



IRTA ACTION

Winter 2023-2024

Quarterly Newsletter

2023 Legislative News - Veto Session

Legislators convened in Springfield for session last week and acted on several major initiatives - and left without addressing some others. Both chambers adjourned until January 16, 2024, and released calendars for the 2024 Spring Session.

Bills That Passed Both Chambers:

- SB 382 (Edly-Allen/Gong-Gershowitz): Deep fake trailer bill to clarify definitions in the Civil Remedies for Nonconsensual Dissemination of Private Sexual Images Act.
- SB 384 (Feigenholtz/Moeller): Electric Vehicle Charging Act trailer bill to clarify provisions related to EV-capable parking space requirements and residential requirements.
- SB 385 (Belt/Hoffman): Restricts units of local government from enforcing any ordinance that would restrict development of an inoperable state facility conveyed to the unit of local government for recreational purposes.
- SB 584 (Cunningham/Didech): Three minor gaming changes.
- SB 690 (Castro/Didech): Validates certain tax levies for community mental health boards to ensure local referenda previously passed are effective.
- SB 696 (Aquino/Huyhn): Omnibus TIF extension bill.

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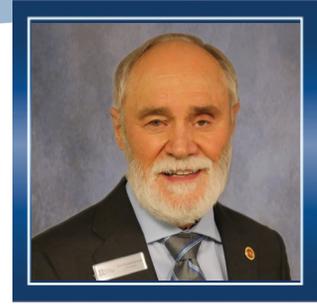
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**Defending Your Pension and
Health Insurance Benefits**

President's Message

Bill Funkhouser



When I took office as IRTA President January 1, 2022, it was apparent that we were facing a time of major transition for the association. Our Executive Director had announced he would be retiring at the end of 2023. We recently had an organizational review by an outside consultant, the Executive Committee had developed a strategic plan and we had just gone through a worldwide pandemic.

I appointed an Executive Director Search Committee which with the assistance of a consultant reviewed applicants and made recommendations to the Executive Committee who decided to hire Jessica Hoselton. You can find information about her in the November 1st *Good Dog News* e-newsletter.

I appointed a Constitution Committee which I asked to review the entire Constitution to see what is no longer working and make recommendations for changes. Their recommendations were presented to the delegates at the convention in October where major changes were approved. I was pleased to read in the Joliet Area RTA newsletter President Ray Kaufman's article where he said: "Speaking of IRTA, at the convention in Springfield a few weeks ago, it was voted on to bring IRTA out of the dark ages of the 1950's when communication was by letters delivered by the post office, pay phones at the gas station, or on party lines in our homes. Now, with the internet, every member of IRTA will be notified of dues increases, be able to vote for officers and area representatives, and receive current information as it is generated. Instead of just the 200 or so people attending the convention voting on those important issues, all 40,500+ members will be able to vote on things. And members who live out of state will now be able to vote too." You can read more about the convention in this issue of the IRTA *Action* newsletter.

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve you as your president for the past two years. As I leave office, I would like to thank you all for your support and particularly the office staff who made my job easy. As our new Executive Director and officers take over, let's all get behind them as they continue the work of protecting our benefits.

Thank you for being members of the only association whose sole purpose is protecting the benefits of retired educators.

2023 Legislative News (Continued from page: 1)

- SB 765 (Harris/Jones): Amends the Farm Mutual Insurance Company Act to provide for catastrophic reinsurance limits.
- SB 950 (Bryant/Friess): Quit claim DOC property.
- SB 1559 (Ford/Lightford): Implements a two-year moratorium on issuing new cannabis transporter licenses. License holders will also have a two-year holiday from paying annual fees.
- SB 1629 (Martwick/Kifowit): Modifies final average salary calculations for Tier 2 Chicago firemen.
- SB 1699 (Walsh/Cunningham): Energy Omnibus legislation passed in the spring (HB 3445) without the ROFR language amendatory vetoed by the Governor.
- SB 1769 (Ventura/Hoffman): Creates the Government Zero-Emission Vehicle Act.
- SB 1956 (Slaughter/Martwick): Grants an annual 3% non-compounded COLA to all Tier 1 Chicago Police retirees who reach age 55 with 20 years of service, effectively removing a birthdate restriction on eligibility.
- SB 1988 (Castro/Burke): Clarify property tax assessment appeal timeline.
- HB 351 (Harmon/Tarver): Clarifies what information notaries public must retain for purposes of petitions.
- HB 1358 (Glowiak Hilton/Burke): Sunset extension bill.
- HB 2104 (Villivalam/Delgado): Adds water safety instruction with respect to safety education for students enrolled in pre-k through 6th grade.
- HB 2394 (Glowiak Hilton/Morgan): Expedites the process to enable IDFPR to procure new software to speed up the licensing process for all industries across the state; and enables IDFPR to extend expiration dates or renewal periods if the secretary finds operational need to do so or if it would avoid hardship on a profession's licensees.

