



# IRTA ACTION

Spring 2023

Quarterly Newsletter

## 2023 Legislative News

Both House and Senate are scheduled to reconvene this week March 7th – March 10th. The House passed a grand total of 98 substantive, non-shell bills out of all committees last week.

The March 10th committee deadline for substantive bills in both Chambers is quickly approaching. Given the slower start to the committee process and the thousands of bills in committee awaiting action, we anticipate there will be many deadline extensions and a very busy week for the General Assembly.

### 2023 Key Session Deadlines:

February 28:	Consolidated Primary Election
March 10:	Deadline – Senate Bills out of Senate Committee & House Bills out of House Committee
March 24:	Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in the House
March 31:	Deadline – Third Reading Senate Bills in the Senate
April 4:	Consolidated Election
April 28:	Deadline – House Bills out of Senate Committee & Senate Bills out of House Committee

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**Defending Your Pension and Health Insurance Benefits**

## President's Message Bill Funkhouser



Last fall Executive Director Jim Bachman, Member Benefits Committee Chair Pat Hampton and I represented IRTA at the Association Member Benefits Advisors (AMBA) Roundup. There were leaders of associations from all over the country attending. It was not just retired teacher associations but associations representing state employees, police, fireman, etc. It was very interesting talking with leaders of the other groups. It seems they all have basically the same concerns we do. Getting and retaining members is number one. Updating constitutions and modernizing governance is also a concern of most. It again made me appreciate how fortunate we are to have the Pension Protection Clause in the Illinois Constitution. Almost all the other association's pensions and benefits are at the whim of their state legislatures and can be changed at any time.

It was an intense 2 days with several presenters and panel discussions. Jim Bachman took part in one of the panel discussions and represented IRTA very well. I was pleasantly surprised that the focus was not on the products offered by AMBA but rather on how they can help us grow our membership. One of the sessions was on "The State of Associations." In this session it was pointed out that one of the main problems associations are facing is insufficient volunteers. This is one of the problems we are seeing in our own association with the difficulty we are having finding volunteers for leadership positions and committee members.

Another session was "Who is Your Who?" That is who are your potential members. In this presentation the population was divided into groups by age. The groups discussed were:

1. Milestone Baby Boomers 1945-1964. This group is just ready to enter retirement and begin participating in Medicare.
2. Gen X 1965-1979. This group is the in-between generation. They are working, raising children, and possibly taking care of parents.
3. Millennials 1980-2000. This is the generation that grew up with technology.

Our target groups are Milestone Baby Boomers and Gen X who are beginning to think about retirement. Each of these groups has a different set of values and expectations. As an association we need to keep that in mind as we modify our structure to appeal to them and meet their needs.

For me, the highlight of the Roundup was keynote speaker Tom Morris. He is one of the most active public philosophers in the world, a former professor at Norte Dame and the author of several books including *Plato's Lemonade Stand* and *If Aristotle Ran General Motors*. I am very pleased that Mr. Morris is going to be the keynote speaker at our convention in October. I hope many of you will be attending and get a chance to hear him.

## Points to Ponder:

"Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek."

- Barack Obama, President

"If you want to do something you've never done before, you have to do something you've never done before."

