

WCIRTA

Winter, 2016



Dear Fellow Retired Educator,

For this issue of the WCIRTA Newsletter, I want to focus on some statistics about our organization. In my last message I reported on the great work your board members are doing for us all. However, that fine work has drawn attention to some sobering statistics that I want to share with you in this space.

Our records show 382 retired teachers and administrators in our membership—meaning they are members of and have paid dues to either IRTA or WCIRTA during the past three years. (Our By-Laws require that we drop members from the roster if they have not paid dues to the organization for three consecutive years.) For purposes of clarification, members of IRTA are not automatically members of WCIRTA and vice versa. Although related, they are two separate entities. There are currently 178 IRTA members on our roster who pay \$2.50 monthly for their IRTA dues through Dues Deduct from their TRS annuity check. The deducted amount is forwarded to IRTA with no service charges to the individual or to the organization. In addition, there are 77 individuals listed who have purchased a Lifetime Membership in IRTA and will never have to pay anything more to the organization in the future. There are also a few members who pay their dues 5 years at a time and a few more who pay their dues through membership in IPA or some similar organization. This is some good news!

Locally, 175 members have paid their annual dues of \$5.00 to WCIRTA for either 2015 or 2016. About a third of them—59 members—are already paid for the current year or even 2017, 2018 and even up to 2025. This is also good news! (However, these items of good news are tempered by the fact that TRS records show more than 750 retirees living in Williamson County who receive a monthly annuity from TRS. Why are there not more members in WCIRTA and IRTA?) And now for the bad news. 199 of the 382 on the WCIRTA roster have not yet paid their \$5.00 annual local dues to WCIRTA. More bad news is that there are 77 members of WCIRTA who have paid local dues but are not listed on the state's report as having paid IRTA dues. The worst news is that there are nearly as many people living in the county who receive an annuity from TRS but are not on our lists at all! That number is 368.

What do we do about this? The board has begun a multi-faceted approach to improving these numbers in 2016.

1. We are calling or emailing the 199 delinquent members to urge them to send their \$5.00 membership dues for 2016 to Treasurer Don Kragness, 14082 Poor Farm Road, Johnston City, IL 62951. (Feel free to call Don at 618-983-5546 or email him at donjank1@gmail.com to find out when you last paid the \$5.00 annual dues.)
2. We are calling or emailing the 77 individuals who are now or have been in the recent past members of WCIRTA and urging them to become members of IRTA as well as members of the Williamson County Unit,
3. We are enlisting YOUR help by asking you to contact your retiree friends and former co-workers to see if they will join both WCIRTA and IRTA to help secure the future viability of TRS and our retirement funding. (You can remind them that many of the more than 39,000 members of IRTA voluntarily donated more than \$600,000 to the Legal Defense Fund to have Senate Bill 1 declared unconstitutional last year. And, they will continue to fight to preserve the pensions of ALL retired educators who receive monthly annuity checks from TRS.)

Will you help your board achieve its goals? Send in your own WCIRTA dues today. Contact IRTA for details about joining that organization if you are not already a member. Share with your friends the need for us ALL to work together to promote the welfare of retired educators in Illinois.

Bob Campbell, WCIRTA President

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

The next membership meeting is Friday, February 19, 2016, at 9:00 A.M. at the Crab Orchard Golf Club in Carterville. Hope to see you there!

WCRTA Winter 2016 Membership Report

Retirees: Welcome to 2016! 2015 was an outstanding year and Thank You for your participation. Our plans for 2016 are even better. You have probably been contacted by one of the WCRTA board members recently to make sure we have your correct address, phone #s and or email addresses. The IRTA routinely sends us their updates, but in some cases I see that they also need updated. Susan Goetz @ susan@irtaonline.org is our resource at the IRTA and she sends Don Kragness and me the updates. If you have any questions about what we have on file, send Don or me a note. You can also try sending a note to Susan to update the IRTA records.