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2023 Convention Wrap-Up

The Illinois Retired Teachers Association (IRTA) celebrated its 2023 biennial Convention at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Springfield, IL, on October 16th and 17th. This event saw participation from over 250 retired educators from across Illinois. One of the primary focuses of the Convention was the IRTA's Delegate Assembly, where they proceeded to elect their officers and area representatives for the upcoming term. Those elected, who will commence their roles on January 1, 2024, include Mike Schmidt as President, Rainy Kaplan as Vice President, Donnie Ostrom as Treasurer, LaVonne Chaney as Secretary, Wendy Wieggers as Area 2 Representative, Deloris Turner as Area 4 Representative, and Mary May as Area 6 Representative.

The Convention was marked with various highlights, the most prominent being a live video presentation by Tom Morris, a renowned public philosopher. He has the distinction of delivering over 1,200 presentations globally and is recognized for his expertise in areas such as success, change, and innovation. On Monday evening, a special banquet was organized where the IRTA acknowledged unit honorees for their relentless dedication to the Association, their local chapters, and broader communities. This event also honored the 2021 and 2022 "Units of Distinction." This acknowledgment is part of a program designed to commend the top-performing IRTA units in the state. During the banquet, Secretary Doris Heaton, who has dedicated over 20 years to the IRTA, received a special tribute. Another significant acknowledgment was for Jim Bachman, nearing his two-decade service with the IRTA, who will soon retire at the year's end.

Tuesday's session brought about significant decisions. The assembly approved a resolution concerning an increase in membership dues. Effective January 1, 2024, the revised dues structure will be: an annual fee of \$50, a monthly deduction of

\$3.50 (amounting to \$42 annually), Life Dues at \$600, an annual recurring fee of \$46, and an annual associate recurring fee of \$35. Associate Life dues will be priced at \$200. It's important to note that the 5-Year Dues option will be removed starting in 2024.

In terms of constitutional changes, several pivotal amendments were made. Future proposals concerning dues increases will be categorized under the Standing Rules, which will also specify the involvement parameters for the Finance Committee along with a stipulated timeframe. Secondly, prior to each Biennial Convention, active IRTA members shall carry out a series of actions (by electronic or paper ballot): electing Officers and Area Representatives (in their respective areas) and amending the constitution. Thirdly, the Constitution defines the standing committees as: Finance, Legislative, Member Benefits, Membership, and Leadership Development (previously known as Nominations). A further breakdown specifies that the Finance and Leadership Development Committees will be constituted by a chairperson and a voting member from each area. In contrast, the Legislative, Member Benefits, and Membership Committees will be composed of a chair, the corresponding local unit chair, and any other members expressing interest in joining.

Concluding the events of the Convention, Jan Niccum emerged as the winner of the IRTA Foundation quilt raffle, a venture that successfully raised \$2,200 for the cause. This achievement was made possible, in part, due to the commendable efforts of Kay Ostrom and Glenda Flaherty, who not only created the beautiful quilt but also managed the raffle booth effectively. As the Convention wrapped up, the organizers expressed profound gratitude to AMBA for their unwavering partnership over the years and heartfelt thanks to all the attendees whose presence and involvement ensured a successful 2023 IRTA Convention.

IRTA Member Benefits

You can find information on all of IRTA's member benefits by visiting www.irtaonline.org, logging into the Members-Only section, and clicking on the Member Benefits tab. Some of IRTA's benefits include AMBA offerings, Vacations by Rail and Lifeline Screening. You can also contact the IRTA Office at 1.800.728.4782 for additional information.

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





Excellence in Education Grant Program

This Fall, the Illinois Retired Teachers Association Foundation (IRTAF) awarded \$42,000 in grant money to several public school educators from across the state. This grant money allows these educators to enrich their instruction with materials not otherwise available to them. Their students are the real winners! A special thank you to the Illinois Principals Association for their assistance with the promotion of this program. Below, you will find the name of each winner listed, along with his/her school and the IRTA Area. On the IRTA website (irtaonline.org), you can view a video summary about each project.

