

The LAE Voice

Official Publication of the Louisiana Association of Educators

Great Public Schools for Every Louisiana Child

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2011 LEGISLATIVE SESSION PREVIEW

The 2011 Legislative Session is right around the corner. We've seen what other states are currently facing, but what can we expect here in Louisiana? We've broken out the seven biggest issues facing Louisiana educators in the 2011 Legislative Session.

- 1. Funding:** Louisiana ranks 30th out of the 50 states for the overall revenue provided to school districts. The state receives a "D" grade for our regressive funding system (which provides more funding to wealthy districts than to poor districts). LAE plans to push for ways to broaden the tax base, close loopholes and examine the widespread use of tax credits and exemptions that plague the state's level of revenue and the overall fairness of the tax system. In order for a wise and prudent investment in K-12 and higher public education to be sustainable, Louisiana policymakers must evaluate and reform the current tax structure.

- 2. Teacher tenure:** There are already aggressive efforts in several other states to eliminate due process rights for teachers. You can expect to see those same efforts surface here in Louisiana. In recent education committee hearings, tenure has been referred to as a barrier and a hindrance to student growth.

At the public K-12 level, tenure does not guarantee a job for life; tenure rewards teachers for being effective in the classroom. LAE will push to maintain and strengthen due process provisions regarding contractual, statutory and constitutional rights for all public school employees.

- 3. Retirement:** LAE anticipates a continued effort to move the current Teacher Retirement System of Louisiana from a *defined benefit* plan to a *defined contribution* plan. Research indicates that converting the TRSL retirement plan to a defined contribution plan would be much more costly than maintaining the current defined benefit plan. LAE will aggressively oppose any attempts

to eliminate the current TRSL defined benefit plan. TRSL benefits provide economic security for tens of thousands of retirees and support the economic activity/output of Louisiana. Secured pensions from the TRSL defined benefit plan help the state recruit quality teachers who educate future Louisiana workers.



- 4. Red Tape Reduction Act:** LAE expects Governor Jindal to propose legislation to amend Act 921 which would strike "teacher approval" from the school/district waiver law. This would allow districts to waive laws pertaining to teacher tenure, class size and instructional time, as well as the student discipline curriculum without teacher approval.

LAE will fight any legislation that would reduce a teacher's participation and input in the school district's decision making process on a waiver of any state laws under Title 17.

- 5. Charter schools:** Governor Jindal has recently come out in support of a proposal for businesses to team up with charter schools by allowing a business to provide a "facility or land" for the school and fill half the seats in the school with children of the business operators. The proposal would also have a minority percentage of the seats on the governing board filled by the business operator.

Public schools should not be run like a business. LAE strongly opposes any plan that would turn public schools over to for-profit companies. Privatization is a failed approach that provides an inferior education to our students.

- 6. Student discipline:** LAE anticipates proposed legislation that would "dumb down" the current student discipline law, teacher bill of rights and student assault on a teacher.

It is vital to maintain orderly schools and provide programs to eliminate violence, verbal and physical abuse to students and education employees. Any violence directed at staff or students must be dealt with swiftly, and those involved should be immediately removed from the classroom.

- 7. Student-based budgeting:** We anticipate a proposal to overhaul the way Louisiana would finance 1,300 public schools in the state. Proposed financing would require school districts to let the money follow the students, giving school principals sole-authority on how to spend federal, state and local education dollars without a site-based committee/board.

LAE is currently conducting extensive research around the student-based budgeting concept. Even though student-based budgeting is not new to the national scene, it is a relatively new concept to Louisiana.

LAE BOARD MEMBERS GO FACE TO FACE WITH STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION PAUL PASTOREK



State Superintendent Pastorek presents to a tension-filled room of concerned LAE Board members, sharing his idea of the state's vision, mission and goals for public education and the students of Louisiana.



In his presentation to the Board, Mr. Pastorek shared his thoughts on accountability, but at no point did he mention parents. District 5 Representative DeLisa Washington confronted Mr. Pastorek on his idea of accountability and stressed the importance of holding parents accountable.



District 6 Board Representative Tessie Adams questions Mr. Pastorek on the current student test taking schedule, expressing her concern for the amount of time students spend taking tests in a single day.

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.



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Joyce Haynes, President

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

The people of Wisconsin are asking the governor and legislature to hear them out - and work with them to find bipartisan solutions that will address Wisconsin's challenges. Silencing the voices of public sector employees by busting up their unions is not going to help the state move forward; it will only divide its people.

collective fights and the attacks on the hard working teachers and public sector employees of our nation. I urge you to lend your voice to help us fight this battle. LAE has sent a letter of support to the WEAC team; we encourage you to do the same.

