



Volume XX | Issue 4
Summer 2016

The Guardian

Mississippi Retired Public Employees' Association
Quarterly Newsletter

Officers | Board Members

Becky Cade
President

Ann Thames
Vice President

Mike Lightsey
Treasurer

Bob Rhoads
Secretary

Immediate Past President
Howell Garner

Life Directors
Virgil Belue
Alton Cobb
Lester Herrington
Wylma King
Thomas Loftin
Billy Thames
Anita Toler
Sam Valentine
Fred Walker
Wilma White

2019 Directors
Jane Dykes
Martha Garrett
Mike Larsen
Ed LeGrand
Michael Myrick

2018 Directors
Richard Black
Ann Homer Cook
Lucian Hill
Hoopy Stringer
Evelyn Webb

2017 Directors
Margo Bowers
Joe Johnson
Ollie Johnson
Dale Sullivan
Curt Thompson

District Directors

See page 2 for district directors and their contact information.

President's Message

A brief glimpse back with gratitude and appreciation

By Becky Cade

Your Mississippi Retired Public Employees' Association (MRPEA) Board of Directors (Board) has accomplished so much this past year, and I am so grateful for their encouragement, support, and leadership during my first year as your president.

Regrettably, Mrs. Peggy Brewer resigned as MRPEA secretary as of June 20, 2016. Mrs. Brewer and her husband, the late Dr. Ralph Brewer, faithfully supported and worked hard for this organization and its mission for many, many years. We wish Peggy well!

The Board recently entered into a one-year contract with Insight, Ltd. to manage the day-to-day operations of the association. Insight's Chief Executive Officer Deirdre McGowan is a Certified Association Executive and has extensive training and experience in managing associations. Deirdre and her team of professionals hit the ground running as soon as the contract was executed and have been doing a tremendous job processing member registrations and renewals, as well as maintaining our financial records.

I am excited to share that our online membership registration and renewal system, Neon, has been up and running since the middle of June, which means that individuals may now register and members may now renew their memberships online at www.mrpea.org. As with any new system implementation, issues have been identified; however, necessary adjustments have been, and will continue to be, made quickly and efficiently.

The hiring of Insight, Ltd. to manage our association and the implementation of the online membership system have enhanced our efforts to better serve you and have helped position us to be better prepared to safeguard and protect PERS.

Our annual meeting July 11 was a tremendous success. I encourage those who were not able to attend to visit the annual meeting page on our website for a summary of the meeting and links to the speaker handouts. PERS Executive Director Pat Robertson updated meeting attendees on the financial status of PERS and shared with us that, unless investment returns increase significantly this next year, an increase in the employer contribution rate might be necessary within the next couple of years. This is cause for concern considering the recent state budget cuts.

We appreciate everyone who participated in and attended this year's annual meeting, especially our sponsors Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi, Gold Level Sponsor; and Empower Retirement and Senior Care Plus, Platinum Level Sponsors. I want to personally thank our conference committee – Chair Rhonda Yates, Jane Dykes, and Martha Garrett – who helped plan and coordinate the event. We also appreciate the Jackson Convention & Visitors Bureau for providing staff who greeted and registered meeting attendees.

I look forward to working with all of you this final year of my presidency. The best is yet to come!





MRPEA District Directors

District 1 – Forrest, George, Greene, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Lamar, Pearl River, Perry, Stone

Wynona Winfield

601-955-4525
wvsubeach@yahoo.com

District 2 - Adams, Amite, Claiborne, Copiah, Franklin, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Lawrence, Lincoln, Marion, Pike, Simpson, Walthall, Wilkinson

Tony Byrne

601-431-2250
annetteb@cableone.net

District 3 - Clarke, Covington, Jasper, Jones, Kemper, Lauderdale, Leake, Neshoba, Newton, Scott, Smith, Wayne

Rhonda Yates

601-693-5340
rhondajates@gmail.com

District 4 - Hinds, Madison, Rankin

Vacant

District 5 - Attala, Calhoun, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Clay, Lowndes, Monroe, Montgomery, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, Webster, Winston

