Additional suits are pending.

**On insurance:** Those who are Medicare eligible should now be enrolled in United Healthcare Group Medicare Advantage (PPO). Cynthia O'Neill, TRS Board member, advises: "All who enrolled should have received their insurance cards by now, plus paperwork from TRS. **Please save everything about the Healthcare switch.**"

### New COLA Formula and Rates for Tier I Active and Retired Members

When and if the law takes effect, there will be two formulas used to determine the size of each year's cost of living adjustment. The COLA formula to be used will be determined each year by the current size of the member's pension.

- Each member, upon retirement, will multiply his/her total service credit by a factor that is initially set at \$1,000 when the bill takes effect. This "pension threshold" will be used in the future to determine the annual COLA. For example, a member with 30 years of service upon retirement in 2015 would have an initial "pension threshold" set at \$30,000. The formula for your annual increase is the following: years of service X \$1000 X 3% = annual increase plus a rate of inflation.
- Beginning in 2016 and in every year thereafter, the \$1,000 threshold multiplier will be increased by the rate of inflation, but the rate will not fall below 0% in case inflation is negative.
- As long as a member's pension is less than their current pension threshold, when the member is eligible for a COLA it will be 3 percent compounded, which means calculated from the member's current pension.
- Once a member's pension equals or exceeds their threshold, the COLA calculation changes. The COLA in every year then becomes 3 percent of the member's current threshold amount.

**Calculating Your Cola.** Based on the previous explanation, the following example can be followed to project your future COLA's. This assumes a retired teacher with 35 years of service and a current pension of \$50,000. It further assumes a CPI of 1 %, which will change from year to year.

**Year 1 (2015):** Service years: 35 X multiplier of 1,000 = 35,000 X 1,050 3 % COLA + 50,000 present pension = 51,050 new pension

**Year 2 (2016):** Service years: 35 X multiplier of 1,010 = 35,350 X 1,061 3 % COLA +51,050 present pension = 52,110.50 new pension

**For more information: Teachers Retirement System(TRS): 1.800.877.7896 <http://trs.illinois.gov/>  
Illinois Retired Teachers Association (IRTA): 1.800.728.4782 [www.irtaonline.org](http://www.irtaonline.org)**

**To contact legislators: Rep. John Bradley: 997-9697/ (217) 782-1051 Sen. Gary Forby: (618) 439-2504/ (217) 782-5509**

**2014 WCRTA DUES (01/01/2014 – 12/31/2014)**

If there is NO RED "X" by your name on the mailing label of this Newsletter, you have paid your 2014 local dues. THANKS!!

If a RED "X" appears next to your name on the mailing label, you have not paid your 2014 local dues. Please mail the completed personal information form provided below and a check for \$5.00 to: **Don Kragness, Treasurer, 14082 Poor Farm Rd, Johnston City, IL 62951.** If questions: call Don Kragness at 618-983-5546. To pay State Dues, complete the IRTA Membership Form and the Personal Information Form.

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***IRTA STATE & LOCAL UNIT MEMBERSHIP FORM***

620 NORTH WALNUT STREET, SPRINGFIELD, IL 62702 ... 1-800-728-4782

**Email:** [irta@irtaonline.org](mailto:irta@irtaonline.org) --- **web:** [www.irtaonline.org](http://www.irtaonline.org)

**STATE DUES**

- Dues Deduct - \$30/year (Complete the Authorization for Dues Deduct Section below.)
- Annual - \$40
- 5 Years - \$175
- Life - \$400
- Membership Free for the Calendar Year of Retirement

**STATE ASSOCIATE DUES (non certified)**

- Annual - \$25
- Life - \$125

**LOCAL UNIT DUES (WCRTA)**

- Annual - \$5**

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**Authorization for Dues Deduct (STATE DUES)** – Signature and Social Security # Required --

I hereby authorize the Teachers' Retirement System to deduct my IRTA dues in monthly installments at an initial rate of \$2.50/mo. or as subsequently established by the Delegate Assembly.

\_\_\_\_\_ Signature required for Dues Deduct.

\_\_\_\_\_ Social Security # required for Dues Deduct

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**PLEASE PRINT –PERSONAL INFORMATION FORM**

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First: \_\_\_\_\_ MI: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ District Retired From: \_\_\_\_\_ YR Retired: \_\_\_\_\_

## Potential Changes in Healthcare Options for Medicare Eligible Retirees

CMS, the state agency that oversees healthcare options for retirees in all of the state's plans, has issued a Request for Proposals to health insurance providers to develop and submit plans for a Medicare Advantage plan for those annuitants eligible to receive Medicare.

(Go to <http://www2.illinois.gov/cms/employees/benefits> and look for State-Sponsored Medicare Plan for further details.)

The RFP will allow the state to incorporate Medicare into the healthcare plans they administer, allowing for cost-saving. This will mean that Illinois will administer both Medicare and what has been available as supplemental coverage. Speculation is that CMS will provide the option of a Medicare Advantage plan or a Medigap plan when the RFP process is complete.

Watch for information about this change from CMS, TRS, IRTA, IEA, etc. and read the descriptions carefully before making any decisions about your own coverage.

TRS annuitants who are over 65 but ineligible for Medicare coverage can not be eligible for the Medicare Advantage plan. They will still be eligible for TRIP insurance.

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## Dues Increase to be Considered at IRTA Convention

WCRTA will have a full complement of 8 delegates going to the IRTA Convention in October. Our delegates will be Bob Campbell, Mary Lou Gander, John Harland, Judi Harland, Don Kragness, Marge Mangan, Anna Morris and Tom Oates.

One of the items on the agenda will be a proposal to increase the dues structure of the IRTA. All categories of membership dues payment will be modified by the proposal but the one that is probably of the most interest to WCRTA members is the Dues Deduct method.

Dues paid by monthly deduction from the TRS annuity have been \$2.00 per month or \$24.00 per year. The proposal would change that to \$2.50 per month or \$30.00 per year if it is passed by the delegates at the convention.

The WCRTA board also discussed the issue of increasing the dues for the local unit from the current rate of \$5.00 annually, but decided to wait until after any action at the convention and to do further research on the amounts paid currently by other units in the area. The chart below shows the dues structure for the other units in Region 18.

|                         |         |             |        |
|-------------------------|---------|-------------|--------|
| Alexander-Pulaski-Union | \$10.00 | Johnson     | \$5.00 |
| Gallatin-Saline         | \$10.00 | Massac      | \$5.00 |
| Jackson                 | \$10.00 | Pope-Hardin | \$5.00 |

Let your convention representatives listed above know how you feel about the proposed dues increases for IRTA. Also, please share with your board members your feelings about increasing the local unit dues from the current rate of \$5.00 annually.

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**IF YOU ARE NOT A MEMBER OF IRTA, PLEASE CONSIDER BECOMING A MEMBER NOW!**