Email President Mary Bell (bellm@weac.org) with any words of encouragement. Sign any petitions in favor of collective bargaining and public sector workers. You can start by logging onto NEA's *Education Votes* website educationvotes.nea.org/nationalpetition. Email information about local or state solidarity actions to campaignhub@nea.org. Wear "Red for Ed" every Tuesday this spring. Spread the word in any way you can.

The NEA family has come out in force to support our colleagues in Wisconsin, as well as those in Idaho, Indiana, New Jersey, Ohio and Tennessee, who are also facing unprecedented threats.

Governor Scott Walker's proposed legislation strips away worker rights and destroys the collaborative partnerships that have been established between labor and management in Wisconsin - the nation's oldest collective bargaining state. The protest is not about pay and benefits; it's not about pensions and health care. This protest is about public sector employees retaining a voice in their profession and in Wisconsin's future.

What is happening right now is historic. Tens of thousands of citizens are gathering in unprecedented numbers and speaking out to show their support for the state's public servants. They are voicing support for the third grade teacher who stays late to help a student with math. They are voicing support for nurses who work every day to care for patients and the firefighters who keep us safe. These public workers are on the frontlines everyday to support us - and they should have a say in their profession.

As all eyes continue to be on Wisconsin, I ask you to stay informed. Remember to talk about our

We are leaders in this national fight for working people. We are in this fight together; let's take action together. We need to win this fight for educators and public sector employees across the nation.

"Our strength is in our togetherness; coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success."

-Henry Ford

Stay strong,
President Haynes

LAE MEMBERS IN ACTION

If you have any association related photographs highlighting your local activities and accomplishments, please pass them along to LAE's Communications Specialist Ashley Davis (ashley.davis@lae.org). This includes chapter events, community volunteer activities, school board meetings, awards ceremonies, etc. Photos must include an active LAE member that is identifiable and should be accompanied by the member's name, local organization name and a short caption.



LAE Board Members Rachel Gifford and Vickie Jacquet take part in a rally for Wisconsin in Washington, DC.



Ouachita Association of Educators' member Paula Williams discusses Read Across Louisiana 2011 on Monroe's KTVE-TV.



LAE President Joyce Haynes reads to students from Redemptorist Elementary School in Baton Rouge for Blue Cross Blue Shield's Living Legends Heritage Reading Series.

CAPWIZ: LAE's Online Political Advocacy Technology



When LAE has a pressing political issue, we use the Capwiz XC online advocacy e-mail system to draw attention to the issue. By using this system, LAE can distribute urgent messages to its members quickly and make immediate requests for action. Whether it be a push to sign a petition or a request to contact legislative representatives, Capwiz is an integral part of LAE's legislative success. Capwiz is a quick and easy way for LAE members' voices to be heard in order to help influence state and federal policymakers. By affecting policy, members help LAE in our fight to protect the right of every Louisiana child to receive a quality education.

With the Legislative Session quickly approaching, we encourage you to sign up and familiarize yourself with Capwiz today! Go to LAE's website, www.lae.org and click on "Capwiz XC" to register.

LAE INSISTS GOVERNOR JINDAL FIND COURAGE TO RAISE NEEDED REVENUES

Louisiana educators are upset with Governor Jindal's plan to recommend a third consecutive freeze in state aid for public schools. A three year freeze will cost Louisiana's public schools close to \$200 million in recurring revenues.

This isn't the first time Governor Jindal has slighted public school funding. In December of 2010, he made a \$42 million error in the MFP when he failed to account for increases in student population. He also shorted the state's K-12 and higher education systems another \$68 million when he redirected the Federal Education Jobs grant. To date, districts still have not received the \$79 million residue from the \$147 million originally approved for Louisiana's K-12 public schools.

Our state's budget is hurting, and we have a governor who continues to give billions of dollars in tax exemptions to big business, paying little attention to the needs of public school children. Enough is enough! It's time the governor dealt with state financing in a responsible way.

Teachers, parents and community members need Penny Dastugue and the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) to step up to the plate, too. The BESE board has the authority to do

what's right for the public school students and the communities that depend upon their decision making. BESE, with a mixture of governor appointees and elected members, should have the courage to represent public schools and stand up to the governor. They can continue to be instruments of the governor, or they can be representatives of the people.