Membership Meetings: Your WCRTA continues to have 4 membership meetings a year. They are scheduled for **Feb 19 at Crab Orchard GC, May 10 at Mackie's, Aug 18's location is undecided, and Oct 17 is at the St Paul's Catholic Church in Johnston City.** So take a minute and mark your calendars now! I have revised the WCRTA website with these dates as well. You can view the schedule at:

<http://williamsoncountyrta.weebly.com/meetings.html>

Membership Data: My membership list as of 1/15/2016 includes 381 retirees. Not all of those retirees are IRTA and or WCRTA members. 254 of the 381 have been WCRTA members. 117 of those prefer dues deduct while 77 are Life members. Others have chosen some other form of dues structure.

In Memoriam: The WCRTA is saddened by the recent passing of member Robert "Don" Newcom. I worked with Don and he passed in 12/2015. We were also updated that member Eddie Usher had passed some time ago in 3/2014. Memorial notes have been sent from the membership. A list of "Gone But Not Forgotten" members is maintained on the WCRTA website at: <http://williamsoncountyrta.weebly.com/gone-but-not-forgotten.html>

Membership Dues: It's January 2016 and your annual \$5.00 WCRTA dues are now due and payable. All dues are paid to WCRTA Treasurer Don Kragness. He is in charge of placing the **RED X** on your record ;-). Don can be contacted at: Donald Kragness - 14802 Poor Farm Rd, Johnston City, IL 62951 (618) 983-5546. His is:

donjank1@gmail.com I try and keep our website updated. Go here to view our website:

<http://williamsoncountyrta.weebly.com/>

Steve Maxwell - WCRTA Membership Chair

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MARY LOU GANDER
BENEFITS CHAIRPERSON

Board of Directors Meeting at the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Marion, Illinois January 6, 2016

The WCIRTA Board Meeting was called to order by Tom Oates who presided over the meeting. Present were: Tom Oates, Anna Morris, Steve Maxwell, Marge Mangan, John Harland, Loren Taylor, Judi Harland, Bert Gordon, Mary Lou Gander, and Don Kragness.

Approval of Minutes— Loren Taylor made a motion to approve Minutes of December 9, 2015, meeting; Anna Morris seconded. Motion passed.

Treasurer's report – Don reported the balance is \$1,720.62.

The Next Membership meeting –The next membership meeting will be **Friday, February 19, 2016, at 9:00 A.M.** At the Crab Orchard Golf Club in Carterville. Bert has contacted Mary at the Crab Orchard Golf Club and it is confirmed for our meeting. Anna has contacted John Bradley and Gary Forby to be put on their schedules. Anna will confirm later. Anna will introduce legislators. Don and Steve will put Dues information notice in the Newsletter. Is it possible to have Membership Meeting times and places printed in the Southern Illinoisan calendar? Bert will check.

Reports – Anna – Legislative “Pensions being taxed?” The pension benefits in SB1 are unconstitutional.

Membership – Steve reported. Steve added Jackie Corder to our list. Eddie Usher and Don (Robert) Newcom have been added to the list of memorialized teachers. The proposed calendar of events is updated on the website. By-Laws are available at the top of the website. Membership dues are due by the end of January. Steve states that our name acronym on the website is WCIRTA. Bert Gordon has been added as Director at Large on the officers and Committees page of the website.

The IRTA Foundation –reported by Judi Harland. The most important thing is that there are 2 scholarships available to Juniors and Seniors in college. Information will be in the Newsletter. The amounts are \$1,500 and \$3,000. There are 23 grants available to active teachers. The profit from mailing labels is more than \$163,000. There is an increasing need for assistance to retired teachers. The Foundation has received a \$90,000 donation from an estate.

Speaker for the May 10, 2016, meeting – Rich Frankenfeld, Director of Outreach, Teachers' Retirement System of Illinois, will be our speaker for the May 10th meeting at Mackies.

Retirees – As Board members check with Unit Offices for names of retirees for this school year, pass those along to Bob.

Newsletter deadlines:

January 15 – articles to Tish Koontz; January 29 e-mail and USPS mail out to members.

Next Board meeting –The next Board Meeting is April 6, 2016, at 1:30 P.M. At the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Marion.

Adjournment –Steve made a motion to adjourn; John seconded. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 2:15 P.M.

Marge Mangan, Secretary

As the calendar turns the page to January, 2016, and we put away the Christmas decorations, it is once again time to ring our local Williamson County IRTA dues up to date.

