

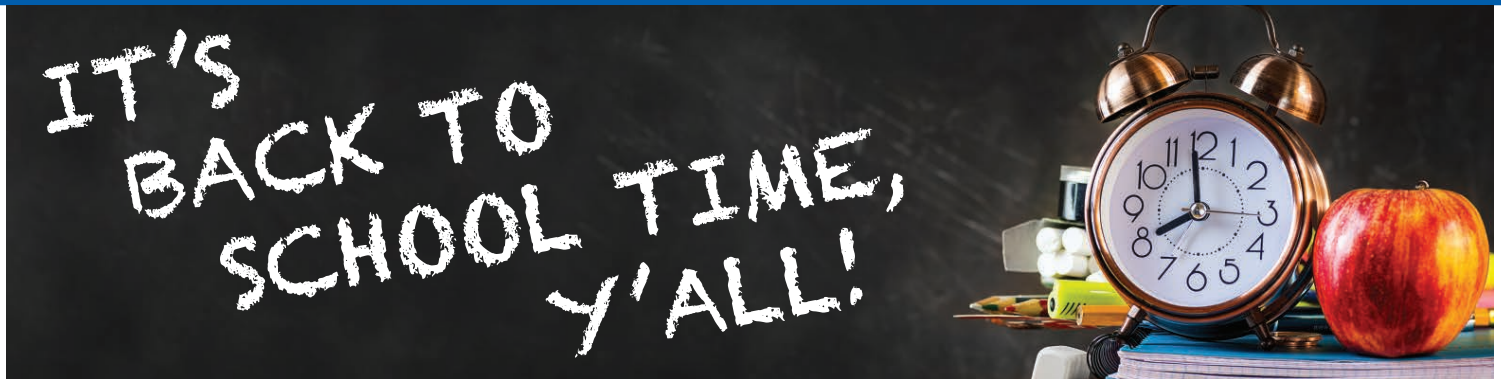


# THE LAE VOICE

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE LOUISIANA ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATORS

Great Public Schools for Every Louisiana Child

Volume 16, No. 2 August 2019



The return of school brings a fresh beginning and renewed emphasis on learning. As an education professional, you hold a unique place in the lives of so many children. Remember the powerful role you play throughout the year. Roll up those sleeves and get ready for success in 2019 and beyond! Welcome back!

## BATON ROUGE EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT SERVICES TEACHER TAKES OFFICE AS TOP LEADER OF THE LOUISIANA ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATORS

*TEACHER AND PUBLIC SCHOOL ACTIVIST, DR. TIA MILLS, ASSUMED HER DUTIES AS PRESIDENT OF THE LAE ON JULY 15, 2019*

Dr. Tia T. Mills wrapped up her 13th year in the classroom in May and now steps into the role of LAE's top official. She will serve as the spokeswoman of the association where her primary duties include leading LAE's lobbying efforts at the Louisiana Legislature and Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) meetings. She will preside over the LAE Board of Directors and the LAE Representative Assembly. Additionally, Dr. Mills will represent Louisiana educators at the national level through her lobbying and networking efforts with the National Education Association. Her immediate focus will be continuing the fight for increased pay for Louisiana's dedicated teachers and school support professionals.



*Dr. Tia T. Mills*

Dr. Mills' state-level association involvement includes her service on the LAE Board of Directors. She's also a member of the Board of Trustees for the Teachers Retirement System of Louisiana.

In 2017, LAE honored Dr. Mills with the association's top honor, the LAE Teacher Image Award. She advanced to the national level where she was selected as one of the top five finalists for the NEA Foundation Awards for Teaching Excellence. Dr. Mills has a doctorate in Higher Education and Organizational Leadership. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in History, a Master of Arts degree in Social Science, and an alternative certification in Mild/Moderate Special Education, all from Southern

University in Baton Rouge. She is a graduate of North Iberville High School. Outside of her work in public education, Dr. Mills is a proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, 100 Black Women of Metropolitan Baton Rouge, Junior League of Baton Rouge, a life member of the Southern University Alumni Federation, and the East Baton Rouge Democratic Parish Executive Committee.

As the youngest president in the history of the LAE, Dr. Mills said she's excited to bring fresh ideas to the organization.