Earlier this year, Louisiana House Speaker Jim Tucker implicated that legislators will consider suspending some of the \$7 billion in tax exemptions as they search for ways to close the \$1.6 billion budget hole. LAE is on board with the notion of requesting tax changes - anything to secure the funding of our valuable public services. LAE will ask the Legislature to go further and reduce exemptions by \$3 billion. We need to spend half of the money that the state could receive as a result of these exemptions and properly fund such governmental services as public schools, both Pre-K-12 and our public higher education institutions, social services and public safety.

We look forward to Governor Jindal presenting his proposed operating budget during the 2011 regular Legislative Session. LAE intends to engage members and seek a broader coalition for our proposals. Stay informed by visiting our website www.lae.org.

KNOW YOUR RETIREMENT: TRSL Q&A

What is TRSL?

TRSL is a defined benefit (DB) retirement plan. TRSL is a pooled retirement plan that offers a predictable defined monthly benefit to retired employees. A DB retirement from TRSL provides a steady income stream that is guaranteed for the remainder of the retiree's life. DB plans are the primary retirement benefit for the vast majority of K-12 public school teachers, education support professionals and other public employees.

How are retirement benefits earned?

In a DB retirement plan like TRSL, coverage is universal; all eligible employees are automatically enrolled in the retirement plan. The amount of monthly income each employee receives is based on the employee's years of service, the employee's final average salary and a fixed multiplier that is determined by the plan. For example, under this design the plan may provide a benefit multiplier of 2.0% of pay. If an employee works for 30 years and has a final average salary of \$40,000, this employee's annual retirement income will be \$24,000 (40,000 x 30 x 2.0), which translates into a retirement income of \$2,000 per month.

How is TRSL funded?

TRSL is funded by employer contributions and contributions from employees themselves. The TRSL defined benefit plan has the advantage because investment earnings do much of the work in paying for benefits. The contributions made on behalf of current workers are invested and these investment earnings compound over time. Earnings on investments have historically made up the bulk of retirement fund receipts. Between 1993 and 2007, 10.3% of total state and local retirement fund receipts came from employee contributions, 19.4% from employer contributions and 70.4% from investment earnings. [Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2009. *State and Local Government Employee-Retirement Systems*. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.]

How are investment decisions made?

Trustees who have a fiduciary duty to ensure that the retirement fund is operating in the best interest of workers and retirees oversee the TRSL retirement plan. These trustees hire professional asset managers to steer the investment of these funds. TRSL has been recognized for its high-value, low-cost

investment program and its cost-effective retirement administration.

Why do retirements matter to employees?

Specific characteristics of DB retirement plans make them effective in supporting retirement security. Specifically, the guaranteed lifetime income is one of the most appealing characteristics of DB plans for employees. DB retirement plans also provide ancillary benefits, such as spousal protections and disability benefits. Retirement experts have long acknowledged the importance of the so-called "three-legged stool" to provide Americans with financial security in retirement, Social Security benefits, DB retirement income and supplemental individual savings. [In Louisiana, where educators do not participate in Social Security, the retirement benefit must take the place of two legs of the stool.](#)

Are retirements an effective recruitment and retention tool?

The TRSL retirement plan is an effective and important retention tool. Retirements are a proven tool for recruiting and retaining highly effective young professionals in our schools and classrooms. DB retirement plans represent the most efficient way for younger workers to save for retirement. A 2008 MetLife survey found that 72% of employees cite retirement benefits as an important factor in their loyalty to their employer. Among employers, a 2004 survey found that 84% of DB plan sponsors believe that their retirement plan has a positive impact on employee retention.

Why do retirements matter to taxpayers?

All American taxpayers have an interest in making certain that all workers can retire with an adequate income. DB retirement plans also help government employers recruit and retain a qualified workforce that provides essential public services. Compared with other types of retirement benefits, DB retirement plans are the most economically efficient use of taxpayer funds. The most current research indicates that a DB retirement plan can provide the same retirement benefit at half the cost of an individual defined contribution plan. In addition, public sector employees' contributions and investment returns have historically paid for about 80% of retirement benefits, with taxpayers covering only a small portion of the cost.

Are retirements more economically efficient than defined contribution plans?

Yes. A recent analysis of the cost to achieve a target retirement benefit under both a DB plan and defined contribution (DC) structure found that a DB plan costs half as much as the DC plan. In other words, the cost to deliver the same retirement income to a group of employees is 46% lower in the DB plan than in the DC plan. The reason for such cost savings is threefold. First, because DB plans pool the longevity risks of large numbers of individuals, they need to only accumulate enough funds to provide benefits for the average life expectancy of the group. Second, DB plans take advantage of the enhanced investment returns that come from a balanced portfolio over long periods of time. Third, DB plans achieve greater investment returns than DC plans.