- Yogi Berra, Baseball Player

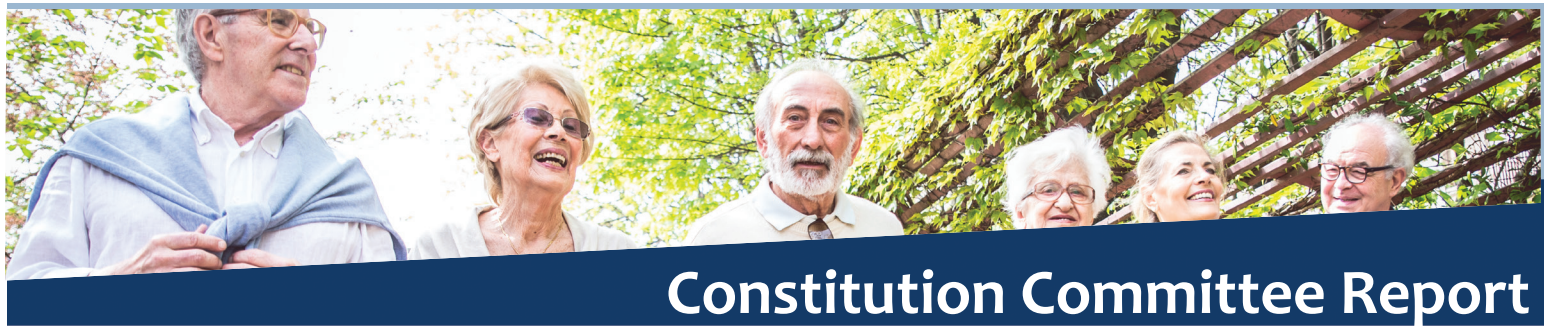


## IRTA Member Benefits

You can find information on all of IRTA's member benefits by visiting [www.irtaonline.org](http://www.irtaonline.org), logging into the Members-Only section, and clicking on the Member Benefits tab. Some of IRTA's other benefits include Liberty Mutual, Lifeline Screening, and Hear in America. You can also contact the IRTA Office at 1.800.728.4782 for additional information.

\* IRTA benefit codes must be mentioned to receive discounts.





Your IRTA Constitution Committee has been working diligently since last fall to fulfill the IRTA Strategic Plan developed and approved by the Executive Committee to:

- **RECONSTRUCT AND MODERNIZE GOVERNANCE**
- **EVALUATE CHANGING ORGANIZATIONAL NEEDS**

To accomplish that task, the committee needed to realistically consider our state association's current status in relationship to actual membership involvement and the effect of realized trends on the future role of state governance, divisions, committees, and meetings. In addition, the committee explored how these trends related to future inclusion of all IRTA members within each aspect of our organization.

It was recognized that various elements of the current constitution hamper the responsiveness and adaptability of our association. IRTA's current organization structure was becoming less representative of actual realities within IRTA Regions. Therefore, changes were imperative when considering IRTA's sustainability in maintaining its place of prominence in effectively representing Illinois retired teachers.

The unfortunate reality of units disbanding, while other existing units were unable to find a member to serve as a Regional Director, were facts that had to be considered and addressed as we reviewed our organizational structure. Maintaining an efficient and effective operating structure is key when planning IRTA's future.

#### **The positive impact of the committee's proposed amendments would:**

- Reduce the size of the IRTA Board of Directors to make it more efficient and productive in making all decisions of the Association. This change would eliminate the Executive Committee, which currently decides most of the consequential issues.
- Recognize and incorporate current and future communication options that were not available when IRTA was initially organized. The utilization of these methods of information disbursement creates immediate contact opportunities that were not foreseen when the first constitution was written, thus eliminating some IRTA structural layers and divisions previously needed such as Regions and Regional Directors.
- Allow ALL active state members their right to vote to determine how their Association is organized and operated. This change will help bridge the gap of non-involvement by members from disbanded units and out-of-state members - which make up over 20% of our membership.
- Foster an organization that is more inclusive of ALL its members and their participation and involvement.
- Move items from the Constitution to the Standing Rules. This change would bring into alignment the fact that the Constitution of an organization contains the fundamental operating principles that govern its operation, while the Standing Rules establish specific rules by which the group is to function.
- Recognize involvement trends of the next generation of retired teachers.
- Greatly assist in maintaining IRTA's viability.



When you consider these amendments, it is imperative that you think of our Association as a whole and not just your specific local, region, or area. Your local may be thriving, but that is not the case of many of our units. Your region may be functioning as planned and intended, but that no longer happens consistently throughout the state. We are in this together and we must take this limited opportunity to make our Association viable for representing not only its current retirees, but also the next generation of retired teachers. Remember IRTA's Purpose "...to maintain and improve benefits to annuitants of TRS..." and IRTA's Mission to "...serve the needs and interests of [ALL] its members..."

Roger Hampton, IRTA Constitution Committee Chair



## Excellence in Education Grant Program

**The Illinois Retired Teachers Association Foundation is making \$42,000 in grant money available statewide in Illinois.** This special grant money will provide additional funds to public school educators (Pre-K through 12) so that their students will have the means to participate in special projects.

Please download, complete, and submit the application online by visiting [www.irtaonline.org](http://www.irtaonline.org) and looking under

the IRTA Foundation section. All proposals must be submitted by June 1, 2023.

A special committee will select the recipients of the grant money over the summer. Grants will be awarded in the Fall.

\* Chicago Public School employees are not eligible for this grant program.

