

The LAE Voice

Official Publication of the Louisiana Association of Educators

Great Public Schools for Every Louisiana Child

Volume 6, No. 8 August 2010

NEA RA IN NEW ORLEANS



LAE/NEA Delegates worked hard to represent their members back home while in New Orleans this year. Whether it was a beautification project in Belle Chasse, Election to the NEA Board-at-Large as a student member (Brandan Trahan), appearing on the front page of the New York Times (Vice-President Debbie Meaux) or just working hard in caucuses or on the floor of the delegate assembly, or attending dinners and dances in the evenings, your delegates were busy. "I think one very enjoyable moment was hearing Diane Ravitch talk about how we are right and the Feds are wrong. It is all about the beauty of teaching and not about testing," said Joyce Haynes, LAE President.

Information, including the following article, appeared on the NEA website on the last day of the conference. Additional information about the Representative Assembly can be obtained at <http://www.nea.org/grants/40257.htm>.

The delegates headed home from the 2010 Representative Assembly fired up and determined to stay united in challenging times. They return home to a lingering economic recession, funding cuts, and one of the most potent anti-union political climates

in decades. Even if some of the hope from 2009 may be diminished, delegates stand ready for action.

"If we are not the activists in politics, we will be the victims of politics," NEA President Dennis Van Roekel told the delegates in his keynote speech on the first day of the RA. "We simply cannot sit it out. There is too much at stake! WE are the people who can stop this madness! WE are the people who can make all public schools great!"

It was the message carried through the four days by speaker after speaker – Teacher of the Year Sarah Brown Wessling said "we need schools where students thrive because of the system, not in spite of it," and the Greatest Education Governor Martin O'Malley said, "It was the responsibility of lawmakers to give educators the support and respect they deserve". On the final day, NEA Friend of Education award winner Diane Ravitch electrified the audience with an impassioned call for the defense of public education and the teaching profession.

"The current 'education reform' movement is pushing bad ideas," Ravitch said. "It wants to end

tenure and seniority, to silence teachers' unions, and to privatize large sectors of public education. Don't let it happen!"

But delegates also had opportunities to back these words with actions. On Monday, NEA President Dennis Van Roekel asked delegates to text "SPEAKUP" to 77007 to connect with NEA's grassroots effort on key issues. Representatives from all 50 states marched up to the stage on Tuesday to deliver thousands of postcards addressed to Education Secretary Arne Duncan outlining the changes they want to see in the ESEA reauthorization.

"What's great about the RA," said Maine delegate Deborah Butler, "is that it reminds all of us that we're all in the same boat. It's important to remember that we are united and we take that home with us."

LAE Mission Statement

The mission of the Louisiana Association of Educators is to organize and empower local associations to promote quality public schools, strengthen the education profession, and improve the well being of members.

WE DID IT

NEA, LAE and various state affiliates working with a broad coalition of other organizations delivers victory for students and educators nationwide. By the hundreds of thousands, NEA members, coalition partners, parents and governors called, emailed and lobbied Congress, demanding they do right by the nation's students and save 161,000 educators' jobs threatened by budget cuts.

Congress listened and the U.S. House, Tuesday 8/10 authorized \$10 billion in emergency funds for the Education Jobs and Medicaid Assistance Act — legislation that will speed money to states to keep teachers and support professionals working.

President Obama is expected to sign the bill into



law this evening. It also includes \$16 billion to reimburse states for social and medical programs.

Many of you contacted your legislators and urged their support for this bill and for that we are extremely thankful. Others, including President Joyce Haynes and Executive Director Michael Walker-Jones lobbied in Washington for this bill. "It is an important day for children and teachers in Louisiana," remarked LAE President Joyce Haynes.

Without the bill, students returning to school this month and next faced class sizes of up to 40, cuts to courses they need to graduate, and less instruction time.



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Joyce Haynes, President

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

An LAE Dream Team has materialized

"Dream Team." The first time I remember hearing that label applied, it was to the 1992 Olympic USA Basketball Team. The team was composed of legendary athletes and coached by Hall of Fame Coach, Chuck Daly.

The Dream Team was awesome. They won the gold medal, with an 8-0 record. In their eight games, they outscored their opponents 938 to 588. Their average margin of victory was 44 points.

I bring up the 1992 Dream Team because those men exemplify the power of teamwork. Every player was considered the best or one of the best individual stars of his professional team. When they came together as a team, however, they put aside egos and personal rivalries and concentrated on not only winning the Olympic Gold medal for the team, but also on restoring the USA to dominance in basketball. Working together toward a worthy goal, they

accomplished what couldn't be accomplished alone.