"There's much work to be done, and I'm prepared to take on the challenge," she said. "I'm ready to continue raising LAE's status as an organization that supports its members and the public school children of Louisiana."

"While we were successful this legislative session in securing modest boosts, LAE members have my promise that we will not stop fighting until we get our educators above the southern regional average," Mills said.

The Exceptional Student Services teacher and Southern University adjunct professor from Baton Rouge served as president of the East Baton Rouge Parish Association of Educators (EBRPAE) for the past seven years. During this time, she was instrumental in helping increase membership in the local association by 30 percent. She led the EBRPAE's efforts to fight for increased salaries for school district employees and convinced the school board to unfreeze educators' pay schedules. She also led the local association's push for fair standards for the state's Industrial Tax Exemption Program.



# FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Dr. Tia T. Mills, President

With the backing and encouragement from a number of public education supporters, I humbly step into the role as LAE's leader -- your leader.

It is an honor to embark on this new journey as LAE President. I hope you are as excited as I am about the new school year. This is my first time not heading back to school for the new season, and while that does make me a little sad, I'm excited for what lies in store for our educators in the 2019-2020 school year. I know every Louisiana school employee is looking forward to the months ahead that are sure to be full of growth, discovery, and one-of-a-kind experiences with your students. As you begin your first few weeks of school, remember that your LAE family is right alongside you, cheering on your efforts. Allow me to send a great big "thank you" out there for every sacrifice you've made on behalf of the children of this state.

An institution established before the start of the Civil War, every student's right to a great public school lays the foundation to ensure a pathway to academics for those who wish to achieve the American dream. As you know, Louisiana educators continue to fight for the survival of our public school system. Before we get too consumed in the business of back-to-school, I want to remind you about a few areas that continue to be top priorities for your sisters and brothers in the teaching profession:

- educator salaries
- school funding
- student discipline
- professional respect

These areas often lend to an unhealthy environment for Louisiana's school employees -- and ultimately, the students across the state. Rest assured that LAE continues to remain vigilant in our advocacy efforts surrounding these critical issues. As a Louisiana educator and member of this great association, I'm asking YOU to stand with us, fight beside us, and speak up on behalf of our public schools and our students.

Election season is right around the corner. I know you're fully aware of the Governor's race -- each day brings forward a new political ad with a new perspective to consider. I want you to know that the LAE political action committee--the LAE Fund for Children and Public Education--has endorsed John Bel Edwards for re-election as governor. His track-record of supporting public education proves his commitment to Louisiana's educators and children. He continues to champion our schools, teachers, school support professionals, and students by striving for improvements in education. He has made it his mission to continue to support raising teacher pay until Louisiana reaches the same level of compensation as surrounding states. Governor Edwards is also fully aware of the need to raise school support workers' salaries and has made a commitment to fight for pay boosts for these professionals. He understands that making this investment in our school employees is the key to keeping the best and the brightest in Louisiana's schools.

No other candidate running for governor has come forward with this promise.

With the hype surrounding these elections, I want you to know how important other races are to the future of Louisiana's public education system. The people we elect to the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) and the Louisiana Legislature (House of Representatives and Senate) play a major role in determining the direction of our schools. The women and men serving in these offices have the final say on the policies and the budgets that govern our schools. It is up to us to make sure that we don't let another four years go by under misguided leadership. The leaders of the LAE Fund for Children and Public Education will interview and make recommendations on the candidates we feel best support public education, but it is ultimately up to Louisiana voters to decide who takes office. Make sure you learn about the candidates running so you can make an informed decision when you cast your vote on October 12.

Please make sure you are registered to vote. It's easy...all you have to do is go to [geauxvote.org](http://geauxvote.org) and follow the instructions.

My sincerest wish for every educator out there is a school year filled with memories, milestones, and much success. LAE will continue to stand firm in our support for the tremendously dedicated and talented professionals working to make our schools warm and inviting homes away from home for our students. My thoughts are with you for the exciting days ahead. I know you will do your best to advance educational excellence in our schools. I look forward to working with you and making you proud.