Candace Baker, Minooka Community High School, Channahon (1)

Tanya Beaulieu, Hononegah Community High School, Rockton (1)
David Belden, Minooka Community High School, Minooka (1)
Joshua Bell, Minooka Community High School, Minooka (1)
Cassandra Bieri, New Boston Elementary, New Boston (1)
Jeanine DeHaven-Binger, Hononegah Community High School, Rockton (1)
Jay Dickerson, River Ridge High School, Hanover (1)
Brittney Krischel, Flanagan-Cornell Unit 74, Flanagan (1)
Nick Micetich, Minooka Community High School, Channahon (1)
Gina Piatak, Coal City Middle School, Coal City (1)
Tammy Walsh, Minooka Junior High School District 201, Minooka (1)
Carley Zimmerman, Flanagan-Cornell, Flanagan (1)

Rachel Castaneda, Rockland Elementary School, Libertyville (2)

Kathleen Choi, Algonquin Road School, Fox River Grove (2)
Gina Copen, Little Fort Elementary, Waukegan (2)
Shan Kazmi, Zion-Benton Township High School, Zion (2)
Mike Kolar, Rockland Elementary School, Libertyville (2)
Brooke Marshall, Gray M. Sanborn Elementary, Palatine (2)
Lisa McCauley, Viking Middle School, Gurnee (2)
Sharon McDaniel, Little Fort Elementary School, Waukegan (2)
Tedd Moody, Indian Valley Vocational Center, Sandwich (2)
Katie Throw, Minooka Primary Center, Minooka (2)

Christine Adelman, Gompers Junior High School, Joliet (3)

Kristine Brokos, Stone School, Addison (3)
Traci Daimid, Lawn Manor Primary Center, Oak Lawn (3)
Catherine Gallagher, Hamlin Upper Grade Center, Alsip (3)
Molly Hooper, International Prep Academy, Champaign (3)
Whitney Huber, International Prep Academy, Champaign (3)
Monica Kula, Pennoyer School #79, Norridge (3)
Josephine Lewis, Jefferson Elementary School, Berwyn (3)
Heather McCarthy, Oak Lawn Hometown Middle School, Oak Lawn (3)

Mickey Tebelman, Meadow Ridge School, Orland Park (3)
Amy Webb, Unity Junior High School, Tolono (3)

Stephanie Altgilbers, Unity High School, Mendon (4)

Trista Barrett, Virginia CUSD 64 and A-C Central 262, Virginia (4)
Leigh Blumer, Banner Elementary School, Dunlap (4)
Erika Brock, Illini Central High School, Mason City (4)
Shellie Brooks, Havana Junior High, Havana (4)
Jill Colley, West Central High School, Biggsville (4)
Kathy Gilles, Wilder-Waite Grade School, Peoria (4)
Nicole Loser, Brimfield Grade School, Brimfield (4)
Valerie Rocke, Banner Elementary School, Dunlap (4)
Emily Ropp, Midwest Central Primary School, Manito (4)
Mikalia Sauder, Midwest Central High School, Manito (4)
Kate Sievers, Jersey Community Middle School, Jerseyville (4)

Melissa Alberssen, Taylorville Junior High School, Taylorville (5)

Kevin Aten, Cerro Gordo CUSD 100, Cerro Gordo (5)
Erin Barker, Okaw Valley Elementary School, Bethany (5)
Jill Briggerman, Main Street Elementary, Shelbyville (5)
Jeri Cardiff, Tuscola East Prairie Middle School, Tuscola (5)
Emily Crossman, Arthur Grade School, Arthur (5)
Jeffrey Finley, Jasper County Junior High, Newton (5)
Emily Keeler, Oblong Elementary School, Oblong (5)
Hope Kirkwood, Okaw Valley Elementary School, Bethany (5)
Jessica Mason, Washington Attendance Center, Carmi (5)
Paula Moutrey, Cara Thomas, and Suzanne Specha, North and Memorial Elementary Schools, Taylorville (5)
Ryan Repking, Dieterich Jr-Sr High School, Dieterich (5)
Carlin Smock, Carmi-White County High School, Carmi (5)
Denise Strack, Atwood Hammond Grade School, Atwood (5)