A Dream Team is just what Louisiana needs now. It is no exaggeration to say that public education is under attack—again. Using the poor economy as an excuse, politicians and entrepreneurs looking for the next get-rich-quick-and-get-out arena, are lining up to destroy public confidence in public schools and educators.

The weapon du jour is a pile of federal money being dangled before cash strapped local school districts. U. S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has states scrambling to recreate their school districts to magically and quickly turn around "low-performing" schools, demanding drastic changes like basing evaluation of educators on individual student test scores, replacing the principal, and/or replacing teachers. Of course, Louisiana wants to jump on board yet another school reform effort. And, of course, we'll start the aggressive transformation and then we'll work out the details like how can student test scores fairly and validly measure teacher worth, are core teachers solely accountable for student learning, does current assessment really measure what students really need to know, etc.

Even testing company executives have figured out that student test scores can't be used for everything being proposed. Diane Ravitch, recipient of the

2010 NEA Friend of Education Award and former manager at the Educational Testing Services, says, "Complex learning environments argue strongly against relying on test scores to determine the impact of a new teacher, a new book, or a clever computer. " Her observations of and experiences with schools have helped her recognize that despite their flaws, schools successfully educate our presidents, our secretaries of education, and many of our children and grandchildren. She now protests the use of student test data for the purposes being required by the newest reform.

Can Louisiana's students achieve more? Certainly. But, no matter how good we are as individual educators, we cannot go it alone. We've got to be Louisiana's Dream Team and band together to achieve a worthy goal—preserving Louisiana's public school system and strengthening our profession. And we need to insist that more be done than testing, testing, testing.

Does a Louisiana Dream Team exist? It certainly does. It's LAE members banding together at the school, local, state, and national levels; each bringing an expertise and a willingness to work together to ensure that each Louisiana student entrusted to us achieves everything possible.

"Our strength is our togetherness; coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success."

- Henry Ford

JUNE 30, 2010

LETTER: GOVERNOR'S ACTIONS ON BONUSES, SEWERS FAIL SMELL TEST

JINDAL'S ACTIONS ON BONUSES, SEWERS STINK

When faced with a choice between bonuses for top teachers or sewers in the district of a politician who advanced his agenda, Gov. Bobby Jindal chose the latter. There is no nice way to say it: The governor's priorities stink.

shreveporttimes.com

With a stroke of his veto pen Friday, the governor cut \$16 million of funding for bonuses to Louisiana teachers who have earned their profession's highest credential, certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Since 1999, Louisiana has paid a \$5,000 bonus to instructors who have met the board's rigorous standards through some 400 hours of intensive study, expert evaluation, self-assessment and peer review at a personal cost of \$2,500. A comprehensive evaluation in 2008 by the National Research Council found that the "evidence is clear that national board certification distinguishes more effective teachers from less effective teachers with respect to student achievement."

At the same time the governor slashed \$16 million for highly accomplished teachers, he let stand \$15 million in funding for sewers in Bossier Parish. The sewer earmark was priority legislation for Rep. Jane Smith, R-Bossier City. And it was Smith, coincidentally, who carried the governor's fetid water by sponsoring House Bill 1368, a reckless measure authored by Jindal that permits waivers of most state education laws, including class size limits and minimum salary standards.

Despite his professed commitment to Louisiana public schools, the governor's actions fail the smell test.

Joyce Haynes, President
Louisiana Association of Educators

LAE BOARD VACANCIES

Pursuant to the LAE Constitution and Bylaws, Article XI. Amendment of the Constitution and Bylaws, Section 2 (a). Amendment Process for the Constitution and Bylaws, "a proposed amendment to the Constitution and Bylaws shall be presented in writing to the Constitution, Bylaws and Rules Committee, through the President, ninety (90) days prior to the start of the Representative Assembly. If an amendment is mailed, it must be postmarked ninety (90) days prior to the start of the Representative Assembly. Furthermore, the specific dates shall be announced in the Association's calendar or the first publication of the year."

The LAE Representative Assembly will be held on April 2 – 3, 2011. Therefore, the due date for proposed constitutional amendments is **January 28, 2011**.

Board Vacancies: Please submit your letter of Intent and Resume to President Joyce Haynes, via email to laurie.guillot@lae.org by August 18, 2010.