Marty Wiseman

662-312-6166
mw3@msstate.edu

District 6 - Bolivar, Carroll, Grenada, Holmes, Humphreys, Issaquena, Leflore, Sharkey, Sunflower, Warren, Washington, Yazoo

Preston Ratliff

662-897-4333
p_ratliff2000@yahoo.com

District 7 - Alcorn, Benton, Itawamba, Lee, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Tippah, Tishomingo, Union

Robert A. McNeil

662-680-9024
ramcneil@comcast.net

District 8 - Coahoma, DeSoto, Lafayette, Marshall, Panola, Quitman, Tallahatchie, Tate, Tunica, Yalobusha

Thomas E. Toney

662-563-3744
thomasetoney@bellsouth.net

MRPEA call to action

Current political environment

In today’s evident anti-public employee/anti-state government environment, critical public policy issues are overlooked in favor of “cookie-cutter” legislation often developed by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). ALEC attempts to influence the political base in an effort to expand its political power on the state and national levels and has helped promote the national effort to replace defined benefit plans like PERS with defined contribution plans. Visit www.alec.org to read more.

During Mississippi’s 2013 Legislative Session, two harmful PERS-related bills were introduced; however, after active employees and retirees applied intense pressure on state leadership, both bills died in committee and both legislators who introduced the bills were defeated in their 2015 re-election bids. During the 2016 Legislative Session, tax cuts for big business were approved despite reports from state leaders that Mississippi is in the midst of a critical budget situation. This diametric behavior gives rise to the belief that the budget shortfall may be manufactured as a pretext for dismantling PERS and Medicaid – both considered by some to be “entitlement” programs.

Today, state leadership and both houses of the Mississippi Legislature appear to be controlled by a similar political mindset, with most key votes straight down party lines. A “Super Majority” exists in both the Mississippi Senate (37-15) and Mississippi House (78-42, with two vacancies). The Super Majority may not favor public employees and retirees if PERS has to ask for an increase in the employer contribution rate and if harmful PERS-related legislation is introduced during the 2017 Legislative Session unless significant pressure is brought to bear by large numbers of people such as MRPEA’s membership.

What can you do?

The first thing you can do is recruit others to join MRPEA, especially active public employees. Next, find out who represents you and your interests at the Mississippi State Capitol. Visit www.openstates.org and www.legislature.ms.gov to find out who your senators and representatives are and then contact them **before** the next legislative session begins in January 2017. Thank them for their past support, and ask them what their position is on your retirement system. Be firm that you want **no detrimental changes** made to PERS. Consistency in our messages is important.

Be willing to participate in a grassroots effort during the legislative session, and encourage fellow employees and retirees to do the same; be a part of a large group email list who respond to “calls to action” if the need arises during the session; and be willing to come to the Capitol to talk with legislators or the news media or to attend a press conference.

Also, plan to attend MRPEA Day at the Capitol February 8, 2017, as we need to have a visible presence at the Capitol to derail any attempts to dismantle PERS. The Day at the Capitol would be an excellent time to schedule a meeting with your legislators to tell them personally how much you appreciate their support of our retirement system as it is today.

Legislative contact information during the legislative session

Office	Telephone Number
Governor Phil Bryant	601-359-3150
Lieutenant Governor Tate Reeves	601-359-3200
Speaker of the House Philip Gunn	601-359-3300
State Senators	601-359-3770
State Representatives	601-359-3770
Senate Finance Committee Chair Joey Fillingane	601-359-3246
House Appropriations Chair – <i>to be announced</i>	601-359-3340



Contact MRPEA

Deirdre McGowan

Office Manager

601-919-0670

mrpea@bellsouth.net

www.mrpea.org

Meetings and Events

MRPEA Board Meeting

October 10, 2016

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

location to be determined

MRPEA Board Meeting

January 9, 2017

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

location to be determined

MRPEA Day at the Capitol

February 8, 2017

10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

New Capitol Rotunda

MRPEA Board Meeting

April 10, 2017

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

location to be determined

MRPEA Board Meeting

July 10, 2017

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

location to be determined

Social Media



Partner Organizations

Mississippi Association of Personnel Administrators (MAPA)

Mississippi Association of School Administrators (MASA)

Mississippi Professional Educators (MPE)

Mississippi Public Health Association (MPHA)

Public Employees' Retirement System of Mississippi (PERS)

Retired Education Personnel of Mississippi (REPM)

Changes to MRPEA Constitution approved

The following amendments to the MRPEA Constitution were approved by the membership at the Annual Business Meeting July 11. The amended Constitution is posted at www.mrpea.org.