In Solidarity,  
President Mills



## Q&A WITH LAE VICE PRESIDENT D'SHAY RUSHING OAKS

### **LAE: WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO GO INTO THE EDUCATION PROFESSION?**

*DO: I wanted a profession where I could make a difference. Education was in my blood since my dad worked in the public school system where I went to school and now work.*

### **LAE: WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART ABOUT BEING A TEACHER?**

*DO: Making a difference by building relationships with students and their families. Students will perform better in school when a teacher shows that he/she cares for them.*

### **LAE: WHAT IS THE BIGGEST ISSUE FACING PUBLIC EDUCATION IN LOUISIANA TODAY?**

*DO: Educators leaving the profession because they do not have the resources they need and are not paid their worth. Many educators go into other professions or to other states where they are valued more. I think all school personnel should be paid at a level where they are not forced to have more than one job or live below the poverty level.*

### **LAE: WHAT SPURRED YOU TO BECOME AN ACTIVIST FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEES?**

*DO: As a young teacher, I realized my college classes did not adequately prepare me for the classroom, and I needed more support and resources to help me. One of my favorite teachers told me I could find support with the LAE; therefore, I started getting involved and realized I was not the only one having problems.*

### **LAE: WHAT SONG GETS YOU FIRED UP TO DO THIS WORK?**

*DO: "Eye of the Tiger" by Survivor.*

### **LAE: WHY SHOULD ACTIVISM MATTER TO LOUISIANA EDUCATORS?**

*DO: When we work together, we get things accomplished. For example, the recent pay increases for teachers and support personnel would not have happened if we had not been a part of a coalition with all stakeholders.*

### **LAE: WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE INSPIRATIONAL QUOTE?**

*DO: "Education is for improving the lives of others and for leaving your community and world better than you found it."  
--Marian Wright Edelman*

### **LAE: WHAT IS ONE MESSAGE YOU'D LIKE TO SEND TO ALL LAE MEMBERS?**

*DO: You are not alone. People across the state and the nation are here to help and support you!*

## **ATTENTION: LAE BOARD VACANCIES**

The LAE Board of Directors is composed of association leaders who are active education employees elected by their peers to act for the association in between meetings of the Representative Assembly. You must be a member for at least three consecutive years to be eligible to apply for the following vacancies.

If you are interested in applying, please send your letter of intent and resume to Kenton Cooper at [kcooper@lae.org](mailto:kcooper@lae.org) by September 3, 2019 at noon. The next LAE Board meeting is scheduled for September 6, 2019, and the seats will be appointed at this meeting.

### **ASSOCIATIONAL DISTRICT 2, SEAT B**

*Representing Avoyelles, Caldwell, Catahoula, Concordia, East Carroll, East Feliciana, Franklin, Grant, Iberville, LaSalle, Madison, Morehouse, Ouachita, Pointe Coupee, Rapides, Richland, St. Helena, St. Martin, Tensas, West Baton Rouge, West Carroll, West Feliciana, and Winn parishes and the City of Monroe.*

### **ASSOCIATIONAL DISTRICT 3, SEAT A (MINORITY SEAT)**

*Representing Acadia, Calcasieu, Cameron, Evangeline, St. Landry, and Vermilion parishes.*

### **ASSOCIATIONAL DISTRICT 4, SEAT B**

*Representing East Baton Rouge, Livingston, Tangipahoa, and Washington parishes, the cities of Baker, Bogalusa, Central, and Zachary, and the Louisiana School for the Deaf and Visually Impaired (LSDVI), Association for Correctional Employees (ACE-Baton Rouge), and Special School District 1 (SSD1).*



# THAT'S A WRAP: LAE'S 2019 LEGISLATIVE RECAP

The LAE, once again, served as an effective advocate for public school students and educators during Louisiana's 2019 Legislative Session. This session, association leaders and members:

- Successfully secured permanent pay raises for teachers and school support staff - the first step in a multiyear plan to raise educators' pay to match their colleagues in surrounding states. (SCR 3, Senator Blade Morrish)
- Convinced legislators to increase basic school aid through the state's school funding formula. (SCR 3, Senator Blade Morrish)
- Defeated legislation that would end the defined-benefit retirement program for educators. (HB 28, Representative Barry Ivey)
- Sponsored legislation to establish procedures for teachers to grieve ratings received from the value-added portion of their evaluation. (HB 337, Representative Patricia Haynes-Smith)
- Advocated for a resolution requesting the LA Board of Elementary and Secondary Education work with the Governor and the Legislature to develop a ten-year plan to increase Louisiana teacher salaries to the highest in the nation. (SCR 57, Senator Wesley Bishop)
- Halted legislation that would have reduced local school board control over decisions regarding property tax revenues. (HB 76, HB 81, Rep. Mark Abraham; HB 440, Rep. Barry Ivey; HB 529 Rep. Franklin Foil; SB 214, Sen. Bodi White; HCR 3, Rep. Rick Edmonds)

