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Summer 2017

The Guardian

Mississippi Retired Public Employees' Association
Quarterly Newsletter

Officers | Board Members

Ann Thames
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Ed LeGrand
Vice President

Bob Rhoads
Secretary

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2019 Directors
Jane Dykes
Mike Larsen
Michael Myrick

2018 Directors
Mike Black
Lucian Hill
Hoopy Stringer
Evelyn Webb

Ex Officio
George Dale
Randy McCoy

District Directors

See page 2 for district directors and their contact information.

President's Message

Get involved! You can make a difference!

By Ann Thames

A watchful eye and a strong voice at our state Capitol are key to keeping the Public Employees' Retirement System of Mississippi (PERS) secure.

During Mississippi's 2013 Legislative Session, two harmful PERS-related bills were introduced. However, after active employees and retirees applied 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, additional tax cuts—primarily for big business—were approved despite reports from state leaders that Mississippi is in the midst of a critical budget situation. Revenues have consistently fallen short of projections in recent years, resulting in multiple cuts to state budgets and diminished bond ratings. Continued budget shortfalls could have a negative effect on PERS; therefore, we must remain vigilant and be prepared to act in large numbers if adverse PERS-related legislation is introduced during the 2018 Legislative Session.

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 2018. 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 initiate or 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 if needed.

Also, plan to attend MRPEA Day at the Capitol January 23, 2018, from 8:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., as we need to have a visible presence at the Capitol to derail any harmful PERS-related legislation that might be introduced. 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 PERS as it is today.

Finally, I want to thank you for the confidence that you have placed in me by allowing me to serve as your president for the next two years. I look forward to the challenges ahead and to working with all of you to preserve and protect our retirement system as it is today.



MRPEA District Directors

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

Wynona Winfield
601-955-4525
wwsubeach@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*

Vacant

District 4 - *Hinds, Madison, Rankin*
Joe Johnson
601-624-6642
joejohnson1946@gmail.com

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

Marty Wiseman
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wmw3@msstate.edu

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

Preston Ratliff
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p_ratliff2000@yahoo.com

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

Robert McNeil
662-680-9024
ramcneil@comcast.net

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

Keith Shaffer
662-934-0055
kshaffer@advanc-ed.org

MRPEA News

New MRPEA officers and directors elected

At the July 10 annual business meeting, the Nominating Committee presented the slate of 2017-2019 officers and 2020 directors for a vote by members. Officers elected for two-year terms beginning August 1, 2017, are: President – Ann Thames; Vice President – Ed LeGrand; Secretary – Bob Rhoads; and Treasurer – Mike Lightsey. Directors elected for three-year terms beginning August 1, 2017, are: Ronnie Bell; Margo Bowers, Olin Lewis; and Dale Sullivan. Members elected the new slate of officers and directors by majority vote of those present and voting. The Nominating Committee included: Chair Howell Garner, Tony Byrne, Robert McNeil, Dale Sullivan, and Curt Thompson.

Amendments to the MRPEA Constitution and By-Laws approved

At the July 10 annual business meeting, the following technical amendments to the MRPEA Constitution and By-Laws were approved by the required two-thirds vote of members in attendance and voting:

1. Amended Article I, Section 3, Type of Organization, to clarify that MRPEA is a non-profit organization recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as tax-exempt under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(4);
2. Amended Article II, Purpose, to align with the purpose (Vision and Mission) of the organization today;
3. Amended Article III, Section 1, Membership Eligibility, for clarity; and
4. Amended Article V, Section 2, Board of Directors, to formalize the election of multi-year directors beginning in 2018 in an effort to implement the 2016 change from 15 to 10 multi-year elected directors through attrition.

The amended Constitution and By-Laws is posted at mrpea.org. Members of the Constitution and By-Laws Committee were: Chair Evelyn Webb, Mike Black, Margo Bowers, Preston Ratliff, and Bob Rhoads.

New district director in District 8 appointed

At its July 10, 2017, meeting, the MRPEA Board of Directors approved the appointment of Dr. Keith Shaffer as district director for District 8 (Coahoma, DeSoto, Lafayette, Marshall, Panola, Quitman, Tallahatchie, Tate, Tunica, and Yalobusha counties). Keith replaces Thomas Toney who resigned from the post. Keith retired as South Panola School District superintendent in 2013 after nearly 30 years in education in Mississippi.

Networking with MRPEA

MRPEA has established a network with around 20 organizations throughout the state whose members participate in PERS. We are working together with these organizations to safeguard current PERS benefits for retirees and current employees. We do this by keeping our vast combined memberships informed regarding developments regarding PERS and other matters impacting retirees. If you know of an organization that might benefit from participating in this partnership, please let us know.

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 John Read	601-359-3340



Contact MRPEA

Deirdre McGowan
Executive Director

601-919-0670
mrpea@bellsouth.net
mrpea.org

Meetings and Events

MRPEA Board Meeting
October 9, 2017
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
location to be determined

MRPEA Board Meeting
January 8, 2018
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
location to be determined

MRPEA Day at the Capitol
January 23, 2018
8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
New Capitol Rotunda

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)

Retired Education Personnel of Mississippi (REPM)

Stay Connected

Thank you for your continued support of MRPEA

Thank you to everyone who either joined or continued their active membership in MRPEA this year. We appreciate and need your continued support and active participation.

Public employees and retirees have a vested interest in legislation and any decisions that could potentially affect their retirement security; therefore, MRPEA has and continues to promote beneficial legislation and discourage harmful legislation.

Your support is vital to:

- ✓ **Keeping** MRPEA at the State Capitol when the Mississippi Legislature is in session;
- ✓ **Helping** MRPEA keep members informed via newsletters, e-mails and texts, website updates, and social media;
- ✓ **Supporting** MRPEA as it plans and hosts meetings;
- ✓ **Allowing** MRPEA to be a liaison between our members and PERS leadership; and
- ✓ **Fortifying** MRPEA's strength as a guardian for the retirement of thousands of PERS retirees.

Renewing your membership is easy!

- Securely and conveniently renew online at mrpea.org; **or**
- Complete and return the Membership Registration/Renewal form on the back of this newsletter.

If you have questions about the status of your membership or if you need assistance with your online registration, please call or email, 601-919-0670 or mrpea@bellsouth.net.



Sign up for text alerts

Text "MRPEA" to the number 95577 to receive our periodic text alerts so that you will be in the loop when we have important news to share quickly.

PERS News

Fitch to chair, Breland to vice chair PERS Board of Trustees

Mississippi Treasurer Lynn Fitch has transitioned from vice chairman to chairman of the Board of Trustees of PERS for fiscal year 2018, which began July 1.

At the Board's June 27 meeting, Fitch became chairman for fiscal year 2018, succeeding Dr. Randy McCoy, one of the Board's two retiree representatives.

The Board then elected as its new vice chairman Kelly Breland, director of the Bureau of Administration for the Mississippi Department of Mental Health and one of the Board's two state employee representatives.

The chairman presides at board meetings, appoints members of board committees, and can call special meetings. The vice chairman transitions to chairman after a year and serves as chairman when the current chairman is absent.

COLA notices mailed

PERS recently mailed Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) notices. 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

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MRPEA Membership Registration/Renewal

\$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 _____ Date of Birth _____

Signature _____ Date _____

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

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