ASSOCIATIONAL DISTRICT 1, SEAT B

(effective September 1, 2010) – Bossier, Caddo, Claiborne, Desoto, Natchitoches, Red River, Sabine, Vernon and Webster

ASSOCIATIONAL DISTRICT 2, SEAT C

Avoyelles, Bienville, Caldwell, Catahoula, Concordia, East Carroll, Franklin, Grambling State University, Grant, Jackson, LaSalle, Lincoln, LSU-A, Madison, Monroe City, Morehouse, University of Louisiana at Monroe, Ouachita, Pointe Coupee, Rapides, Richland, Tensas, Union, West Carroll, West Feliciana and Winn

ASSOCIATIONAL DISTRICT 3, SEAT B

Acadia, Allen, Ascension, Beauregard, Evangeline, Iberville, Jefferson Davis, St. James, St. John, St. Landry, St. Martin, and West Baton Rouge

ASSOCIATIONAL DISTRICT 4, SEAT B

Baker, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Livingston, St. Helena, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Washington, Zachary, City of Bogulsa, LSD, LSVI, ACE and SSD #1

ASSOCIATIONAL DISTRICT 6, SEAT B (MINORITY)

Assumption, Iberia, Jefferson, Lafourche, Plaquemines, Orleans, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. Mary and Terrebonne

LEGISLATIVE REPORT OVERVIEW:

LAE WORKS TIRELESSLY TO PROTECT MEMBER RIGHTS, RETIREMENT, EVALUATIONS ETC.

This legislative session was one of the most challenging sessions in recent history. On a funding basis the legislature chose not to provide additional funding to the MFP for the second year in a row. In addition, the decision of Governor Jindal to veto the bill funding the National Board Certified Teacher's (NBCT) supplement at Superintendent Pastorek's request and the increase in cost, particularly funding for retirement, has placed school districts in difficult position concerning financing on-going programs. (See Joyce Haynes, LAE President's editorial on NBCT funding reprinted from the Shreveport Times) This lack of financing has meant that many who move or retiree are not being replaced and in some cases teachers are being laid off or asked to accept decreases in salaries. Increases in class size will surely follow causing difficulties for students and school/ district test scores. LAE will be fighting along with local associations, to maintain staffing levels and salaries.

In addition, LAE and NEA have been working tirelessly on the Teacher Jobs Bill at the Federal level hoping to bring additional funding to Louisiana in order to protect teacher jobs and maintain salaries. More information on those efforts will be provided in a different area of this newsletter.

Two particular bills at the state level, HB 1033 and HB 1368 may provide additional difficulties for LAE and education employees.

HB 1033 (ACT 54) is a program designed to change the process for evaluating teachers and principals. The purpose of this bill is to provide a value added growth model for evaluating teachers and principals with student test scores making up 50% of a teacher's evaluation. The bill provides for training and evaluation in the first 3 years of teaching and specifies that beginning teachers or out of state teachers who do not meet evaluations, including value added scores, shall not be granted continuing certification or prior experience. The bill does provide for grievance procedures for those who challenge their evaluations and for confidentiality for individual teacher evaluations including test scores. The bill also provides for an **Educator Evaluation Advisory Committee** to provide oversight and to make recommendations to the Legislature concerning value added assessment through at least 2013. The bill provides that charter schools shall be evaluated by a value added growth model. LAE strongly opposed this bill for a number of reasons and will be working with our locals, through our publications, and the Educator Evaluation Advisory Committee. We will work with other education interest groups to ensure that teachers are fairly evaluated and that value added growth models are not used inappropriately in evaluating teachers.

HB 1368 (ACT 749), also called the waiver bill, allows the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to provide districts the ability to avoid current laws in some situations. Among those issues that can be waived under **HB 1368 (ACT 749)**, are issues concerning instructional time, curriculum, funding, personnel, student-to-personnel ratios, and student support issues. **HB 1368 (ACT 749)**, requires a vote of 50% +1 support from the teachers involved for the superintendent to take the request to his local board and then requires support from the local board to take the issue to BESE. BESE does not have to grant the waiver. LAE is investigating the legality of **HB 1368 (ACT 749)**, and we will decide if we will be challenging **HB 1368 (ACT 749)**, in court. We

will also be working with school districts and locals to insure that our members have significant input into any district waiver attempts.

Retirement- The 2010 Legislative Session proved to be a tough session with an all out attack on the Teacher Retirement System. Bills designed to limit retire-rehire, change the current defined contribution plan to a defined benefit plan, and to change the number of years and age at which employees can retire were introduced. We were able to defeat the majority of bills in the retirement committee.