## IRTA 2023: Save the Dates

Convention: **October 16 & 17, 2023**  
(Crowne Plaza – Springfield, IL)

Virtual Conference hosted by Area 2: April 5, 2023

Virtual Conference hosted by Area 3: June 7, 2023

Virtual Conference hosted by Area 4: July 12, 2023

Virtual Conference hosted by Area 5: August 9, 2023

Virtual Conference hosted by Area 6: September 6, 2023



## Doug Strand, TRS Annuitant Trustee Re-Elected



My fellow retiree, I am humbled everyday by the privilege you have given me to serve as your trustee on the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) Board of Trustees for the past four years. I most appreciate all of you who electronically signed for me to appear on the TRS ballot. As the uncontested winner, I will have the honor of serving you for another term. Knowing I have your support gives me the confidence to represent you. I appreciate each and every one of you; I could not have done this without your support. I truly look forward to another four years.

Douglas L. Strand  
TRS Board and IRTA Member





## Member Benefits



**BENEFITS  
STILL FIT?**

### CONSIDER ADDITIONAL INSURANCE COVERAGE

As your life changes, consider some of these benefits and discounts from **IRTA & AMBA**:

- Dental & Vision Plans
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- Medical Air Services Association (MASA)
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- Medicare Solutions
- Final Expenses Whole Life & Guaranteed Acceptance Life Insurance
- Annuity
- Start Hearing, Inc.
- Discounts on Travel, Dining & more

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**[myambabenefits.info/irta](http://myambabenefits.info/irta)**

IRTA - Illinois Retired Teachers Association



## 2022 IRTA "Unit of Distinction" Program Award

The following units (right columns) are being recognized as a **2022 IRTA "Unit of Distinction."** The "Unit of Distinction" Program is a voluntary program based on the honor system that is designed to help guide and direct local unit leaders, as well as acknowledge IRTA units that are the best in the state. Units receiving the "Unit of Distinction" Award will be recognized at the IRTA Biennial Convention, in the IRTA *ACTION*, e-newsletter, and on the IRTA website. Units will also receive a gift of \$250.

Alexander-Pulaski-Union Counties RTA  
Blackhawk RTA  
Champaign County RTA  
Clinton County RTA  
Douglas County RTA  
Hamilton County RTA  
Jackson County RTA  
Joliet Area RTA  
Lake County RTA  
Land of Lincoln RTA  
Madison County #1 RTA  
McHenry County RTA  
Mercer County RTA

Moultrie County RTA  
Northwest Suburban RTA  
Ogle-Lee Counties RTA  
Peoria Area RTA  
Shelby County RTA  
Stephenson County RTA  
Wayne County RTA  
West Lake Shore RTA  
White County RTA  
Williamson County RTA  
Winnebago County RTA



# IRTAPAC Donation Form

The IRTAPAC Fund continues to grow, but we need your help. Donate to our Political Action Committee and protect the status of retired educators by donating just \$1.00 per month through pension deduction. IRTA will continue to fight for retired educators' benefits as we have for over 65 years. Help Us in Our Fight! The IRTAPAC donation form can be found on the IRTA website at [www.irtaonline.org](http://www.irtaonline.org).

*Member dues money is never used for PAC purposes.*

## 2023 Legislative News (Continued from page: 1)

May 11: Deadline – Third Reading House Bills in Senate  
May 12: Deadline – Third Reading Senate Bills in House  
May 19: Adjournment

### Pritzker details Teacher Recruitment, Retention Change:

The state will invest more than \$200 million over the next three years as part of a proposed Teacher Pipeline Grant Program aimed at supporting school districts struggling the most in the ongoing educator and support staff shortage, Gov. J.B. Pritzker announced Friday.

Speaking at Streamwood High School, Pritzker said the proposed program would send \$70 million per year over the next three years to the 170 school districts facing the most significant teacher shortages.

"We've come a long way when it comes to K-12 education, but any parent will tell you that it's not enough. All across the nation school districts are fighting the impact of teacher shortages, as education professionals struggle to weigh their passion for their classrooms with their own mental, financial, and personal well-being. As part of my plan to make us the best in the nation, I'm proposing that we address teacher shortages head-on and dedicate an additional \$70 million annually specifically targeted at attracting new teachers into the profession, and retaining the quality educators that we already have," Pritzker said.

To promote local flexibility, school districts receiving funds as part of the program would be free to use the funds in whatever ways they see fit, including signing bonuses, housing stipends, down payment assistance, tuition payment, and loan repayment support. They could also use the funds to support the educators they already employ with supplies, professional development, and other school culture supports.