Becky Bailie, Herrin Elementary School, Herrin (6)

Doug Bates, Williamson County Education Services, Herrin (6)
Molly Brown, Denning Elementary, West Frankfort (6)
Heather Ingram, Herrin Elementary School, Marion (6)
Melanie Hamilton, Denning Elementary, West Frankfort (6)
Jodi Jerald, Herrin Elementary School, Herrin (6)
Beverly Kapp, St. Rose Elementary, St. Rose (6)
Jennifer Mezrich, Frohardt Elementary, Granite City (6)
Marla Miller, Frohardt Elementary, Granite City (6)
Jennifer Morence, Carlyle High School, Carlyle (6)
Roxanne Price, Lincoln Elementary School, Marion (6)
Carrie Schildroth, Alton Middle School, Alton (6)
Darrin Smith, The Learning Center, Marion (6)
Lynnette Staley, Hamilton County High School, McLeansboro (6)
Brianne Steinkamp, Carlyle Junior High School, Carlyle (6)



2024 IRTAF Scholarships & Benefits

The 2024 application and current guidelines for the IRTA Foundation Scholarships will be available December 1, 2023. Applications and current guidelines will be posted on the IRTA website at www.irtaonline.org/foundation/scholarships.

One \$2,000 scholarship is available in each of the six IRTA Areas of the state. These scholarships are only available to *incoming juniors or seniors* in college enrolled in a certified teacher training program. The deadline to postmark or email applications is March 7, 2024.

Other scholarships available in 2024, are the **Moler-Austin Scholarship** which offers two \$4,500 scholarships to **KENDALL COUNTY** high school graduates that will be entering their Sophomore, Junior, or Senior year of college with a declared major in Education. The **Helen Kennedy Scholarship** which is a \$2,000 scholarship and is available to graduates of any Illinois High School that will be entering their sophomore, junior, or senior year of college with a declared major in Education. Finally, the **Rose Sandstrom Scholarship** is for \$2,000 and is available to one incoming senior in college attending either Western Illinois University or Monmouth College with a declared major in Physical Education.

Applications for any of the above scholarships must be postmarked or emailed and sent to the IRTA office on or before March 7, 2024, and the recipients will be announced by April 21, 2024. The awards will be given as follows: one half in June for the fall semester with the balance to be awarded in January upon registrar verification of a 3.0 or above GPA on a 4.0 scale.

If you have any questions or need assistance in obtaining an application or to send an application, please contact Susan Goetz at susan@irtaonline.org or call 1.800.728.4782.



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Illinois Retired Teachers Association





Jim's Farewell & IRTAPAC

Dear Members:

As all of you are probably aware, at the end of December I will be retiring. I have been your Executive Director for almost 20 years. During those years we have successfully built upon the foundation that others who preceded us started. Our membership has grown to be over 40,000. We have fought off attempts to underfund your pensions; passed legislation 19 years ago that provides the formula for your health care and still is working today; defeated a law in the Supreme Court that would have cheated you from the pension you earned and provided you through our partners, AMBA, with many benefit choices.

Our mission today and always will be to protect your retirement benefits and with your assistance we have been successful for the last 20 years and will continue to be so under the new leadership. None of this could have been accomplished without the tremendous staff working tirelessly on your behalf.

I want to thank all the past presidents and board members who I have had the opportunity to work with. Their dedication to the IRTA goes unmatched. I will miss going to speak at the local units and talking with you about how your association can help you. In closing, please know that I have never been prouder to represent an organization.

Your Executive Director, Jim

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. The IRTAPAC donation form can be found on the IRTA website at www.irtaonline.org. *Member dues money is never used for PAC purposes.*

2023 Legislative News (Continued from page: 2)

- HB 2473 (Rezin/Yednock): Ends the moratorium on construction of new nuclear energy plants in the state and addresses concerns that Gov. Pritzker had with a similar bill (SB 76) he vetoed.
- HB 3641 (Joyce/Burke): State government omnibus bill, including an extension for the equal pay provisions for day and temporary labor to April 1, 2024.
- The General Assembly voted to accept the amendatory veto on HB 2878 (Hoffman/Castro), an omnibus procurement bill that, among many other things, would have authorized public-private partnerships for local transportation projects which the Governor vetoed out of the bill.