Are there any other reasons why Defined Benefit (DB) plans might be a good deal for taxpayers?

Yes. DB retirement plans also save governments money in reducing citizens' need to rely on public assistance. A recent study finds that DB retirements have been instrumental at keeping elder Americans out of poverty. When fewer households experience poverty and financial hardship, the government saves money at all levels because fewer dollars of public assistance are needed. The report calculates a savings of some \$7.3 billion in public assistance expenditures in 2006 attributable to receipt of retirement income. In the absence of DB retirements, spending on public assistance for the elderly would be about 40% higher.

What is the macroeconomic effect of expenditures from DB retirement income?

The economic impact of DB retirements reaches well beyond the retirees who receive retirement checks. Retirement income has a broad economic impact both nationally and on the local level. In 2006, spending from public retirement payments supported more than 2.5 million American jobs that paid more than \$92 billion in total compensation. Retirement spending also supported more than \$358 billion in total economic output nationwide and more than \$57 billion in federal, state and local tax revenue. State and local retirements also have large multiplier effects. Each dollar paid out in retirement benefits generates \$2.36 in total economic activity, and every dollar contributed by taxpayers to state and local retirement funds generates \$11.45 in economic activity.

LAE HOSTS THE 2011 NATIONAL BLACK ISSUES CONFERENCE IN BATON ROUGE

LAE has been working closely with the NEA Black Caucus as we play host to this year's National Black Issues Conference. Events will be held in Baton Rouge at The Drury Inn hotel (7939 Essen Park), from March 25th – 27th. NEA President Dennis Van Roekel will be the keynote speaker at a luncheon on Saturday, 3/26. We have a very informative conference planned. See the workshop descriptions provided below:

Educators of Color – Living Through the Reform Attacks: This workshop will familiarize the classroom teacher and local leaders with a view of the global attacks upon the teaching profession by nationally organized groups. The presenter will then explore how these attacks are impacting individual classroom teachers and the environment in which teachers of color must try to survive. **Presented by:** Elementary Vice-President, United Teachers of Los Angeles Julie Washington

Motivating New and Veteran Teachers to Build Parent and Community Support: Participants will learn about several techniques used to build level leaders designated to motivate new and veteran teachers working in *Minority High Risk – Priority Schools*. These new teachers will explain how they

achieved success by taking the faculty into their respective community in order to challenge the local school board members, businesses, community members and parents. The workshop will also demonstrate how becoming active in the union can lead to higher academic achievement. **Presented by:** Cecily Myart-Cruz and Erika Lynn Jones

Leadership Self Assessment: Are You the Leader You Think You Are: One of the most important sets of skills required in changing the world today is leadership. When was the last time you checked out your own leadership effectiveness pulse? This workshop will take a look at you, your leadership styles, values, characteristics and skills, and will explore the critical leadership characteristics that will either lead you to success or failure. **Presented by:** Lennell Terrell and Tamara Hamilton

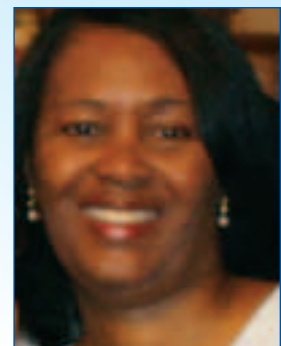
Networking: The Key to a Successful Association/ Union Career: Participants will learn one of the secrets on how to get on the right path to a successful governance or staff career. The "give three things – receive three times three," principle will be discussed. In addition, participants will leave the workshop with their own personal plan for success through networking. **Presented by:** LAE President Joyce

Haynes and LAE Executive Director Dr. Michael Walker-Jones

Interested in attending this exciting conference? Log on to www.neablackcaucus.com TODAY to reserve your spot!!

BRAVO!

LAE would like to send a big congratulations to Jessie D. Clifton Elementary School's **Pat Thomas!** Pat's proposal to supply educational materials for the LA-4 After School Enrichment Program earned her the Calcasieu



Pat Thomas

Association of Educators "Apple for Teacher Grant." Bravo Pat! You can win a grant too. Check out the "grants" section of the LAE website, www.lae.org, for information.