The Illinois State Board of Education will also be using \$6 million in federal funds to contract a marketing firm to develop a statewide recruitment advertising campaign.

### WEP/GPO:

Federal lawmakers seeking to repeal Social Security's Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO) are giving it another try this year.

U.S. Representatives Abigail Spanberger (D-VA) and Garrett Graves (R-LA) reintroduced the Social Security Fairness Act of 2023 (H.R. 82) in January. A similar bill received widespread bipartisan support in 2022 but never made it to a floor vote. Bills that don't pass expire at the conclusion of each Congress.

The WEP and GPO, which are part of federal law, can reduce Social Security benefits for recipients of public pensions that serve as a substitute for Social Security.

While some bills in recent years have aimed to modify one or both the WEP and GPO, H.R. 82 seeks to fully repeal both provisions. As of early March, the bill had nearly 180 cosponsors, twelve of whom are from Illinois: Rep. Sean Casten [D-IL-6], Rep. Robin Kelly [D-IL-2], Rep. Mike Bost [R-IL-12], Rep. Lauren Underwood [D-IL-14], Rep. Janice Schakowsky [D-IL-9], Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi [D-IL-8], Rep. Nikki Budzinski [D-IL-13], Rep. Bill Foster [D-IL-11], Rep. Jesus "Chuy" Garcia [D-IL-4], Rep. Eric Sorensen [D-IL-17], Rep. Delia Ramirez [D-IL-3], and Rep. Bradley Schneider [D-IL-10].

**What's IRTA doing about it?** Since this is a federal issue to be determined by Congress, we encourage members and retirees to contact their members of Congress to share their opinion about these provisions and how they affect them. We will continue to update members of any movement of this legislation.



# Memorials

## In Memory Of

Below, you will find a list of names of those remembered by memorial gifts for the months of November - January. For a complete list of donations to the Foundation, please visit the IRTA website and look under the Foundation section.

## November

Aurora Area RTA in memory of:

Shirley Best  
Carol Dauwalder  
Beverly (Sue) Jacobson  
Jim McGuire

Champaign County RTA in memory of:

Norma Bletscher  
Garris Graham  
Eunice Weech

Decatur Area RTA in memory of:

Joan Marie Brown  
Dennis Gatchel  
Mary Kay Gatchel  
Leo LaFauce  
Alice J. Lambrick  
Doris Woods Lewis  
Barbara Paine  
Robert "Bob" Patterson  
Suzanne Purcell Pritchett  
Eileen Sleeth  
Catherine "Dee Dee"  
Stoutenborough  
Donald Wachter  
Betty Ann Godwin Watkins

DuPage County RTA in memory of:

Jacqueline Yndestad

Effingham County RTA in memory of:

Marilyn Tolliver

Fulton County RTA in memory of:

Joyce Cannon  
Joy Roberts

Greene-Jersey Counties RTA in memory of:

Unit members who have passed away  
Livingston County RTA in memory of:  
Tim Dever

Madison County II RTA in memory of:

Joy Kissack

Montgomery County RTA in memory of:

Stanley Horst  
Harry Kirk  
Shelia Macon  
Audrey McCaw  
Judith Miles  
Ruth Storm

Stephenson County RTA in memory of:

Gordon Grande  
Walter Hayward  
Robert Hendrickson  
Walter Hoffman  
James Hoover  
Joseph Howard  
Jean Joyce  
Karen Julius

Barb Levertson  
Greg Ludwig  
Sandra McLain  
Sandy Morrison  
Robert Schroeder  
Robert Wachlin

Wabash-Edwards Counties RTA in memory of:

Mike Rice

Warren County RTA in memory of:

Rose Sandstrom

Wayne County RTA in memory of:

Robert Walker

West Lake Shore RTA in memory of:

Steven Eckert  
Carmella Jandacek  
Aldo Mungai  
Lynn Ververs  
Patricia Wilson

Whiteside County RTA in memory of:

Pamela Pfundstein

Winnebago County RTA in memory of:

Gary C. Anderson  
Patricia Atwood  
Judy Danca  
Leona Frey  
Martha Hart  
Robert Henbest  
Rosemary Highland  
James Hoover  
John D. Johnson  
Carmen Kellogg  
Ethel Kotche  
Nancy Leitschuh  
Joyce Oberst  
Alice Pampe  
Mary Jo Powers  
Suzanne Stocker  
Judith Suit