The fight for increased pay for Louisiana's dedicated school employees continues. Visit [lae.org/payraises](http://lae.org/payraises) to find out how you can get involved!



# WHAT MAKES LOUISIANA'S FALL 2019 ELECTIONS SO IMPORTANT? *A LOT!*

## IN ADDITION TO DECIDING WHO WILL LEAD OUR STATE, LOUISIANA VOTERS WILL ALSO DECIDE WHO WILL SERVE ON THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

On October 12, 2019, voters will have a chance to decide who will lead Louisiana into 2020 and beyond when they cast their vote for the next Governor of Louisiana, the state legislature, and several other locally elected officials.

In April of 2019, the LAE made an early endorsement of Governor John Bel Edwards. He is the first governor since Kathleen Blanco to truly support educators. For the first time in nearly a decade, Governor Edwards made increasing teacher and support staff pay his top priority and has promised to keep educator pay at the forefront of his agenda heading into 2020. He has promised to pursue additional salary increases in order to bring teachers in Louisiana above the Southeast Regional Average. No other gubernatorial contender has mentioned a plan for school employee pay increases.

Just as important, voters will decide who serves on the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). The board is composed of 11 members: eight elected by voters in eight BESE districts, and three appointed by the Governor of Louisiana to represent the state at-large. Together, these members adopt and enact policies governing the elementary and secondary schools of Louisiana. Board members are responsible for:

- **DETERMINING TEACHING STANDARDS AND EVALUATION SYSTEMS**
- **APPROVING THE FUNDING FORMULA FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS**
- **EMPLOYING THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION**

When Louisiana voters head to the polls on October 12 (and then again on November 16) it's imperative to elect individuals to office who genuinely: 1.) respect school employees for their work and commitment to the children of our districts; and 2.) understand the financial demands of our 21st-century classrooms.

So, are these elections really that important? Yes! We must all stand together in our efforts to protect the interests of our students and our profession. Please be sure to get your voter registration responsibilities taken care of early to ensure you can cast your vote in these critical elections. It's easy to register online at [geauxvote.com](http://geauxvote.com). When you enter your information into the system, it'll walk you through the process. Please register to vote and remember the following dates:

- The deadline to register to vote in person or by mail is **September 11, 2019**.
- The deadline to register to vote through Louisiana's online registration system – [www.geauxvote.com](http://www.geauxvote.com) – is **September 21, 2019**.
- Be on the lookout for a list of LAE-FCPE-recommended candidates.
- Early voting is **September 28 - October 5, 2019** (except Sunday, September 29) from 8:30 a.m.-6 p.m.
- Primary elections are on **October 12, 2019**. General elections take place **November 16, 2019**

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## LAE MEMBERS GET ACCESS TO EXCLUSIVE DEALS DURING BACK-TO-SCHOOL SEASON!

Shop for Back-to-School at your local Office Depot/Office Max and get major discounts with your LAE Store Purchasing Card! To shop online or print your free card, visit [officediscounts.org/lae](http://officediscounts.org/lae).

Save 10% on qualifying purchases with coupon code: 77305623.

\*Valid in-store or online 6/30/19 – 9/28/19.