If you haven't already mailed in your local dues for 2016, would you please take time to do so today? Some of us are a little confused in thinking that, if they are on the IRTA Dues Deduct, our Local dues are paid automatically. Well, That simply isn't the case. Local WCIRTA dues are not part of the Dues Deduct. I will they were. It may be, in the future, but as for now, we collect \$5.00 a year starting in January. You may pay your dues at any of the general membership meetings, but it works just as well so send the to me, Don Kragness, 14802 Poor Farm Road, Johnston City, IL 62951. You can pay multiple years, if you like, and several have done so. If you can't remember if you are up to date, simply send me an email at donjank1@gmail.com or call me at 618-983-5546. Thanks a bunch! See you at the breakfast meeting in February.

Don Kragness, Treasurer

From: Anna Morris

Let me begin with some good news. A bipartisan group of more than 50 legislators have now signed House Resolution 890 (HRO890) which concludes that the Illinois Income Tax Act should not be amended to allow the taxation of retirement income. The resolution was forwarded to all constitutional officers and all leaders of the General Assembly.

For the Record: The chaotic juggernaut that has marked Illinois government for the last seven months continues. The governor and legislative leaders met twice in December, with no progress being made toward passing a 2015 budget. Sporadic payments have been made to some programs based on court orders and agreement by the governor. Yet many service providers like local governments, higher education, and scholarship grants go unfunded. Williamson County, along with a few others, has initiated a law suit to force state action. **The 2016 legislative session began on January 13. The senate met on that day. However, House Speaker Madigan postponed** their meeting until January 27 when the State of the State message will be delivered “because the workload was not there.” **No progress appears imminent on the ideological gap between the Republican governor and Democrat legislative leaders.** The governor is demanding action on reform measures such as curbing the power of unions (including collective bargaining), term limits, and measures to reduce business costs/ taxes. **Legislative leaders say that the measures have little to do with creating a budget. They are proposing a tax increase and selective budget cuts. Both parties continue to look for a solution to address the ever-increasing \$111 billion budget deficit. A further issue** is the state primary election on March 15. Law makers in close election races might be reluctant to vote on significant measures until after the election.

Fair Share: On January 11, the U. S. Supreme Court heard arguments on a suit brought by 10 California teachers and a teachers group, Christian Educators Association International, against their bargaining union. The lawyers make the argument that having to make “fair share” payments in lieu of membership payments violates their free speech. **The union maintains they are receiving all of the benefits won by the union. Early speculation is that the court will rule** in favor of the employees. USA Today notes, “If the justices rule that free-speech rights of non-members entitle them to contribute nothing to the cost of representation—they can already opt out of financing unions’ political activities—more workers are likely to become ‘free riders.’ That would lead to a drop in membership and revenue.” **Elimination of fair share contributions would be a major blow to public employee and teachers unions. A suit by Governor Rauner against the state employees union (AFSCME) is on hold until the Supreme Court makes its decision. The governor’s representatives have walked away from negotiations of the Master Contract which expired July 1, 2015. To quote AFSCME: “ The Administration wants to double employees’ costs for health care, making the state’s health plan the worst in the nation for any state workforce. It would also freeze wages for four years.” Collective bargaining is a key element that state employees and teachers need in the negotiating process and is at risk of being lost.**

Info provided by Bob Lyons, teachers’ representative on the TRS Board of Trustees: (Annuitant benefits as of December 1, 2015) The average annuitant pension is \$52, 752. To lower that number, add survivors and disabled to the annuitants and the average drops to \$48,171.

Current TRS Pension Benefits

Benefit Range	Members	Percent
Under \$50,000	49,881	47.80%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	47,221	45.20%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	6,721	6.40%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	435	0.42%
\$200,000 - \$249,999	77	0.07%
\$250,000	16	0.01%

**To contact legislators: Senator Gary Forby (618-439-2504 or 217-782-5509 email: senatorforby@yahoo.com) Rep. John Bradley (997-9697 or 217-782-1051 email: repjohnbradley@mychoice.net)
For the governor: (217-782-0244)**