UPCOMING EVENTS



March 17	St. Patrick's Day
March 18-19	Executive Committee
March 25-27	NEA Black Issues Conference <i>Baton Rouge</i>
April 1	Board Meeting
April 2-3	LAE RA
April 24	Easter
May 2-6	Teacher Appreciation Week

LAE REGIONAL MEETINGS CONTINUE

LAE will continue hosting regional meetings on the following dates at the locations listed below. Please make every effort to attend these important meetings!

- March 22:** Monroe – Holiday Inn – 1051 US Highway 165
- March 23:** Belle Chase – Lil G's Cajun Restaurant – 9338 Hwy 23
- March 28:** Lake Charles – Isle of Capri – 100 Westlake Ave
- March 29:** Baton Rouge – Marriott – 5500 Hilton Ave

Pre-RA regional conferences will take place from **4:00 PM - 5:00 PM**.
Legislative/Membership meetings will take place from **5:15 PM- 7:00 PM**.

LAE SOCIAL MEDIA SITES



Links for all of these are on LAE's website: www.lae.org

THE BOSSIER ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATORS SENDS "LETTERS TO THE FRONT"

The Bossier Association of Educators (BAE) hosts an annual letter writing campaign in local schools called *Letters to the Front*. The goal is to write motivational letters to send to Louisiana troops serving overseas.

The program has grown quite a bit over the past ten years. The number of letters sent overseas by Bossier Parish Schools grows every year. BAE Chairperson Kathy Ritchie's diligence paid off once again this year as more than 5,200 letters were collected and delivered to the US Soldiers Foundation this past Christmas. BAE and the Bossier Parish Schools were recently recognized by the VFW with an Americanism Plaque for their outstanding, continued support of the program. Bravo BAE, on a job well done!

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

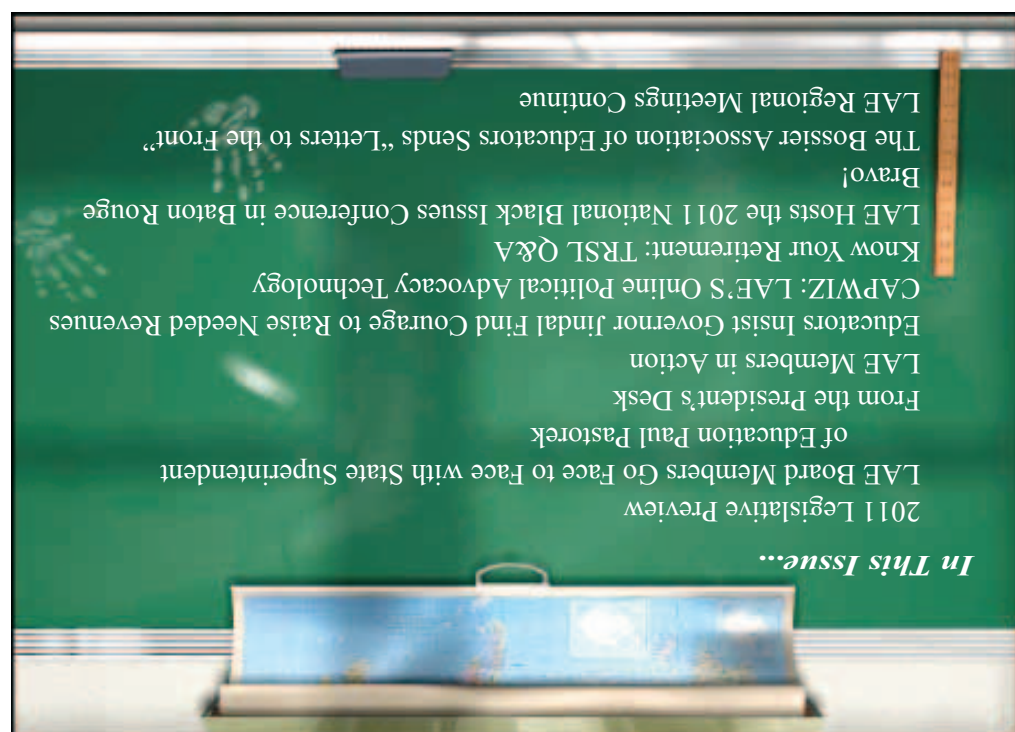


1-877-452-3477
e-mail: helpdesk@lae.org

"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."

SAVE THE DATE

The 2011 LAE Summer Leadership Conference is set for July 25th – 28th. We are now accepting proposals for conference presentations. The deadline to submit your proposal is **Friday, April 8th**. If you'd like to be a presenter or if you'd like to attend the conference, go to www.lae.org for more information.



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