

# THE GUARDIAN

Mississippi Retired Public Employees' Association  
Quarterly Newsletter

 **MRPEA**  
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FALL 2018

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See page 2 for  
District Directors

## GET READY FOR NEXT YEAR'S ELECTIONS!!! YOU HAVE A VOICE! USE IT!

MRPEA continues to grow and reach out to potential new members. Our Executive Director, Emily Pote, has been taking our message to several groups around the state. Once again, I encourage all of you not to let your guard down and assume nothing will happen to your PERS benefits and your annual Cost of Living Adjustment.

Long time Executive Director of PERS, Pat Robertson retired at the end of June. The new Executive Director is Ray Higgins who came to Mississippi from Georgia. Ray brings a great deal of strong experience to the position. Emily and I along with some other MRPEA members met with Ray and made him aware of our position that PERS benefits and COLA should not be changed in any way. We will continue to attend PERS board meetings and monitor their discussions and continue to meet with Ray regarding our concerns.

Emily and I attended the PERS Legislative Budget Office Hearing last month. The LBO committee only met for one day this year and only chose to hear a handful of agency budget presentations, one of which was PERS. While the committee members were respectful of the fact that Ray is new to the position, it was clear that they are not happy at the request for an increase in the employer contribution. It is also clear that most members of the committee believe that changes to PERS need to be made.

Be aware that next year is an election year for the Legislature and state-wide elected officials. **Make a point to talk personally to your legislators and ask them to commit not to make any changes to PERS or the COLA. If your legislators are unwilling to make that commitment, you may want to consider casting your vote differently.** Speak to the other candidates as well about PERS so that you will be as well educated as possible when you go to the polls. We have about a year before election day and it is certainly not too soon to be taking a good hard look at the people who represent you and make sure they are looking out for your interests.



We will be surveying all candidates for office regarding their position on PERS and will post the results of those surveys on our Facebook page and our website. Remember, the voting booth is the most effective way to deal with those who are not supporters of PERS.

Remember that you DO NOT have to be retired to join MRPEA. Please encourage everyone you know whether retired or not from state government to join. The \$20 annual dues are minimal. We need to make our voice heard!

Ann Thames  
MRPEA President



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Brandon, MS 39047**

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Mark your calendars to join us next year on **Thursday, January 17, 2019, from 8:30 AM to 11:00 AM** for **MRPEA Day at the Capitol!**

**INTHISISSUE:**

- PRESIDENT LETTER**
- ANNUAL MEETING RECAP**
- DISTRICT DIRECTOR SPOTLIGHT: TONY BYRNE**

# **MRPEA Membership Form**

**Register or renew online at [www.mrpea.org](http://www.mrpea.org)  
or return form below with payment**

\_\_\_\_\_ \$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**

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## MRPEA Highlights

### MEET DISTRICT 2 DIRECTOR

*Tony Byrne*



Tony Byrne is District 2 Director for MRPEA. He is a charter member and past president of MRPEA, serving from 1994-1995. According to Tony, being a member of MRPEA is vitally important to him to work to protect our retirement funding.

Tony served as Mayor of Natchez for 20 years and as an alderman for the city two years prior to that. Some of his service time occurred during turbulent years of martial law in the city related to racial tensions. During his tenure, the first African Americans were included in city hall, police and fire departments, and on all commissions and committees.

A graduate of Mississippi State University, Tony also completed the Chamber of Commerce Management School at the University of Houston. Tony is affiliated with St. Mary Basilica, Sigma Chi, and the National Football Foundation. He was selected Athlete of the Century for Natchez 2000.

He loves spending time with his wife, Annette, and their family at the lake house, as well as playing tennis and following MS State and New Orleans Saints football.

### DISTRICT 5

Attala, Calhoun,  
Chickasaw, Choctaw,  
Clay, Lowndes, Monroe,  
Montgomery, Noxubee,  
Oktoberfest, Webster,  
Winston

**Marty Wiseman**  
(662) 312-6166  
wmw3@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 McNeil**  
(662) 680-9024  
ramcneil@comcast.net

### DISTRICT 8

Coahoma, DeSoto,  
Lafayette, Marshall,  
Panola, Quitman,  
Tallahatchie, Tate,  
Tunica, Yalobusha

**Vacant**

### CONTACT MRPEA

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

# 2018 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

## MRPEA DISTRICT DIRECTORS

### DISTRICT 1

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

#### **Wynona Winfield**

(601) 955-4525  
wwlsbeach@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*

#### **James Cushman**

(601) 739-3560  
2cushes@bellsouth.net

### DISTRICT 4

*Hinds, Madison, Rankin*

#### **Joe Johnson**

(601) 624-6642  
joej1946@gmail.com

This year's 2018 MRPEA Annual Membership Meeting was held in a new location at the Embassy Suites in Ridgeland, MS. Outgoing PERS Executive Director Pat Robertson and Incoming PERS Executive Director Ray Higgins spoke to the membership about the current financial standing of the organization, the challenges currently facing PERS, and the changes that have happened and are set to happen in the near future.

Legrand about the state of the organization and the actions they are taking to guard your retirement.

MRPEA President Ann introduced our new Executive Director, Emily Pote, and thanked our exhibitors and sponsors for their support of the organization. We look forward to seeing everyone again next year at the Embassy Suites in Ridgeland, MS for the 2019 MRPEA Annual Membership Meeting!

Those in attendance also heard MRPEA President Ann Thames and Vice President Ed



**MRPEA**  
*Around the State*

This Quarter, MRPEA leadership has been focusing on reaching the most current and potential MRPEA Members.

Our Executive Director, Emily Pote, has been out at conferences sharing our message, as well as creating information pieces that have been mailed all across the state.

In May, Pote had the opportunity to speak in Bay St. Louis at the Regional Leadership Conference for Administrators on Minority Issues.

Pote also had a chance to speak to both the MS Fire Chiefs Association and the MS Fire Fighters Association in Gulfport during the first weekend in June.

*Pictured (left) Mike Beyerstedt, Emily Pote, and Terry Wages*