1. *Life Directors* - The Constitution was amended to prospectively define a new Life Member of the Board of Directors beginning August 1, 2016, as a past president who is a dues-paying member and who has served as vice president and president for a minimum combined period of four years and to provide that future Life Members of the Board of Directors shall serve in an advisory (non-voting) capacity. Current Life Members of the Board of Directors will be grandfathered and may continue to serve in a voting capacity as long as they wish to serve. *Justification:* Provides a clear and objective basis for individuals to become Honorary Life Members of the Board of Directors.
2. *Board Size* - The Constitution was amended to reduce the number of elected multi-year board members from 15 to 10, with one board member from each district and two at-large members. This change will be implemented through attrition until the number is reduced from 15 to 10. The Nominating Committee will be charged by the President with the responsibility of ensuring over time that each of the eight districts has at least one board member. *Justification:* Provides a more manageable number of board members and ensures that all districts have fair and equal representation. This change will reduce the total size of the MRPEA Board of Directors from 40 to 35, which would include four elected officers, 10 elected multi-year board members, the immediate past president, eight district directors, 10 life members of the Board, and two retiree representatives serving on the PERS Board of Trustees.
3. *Board Meetings* - The Constitution was amended to provide that the Board of Directors will schedule meetings as deemed necessary. *Justification:* This will give the Board of Directors the flexibility to decide how often they need to meet.

New MRPEA officers and directors elected

Also during the Annual Business Meeting July 11, the MRPEA Nominating Committee, chaired by Curt Thompson, nominated Mike Lightsey and Bob Rhoads to fill the unexpired terms of former MRPEA Treasurer Sarajeane Babin and former MRPEA Secretary Peggy Brewer, respectively. Lightsey's and Rhoads' terms will run through July 31, 2017.

Jane Dykes, Martha Garrett, Mike Larsen, Ed LeGrand, and Michael Myrick were all nominated to continue serving on the MRPEA Board for three-year terms that will end July 31, 2019. The Committee also nominated Evelyn Webb to fill the unexpired term of Col. James Ables, who resigned from the MRPEA Board effective April 11 to focus on his health. Webb's term will run through July 31, 2018.

The Nominating Committee included Chair Thompson, Margo Bowers, Dale Sullivan, and Ann Thames. Members in attendance at the Annual Business Meeting elected the new slate of officers and directors by acclamation.

PERS News

The Public Employees' Retirement System of Mississippi (PERS) recently mailed Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) notices, and retirees who receive an annual lump sum COLA may notice that tax withholdings for this payment differ from last year. On its website, PERS explains that the reason for the change is because PERS switched to a new pension administration system last year, which defaulted each retiree's COLA tax withholdings to the same preference set for his or her monthly benefit distribution. Any retiree who would like to adjust his or her lump sum COLA tax withholding preference should indicate the preferred change on the bottom portion of the notice and return that part of the notice to PERS by October 31. Any retiree who did not receive or who no longer has his or her notice may call PERS at 601-359-3589 or 800-444-7377 to request a duplicate notice.



P. O. Box 5580
Brandon, MS 39047-5580

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

PRESORTED
FIRST CLASS MAIL
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
JACKSON, MS
PERMIT NO. 670

MRPEA Membership Application

\$20 Annual Rate (August 1 – July 31) \$250 Life Rate I want to support MRPEA with the enclosed donation

Check One: Miss Ms. Mrs. Mr. Dr. Other: _____

Name _____ County _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Email _____

Mail this form with a check payable to: MRPEA, P.O. Box 5580, Brandon, MS 39047-5580

For other convenient payment options, enroll or renew online at www.mrpea.org.