Without the aggressive efforts of LAE, educators in Louisiana were in position to lose a substantial amount of retirement security through their current defined benefit plan (DB), which is now administered by the Teacher's Retirement System of Louisiana. Governor Bobby Jindal advocated against the teachers of Louisiana, advancing his argument of decreasing risk to state and employer agencies by shifting the burden of retirement planning and investments to the employee. Jindal and State Representative Jim Tucker (R-Algiers) placed an enormous amount of pressure on the Legislative Joint Retirement Committee to recommend legislation to change the current defined benefit plan (DB) to a defined contribution plan (DC), mostly based on political philosophy rather than sound research. Sure enough, at the beginning of the legislative session Representative Jim Tucker offered not only legislation **HB 930** that would have dismantled the TRSL's defined benefit structure, but also legislation **HB 1229** that would have replaced elected board members of the Teachers Retirement System of Louisiana (TRSL) with political appointees to control the investments of all four state retirement plans.

LAE steadfastly opposed **HB 930** and **HB 1229** because the legislation would have diluted membership control of TRSL investments and consolidated the assets of TRSL with other retirement systems. TRSL is currently among the most stable pension funds in the nation. After two failed attempts to hear **HB 1229** in committee, the bill was finally heard and deferred by Rep. Jim Tucker due to the vast amount of support from LAE active and retired members who filled the committee room to capacity. **HB 930** was also voluntarily deferred primarily due to evidence that defined contribution (DC) plans cost more to administer than defined benefit (DB) plans. The annual *cost to administer a Defined Contribution (DC) Plan can rise to as much as 2% of assets* compared to the annual cost of *0.25% for Defined Benefit (DB) Plans*. Even though **HB 930** and **HB 1229** would have been the most detrimental to the pensions of teachers in Louisiana, other pieces of legislation were passed with substantial amendments or defeated all together. Some of the other pieces of major legislation are:

HB 519 (ACT 921) by Representative Page Cortez. This legislation became law and will take effect on July 1, 2010. This bill prohibits a retiree from receiving retirement benefits during a period of re-employment unless the retiree is re-employed in a certified shortage area. A grandfather provision added to the bill allows those retirees who were re-employed before July 1, 2010 to continue re-employment under the present retiree return-to-work provisions. Other amendments to the bill allow certified speech therapists, speech pathologists and audiologists to

return to work and continue receiving retirement benefits when they are re-employed in a certified shortage area.

HB 519 (ACT 921) does not ban retire-rehire outright, but sets stringent guidelines on the practice. After June 30, anyone who wants to retire and then be rehired must be a teacher in a "critical shortage area." The authority to determine whether or not a position is deemed a "critical shortage area" lies with the personnel administrator of the local school district. Those who do not meet the bill's requirements may return to work in a school after retiring, but will not be allowed to collect their pension as well as their school salary.

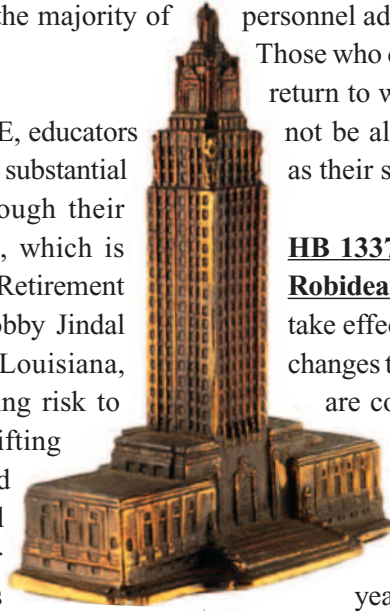
HB 1337 (ACT 992) by Representative Joel Robideaux. This legislation became law and will take effect on January 1, 2011. This legislation changes the method by which retirement benefits are computed by TRSL for new employees hired on or after January 1, 2011. Benefits will be computed using a benefit factor of 2.5%, minimum service and age eligibilities set at 5 years of service at age 60. Final average

compensation periods are set at 60 months with a limit of 15% of salary increases in any given year to be used in computing the average final salary. On May 13, 2010, amendments adopted by the House Retirement Committee included the continuation of five year vesting for teachers and the option to retire at any age with twenty years of service. **HB 1337 (ACT 992)** will not affect any employees hired on or before December 31, 2010. Retirement benefits calculated for employees that were members of TRSL prior to January 1, 2010 will not change. Even though LAE was opposed to **HB 1337 (ACT 992)**, we played an integral role in the negotiation of the amendments. LAE conducted discussions with Representative Robideaux and the House Retirement Committee staff to make the legislation as palatable as possible. With amendments, this legislation ultimately conforms to LAE's position that the retirement security of all pre-K through 12 members of TRSL can be assured only by participation in a state defined benefit retirement plan funded in a manner that assures the long-term stability of the plan.