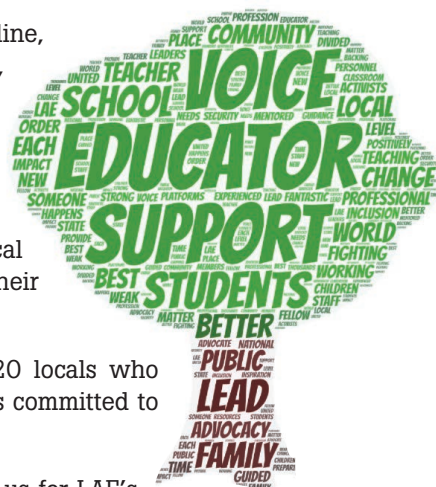
# LAE'S ANNUAL SUMMER CONFERENCE SHOWS ASSOCIATION LEADERS FROM ACROSS THE STATE HOW TO GROW THEIR LOCALS

Member representatives from Acadia, Caddo, Calcasieu, Concordia, East Baton Rouge, Evangeline, Iberia, Lafayette, Lafourche, Monroe City, Natchitoches, Ouachita, Rapides, St. Bernard, St. Landry, St. Mary, St. Martin, St. John, Terrebonne, and Vermilion parishes dedicated time during their summer to learn about best practices for growing and strengthening their local LAE chapters.

Trainings focused on developing effective strategies for membership growth, early-career educator engagement, LAE's professional development offerings, how to recruit using LAE/NEA Member Benefits, the importance of establishing a local communications structure, and political action activities. Louisiana First Lady Donna Edwards joined LAE members to thank them for their work and discuss her husband's achievements in office.

After an intense three days of learning, networking, and strategizing, members from the 20 locals who attended walked away with a renewed sense of excitement for association work. All attendees committed to implementing what they learned for association organizing efforts in the coming school year.

For those who are interested in getting more involved in association work, make plans to join us for LAE's next summer conference set to take place June 8 – 10, 2020.





# LOUISIANA EDUCATORS JOIN THEIR COLLEAGUES FROM ACROSS THE NATION AS THEY PREPARE TO MAKE AN IMPACT IN 2020

Galvanized by the historic mobilization of public school employees across the nation, nearly 100 educators from Louisiana gathered in Houston, Texas this past July for the NEA's 98th Representative Assembly. The theme of the 2019 RA was *Our Democracy. Our Responsibility. Our Time!* After four busy and exciting days, LAE's delegates left Houston ready to carry the momentum of the #RedforEd movement into 2020.

At this year's RA, NEA took a big first step in leading the conversation around public education and the upcoming elections with the *Strong Public Schools Presidential Forum*. For two hours, ten presidential hopefuls sat down with the delegates as they answered questions from NEA members on everything from education funding, privatization, testing, school safety, and student debt.

It wouldn't be your typical NEA RA without new business items -- lots and lots of new business items. The RA is a democratic body, so delegates spend most of their time debating and voting on policies, resolutions, and amendments that will direct much of the association's work in the coming year. This year, delegates adopted more than 60 new business items, dealing with topics as far-ranging as the impact of technology on students, the opioid crisis, immigration advocacy, charter school "co-location," and ethnic studies.

Louisiana delegate and St. Landry Parish Association of Educators President Jamal Taylor led the charge to pass an amendment to NEA's Legislative Program, as well as a new business item, calling for the NEA to fight for 100% loan forgiveness for educators across the country. LAE members stood behind him to show their support as he explained the need for the NBI.

"Student loan debt is a crisis, especially for our woefully underpaid educators," Taylor said. "Louisiana's delegation, for the first time



in years, spoke out to take action on this very real and very serious issue that plagues our nation's teachers."

Closing out RA festivities was an address from new NEA Executive Director Kim Anderson. She shared with the crowd how thrilled she was to be taking on her new leadership role.

"What's in my heart is what's in yours: a love of the students we serve," Anderson said. "As I take my new position, I will always remember the responsibility we all share to instill the values of democracy and equal opportunity in our schools for our children."

For photographs and videos from the 2019 RA, check out [www.flickr.com/photos/neapr](http://www.flickr.com/photos/neapr). LAE leaders look forward to next year's event, which will be held in Atlanta, Georgia, July 2 – 6, 2020.





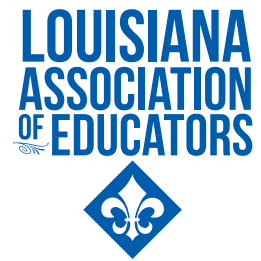
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## UPCOMING EVENTS

September 2:  
Labor Day\*

September  
28-October 5:  
Early Voting

September 6:  
LAE Board Meeting

October 12:  
Election  
Day

\*LAE Headquarters AWSED