



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Your weekly update newsletter from LAE President Joyce Haynes

May 9, 2011

LEGISLATIVE SESSION IN FULL SWING

The LAE Lobby Team is keeping you up to speed on the top issues being discussed during the 2011 Legislative Session. Be on the lookout for the *Capitol Connection* every Friday for weekly legislative recaps. If you have a colleague who is interested in receiving weekly updates, please have them send an email to ashley.davis@lae.org requesting to be placed on the email list. Also, be sure to check out www.lae.org for additional updates and alerts.

BILLS TO WATCH

LAE Government Relations Specialist Shane Riddle and the entire lobby team will be keeping a close eye on the following bills:

Education Legislation

- New School Letter Grading System: **SB 35** and **SB 201** would delay implementation of the new letter grading system developed by BESE. **LAE supports this legislation.**
- RSD Takeovers: **HB 499** would place a moratorium on state takeovers of public schools in Louisiana by the RSD. **LAE supports this legislation.**
- School Bus Driver Tenure: **HB 101** would remove due process rights for bus drivers. **LAE strongly opposes this legislation.**
- Extended Sick Leave and Sabbatical Leave: **HB 454** would allow school boards to suspend compliance with the granting of extended sick leave and sabbatical leave when districts do not receive the MFP increase of 2.75 percent. **LAE opposes this legislation.**
- Charter Schools: **HB 421** would encourage corporations to partner with charter schools by allowing half of the seats in the school to be filled by children of the corporation employees, a minority percentage of the seats on the boards that govern the charter schools, and the corporations to provide "a facility or land to the charter school." **LAE opposes this legislation.**

Retirement Legislation

- Retirement benefits: **HB 530** would increase the employee contribution rate for higher education employees. **LAE opposes this legislation.** **SB 12** would increase costs and reduce benefits for active participants of TRSL. **LAE opposes this legislation.**
- Retiree Return-to-Work: **HB 151**, **HB 369** and **HB 417** would allow retirees to return to work as substitute teachers without loss of retirement benefits. Limitations would be placed on earnings. **LAE supports this legislation with amendments on earnings limitations.**
- Higher Ed Return-to-Work: **HB 150** would allow a retiree to return to work as an adjunct professor without loss of retirement benefits. Limitations would be placed on earnings. **LAE supports this legislation with amendments on earnings limitations.**

The LAE Lobby Team will update these bills regularly for your reference. Go to www.lae.org/cms/2011+Legislative+Session%3A+Bills+to+Watch/212.html to track the progress of each bill.

DID YOU KNOW

Did you know that you can watch live legislative committee meetings online? Go to, www.legis.state.la.us/, scroll down to the section, *Today at the Louisiana Capitol*, and click on the TV icon to view the live House and Senate broadcasts. If there is no TV icon next to a meeting in progress, that meeting is not being broadcast.

SIGN UP FOR CAPWIZ TODAY

We use the Capwiz XC online advocacy e-mail system to draw attention to pressing political issues. By using this system, the **LAE** Lobby Team can distribute urgent messages to members quickly and make immediate requests for action. I strongly encourage you to sign up for Capwiz. Go to www.lae.org and click on "Capwiz XC" to register. If you've signed up in the past and haven't used the system recently, you must sign up again. Please pass this message along to any colleagues who may be interested in receiving Capwiz updates.

ALEXANDRIA TOWN HALL MEETING

The **LAE** Lobby Team met with members at LSU-Alexandria earlier this month to address the major issues that lie before us this session. We discussed the four major areas of concern - teacher tenure, public school funding, teacher evaluations, and the push to change the TRSL defined benefit retirement system to a defined contribution system. At this meeting, we called upon all **LAE** leaders and members in attendance to help us in our efforts to educate both members and non-members on these very important issues. Please be on the lookout for flyers in your schools and encourage your colleagues, families and friends to sign our petition. We need you to join us in this fight!

TENURE: THE MEASURE OF DUE PROCESS

Late last month, BESE District 6 member Chas Roemer sent letters to all BESE members and state lawmakers asking for a written pledge stating their commitment to join him in his fight to abolish teacher tenure. Mr. Roemer's plan to eliminate tenure could cause thousands of teachers to lose their jobs and give a merit raise only to the top 25 percent of public school teachers in the state. **LAE** leaders believe that Mr. Roemer is on the wrong track. Tenure is not the guarantee of a job for life; it is simply a right to due process and provides job security for teachers who have successfully completed a rigorous and closely monitored process. It is our responsibility to make sure that **LAE** members, non-members and legislators are educated on the issue of tenure. We have definition cards available for you to use when you are approached about the issue. See your UniServ Director for your free tenure definition card.

SCHOOL SUCCESS STORIES: LAFAYETTE PARISH

The **LAE** team recently visited with Lafayette Parish Schools Superintendent Burnell Lemoine to discuss the successes he's seen in his district. During our visit, we learned about the district's amazing program, *Schools of Choice*. In order to give Lafayette Parish students a more exciting and fulfilling educational experience and improve the ethnic diversity of its schools, the Lafayette Parish School System offers *Schools of Choice* to all grade levels. These schools offer specialized programs which give students the core curriculum required by the state in the context of a subject of the student's interest and offer a wide variety of programs to choose from. Students can explore programs in the fields of technology, health, engineering, finance, tourism, the arts and foreign language. Be on the lookout for a full story on our visit with Superintendent Lemoine in an upcoming issue of *The Voice*.

We know that there are other school districts offering these types of amazing programs to Louisiana public school students. We are looking for similar success stories from our members across the state. Please be sure to email ashley.davis@lae.org with any similar stories.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR: DATES TO REMEMBER

May – June: 2011 Legislative Session Continues

May 9th: Deadline to submit RFP's for **LAE** Summer Leadership Conference

May 30th: Memorial Day

July 25th – 28th: **LAE** Summer Leadership Conference

"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn."

-Benjamin Franklin