SB 632 by Senator Butch Gautreaux. This legislation was heard in the Senate Retirement Committee on May 17, 2010, and LAE was prepared to testify in opposition to this legislation. **SB 632** would have required active TRSL members to contribute an additional two percent of their salary (three percent for those belonging to the Louisiana School Employees' Retirement System) towards retirement. **SB 632** would have raised the employee contribution rate to a total of 10 percent. LAE strongly opposed this legislation. **SB 632** was voluntarily deferred in committee by the author (Sen. Butch Gautreaux) and converted to a study resolution.

There will be lots to work on through the year as we focus on how each of these will eventually affect our members and as we look seriously at changes needed in the 2011 session.

Whether it be retirement, waivers, assessment, or funding and financing issues in Louisiana and/or the country... the next two legislative sessions will need a close focus from the association and all of our members.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Mark your calendar for the upcoming events.



August 13-14	Executive Committee
August 21-22	LAE Board Meeting
August 26-29	Staff/ LAE Board Training
September 17-18	Executive Committee

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LAE WELCOMES TWO NEW EMPLOYEES



Vera Loyd

Vera Loyd is a new UniServ Staff person based in the northwest and housed in Shreveport. Vera has a BS Degree in English, MSA in School Administration, and served on the NEA Affirmative Action UniServ Intern Program in 2003. She is a retired teacher from North Carolina, with staff experience in Texas, Maryland, North Carolina, and Wyoming.

Vera is the mother of two grown sons; one is a teacher in North Carolina, and one is a pharmaceutical rep in Florida. She is an avid reader and cat lover!



Dr. Michael Walker-Jones

Dr. Michael Walker-Jones is the new LAE Executive Director. He will be working throughout the state and housed in Baton Rouge. Dr. Walker-Jones has taught in elementary, secondary, and higher education in New York, Kentucky, and Massachusetts. He has worked for NEA and held increasing responsibilities as a staff person in state organizations in Kentucky, Arkansas, and Massachusetts. He is extremely interested in both organizational development and curricular issues.

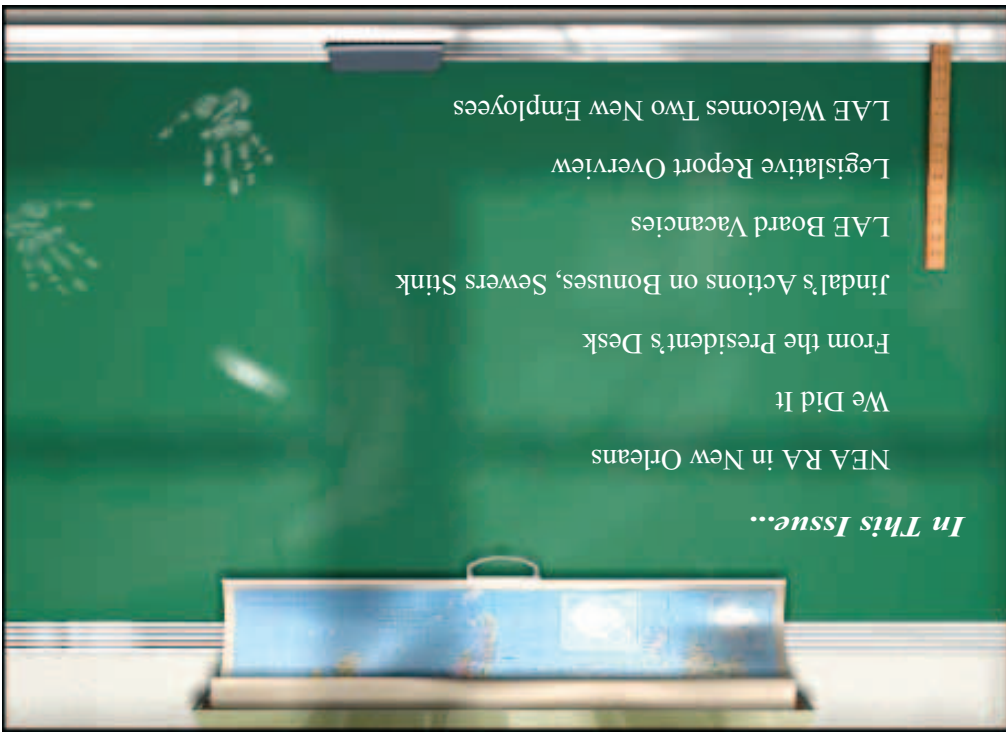
Dr. Walker-Jones is married with four children. He enjoys reading, photography (developing and printing) architectural drawing and construction, art, and a variety of sports including soccer, racquet sports, softball, sailing and golf.

LAE's Help Desk is Here for You...



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"The Louisiana Association of Educators has dedicated the Help Desk to assist its members with work related issues. LAE is proud to sponsor this Help Desk hotline."



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