Other Memorials:

James Earl Barr in memory of:

DARTA members that have passed away

Patricia Barr in memory of:

DARTA members that have passed away

Ruth Cortright in memory of:

DARTA members that have passed away

Jean E. Gift in memory of:

DARTA members that have passed away

Nancy M. Peterson in memory of:

DARTA members that have passed away

Elizabeth L. Query-Smith in memory of:

DARTA members that have passed away

Verlyn Rosenberger in memory of:

DARTA members that have passed away

A. Nadine Wimmer in memory of:

DARTA members that have passed away

Bill Bailey in memory of:

Bill McCauley

Irene Jinks in memory of:

Steve Polep

## December

Blackhawk Unit RTA in memory of:

Unit members who have passed away

Coles County RTA in memory of:

Eloise Buffenmeyer  
Nancy Garner  
Martha Lynn Kendrick  
Barbara MacMillan  
Phyllis Lorene Milam  
Pat Randolph  
Richard Ernest (Dick) Roger  
Dorothy Swartzbaugh  
Cora Ruth Turner  
Joann Welch  
Delbert Willison

Hancock County RTA in memory of:

Marlene Fox  
Mary Logan  
Donna McCutchan  
JoAnn Peitzmeier  
Jim Repplinger

Mason County RTA in memory of:

Zoe Rene Worner

McDonough County RTA in memory of:

Paul Hayes  
Richard Scott  
Carolyn Sue Thompson  
Mary Wolfmeyer

Randolph County RTA in memory of:

Marilyn Cascio

Tazewell County RTA in memory of:

Norma Eldridge  
Howard Hamra  
Margaret Hauter  
Pat Mitchell

West Lake Shore RTA in memory of:

Rona Purpura

Other Memorials:

Ronald Gasper in memory of:

Barbara Gaspar

Bill Bailey in memory of:

Bill McCauley

Roberta & Montie Judd in memory of:

Rona Purpura

Paula L. Matzek in memory of:

Rona Purpura

Dorothy Phillips in memory of:

Rona Purpura

Mavis Salmon in memory of:

Rona Purpura

Roberta L. Wheatley in memory of:

Rona Purpura

Carolyn M. White in memory of:

Roger Steingraber

Marilyn Foster

James T. Schuldt

Jean Warring Seyl

Hamilton County RTA in memory of:

Kenneth Kirkpatrick

Marilyn Morris

Illinois Alpha Chapter in memory of:

Kenny Watkins

Land of Lincoln RTA in memory of:

(Members who passed away in 2022)

Guy Anderson  
William Joe Anderson

William Bird

Gloria Calovini

Richard Clark

Nancy Darrough

Margie Dobson

Herbert Dulle

Juanita Jones

Bernard Lawrence

Arlyn Lober

Susan Mangiaracina

Ray McHattan

George Meyer

Anna Newell

Imogene Riegel

Nancy Riggsby

Marie Ruwe

Mary Smalley

Jack Taylor

Donald Yutzy

Lawrence County RTA in memory of:

Marjorie Myers

Livingston County RTA in memory of:

Marna Tullis

McHenry County RTA in memory of:

Members who passed away in 2022

Northwest Suburban RTA in memory of:

Clydella Meiller

Pope-Hardin Counties RTA in memory of:

George Dugan

Bill Leonberger

Melba Patton

Freda Siener

Tazewell County RTA in memory of:

Howard Hamra

Other Memorials:

Joanna M. Swick in memory of:

May Lou Gaskill

Michele Adcock Polk in memory of:

Charles Rusiewski

**September Memorials Update:**

Effingham County RTA in memory of:

Jean Merry

Joliet Area RTA in memory of:

Florence Wheeler

Michael Zigrossi

Livingston County RTA in memory of:

Ed Reis

Whiteside County RTA in memory of:

James McKinzie

Mark Young

Other Memorial:

Bill Bailey in memory of:

Bill McCauley

## January

Douglas County RTA in memory of:

Virginia Strohecker

Elgin Area RTA in memory of:

Donna Elbert

## Thank You!

Please remember that you can ask your local funeral home to add the IRTA Foundation as a memorial choice at your loved one's funeral.





**Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift to the Foundation for:**

E-mail

Illinois Retired Teachers Association Foundation  
828 S. Second St., 4th Floor  
Springfield, IL 62704

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