Major Issues Not Passed:

- House Speaker Chris Welch held to an internal rule to require 71 Democratic votes before calling a vote on a bill that would extend the controversial Invest in Kids scholarship program, and it appears Democrats were nowhere near that level of support for the plan. Invest in Kids is a scholarship program where low-income kids are sent to private schools using tax-deductible donations to a charity. About 9,500 kids are taking part in the program this year. The program will expire on Dec. 31, 2023.
- An agreement could not be reached on a bill to alter the plan to transition Chicago Public Schools from an appointed to an elected school board. Both the House and the Senate passed alternative proposals – neither of which garnered the support of the other chamber. The General Assembly still has until April 1st to pass a map for CPS.
- The Senate did not consider legislation passed by the House to enable legislative staff to unionize.
- The Senate did not consider the omnibus property tax legislation (SB 2315) passed by the House which removed language amendatory vetoed by the Governor out of HB 2507.
- Rather than calling the veto on HB 3643, a bill to create school options for halal and kosher foods, the Senate sponsor passed new language on SB 457 over to the House, which did not call the bill for a vote.
- The Senate sponsor for vetoed SB 1515 filed alternative language on SB 508 to add restrictions on the use of the E-Verify system to ensure privacy for workers. SB 508 passed the Senate but was not called for a vote in the House.

IRTAPAC Silent Auction

The 2023 Biennial Convention was held on October 16th and 17th. During the convention the IRTAPAC held its annual silent auction which was a success raising a total of \$6,380 to support the IRTAPAC initiatives. The Silent Auction has become a mainstay at the Biennial Convention. Without the support of IRTA Local Units and IRTA members, IRTAPAC could not be effective in making campaign contributions to candidates for local and state elective offices. These contributions and endorsements of candidates make it possible for IRTA to be a voice at the Capitol when retiree pension and healthcare benefits are being discussed. A huge thank you to everyone who participated!



Memorials

In Memory Of

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

July

Franklin-Williamson Counties RTA in memory of:

- Regenna Biermann
- Cathy Ferketich
- Alice Weeks

Jasper County RTA in memory of:

- Jane Hart

Northwest Suburban RTA in memory of:

- Kim Cannon
- Irene Jinks

Randolph County RTA in memory of:

- Howard Gallois

Richland County RTA in memory of:

- Audra Shan

Wayne County RTA in memory of:

- Larry Blackford
- Linda Reeves
- Linda States

Other Memorial:

Kim Spencer in memory of:
Vivian Tudor

August

Fulton County RTA in memory of:

- Arlene Staffeldt

Madison Co I in memory of:

- Dorothy Lloyd
- John McDaniels

Madison Co II in memory of:

- Richard Marcus

Earleen Stutz
Warren County RTA in memory of:
Patricia Gibb

West Lake Shore RTA in memory of:

- Robert Bajek
- Gloria Hannas
- Ruth Ann Holecek
- Kathleen Holzmeister

Other Memorial:

Bill Bailey in memory of:
Bill McCauley

September

Grundy County RTA in memory of:
Members of Grundy Co Chapter who passed away between 2018 to 2023:

- Marge Anderson
- Marianne Best
- Dr. Charles Birch
- Karen Breitwieser
- Freda Dzuris
- John Dzuris
- Jerry Farber
- Charlotte Farrell
- Dave Harper
- Duane Heren
- Audrey Kaufman
- Bobbie Markus
- Sharon Morris
- Jean Naretto
- Lea Sharp

Illinois Alpha Chapter in memory of:

- Wyman Bess
- Alan Mann

Joliet Area RTA in memory of:

- Louise Raboin

Madison County I in memory of:

- Barbara McCourtney

Madison County II in memory of:

- Robert Remmert

Montgomery County RTA in memory of:

- Martha Long

North Lake Shore RTA in memory of:

- Amelia "Mickey" Gaza
- Irene Jinks

Northwest Suburban RTA in memory of:

- Robert Boesel

Tazewell County RTA in memory of: Lake County RTA in memory of:

- Doris Esslinger

West Lake Shore RTA in memory of:

- Joyce Ellsworth Shoemaker
- Lois Klingeman
- Lois Tyson

Other Memorials:

Samara B. Ferdinand in memory of:

- Karen Gershman

Evelyn R. Haas in memory of:

- Rebecca Rench
- Charles Rusiewski
- Charlene Vaughan

Marilyn C. Myers in memory of:

- Irene Jinks

Marti Swanson in memory of:

- Gaye Boland
- Dave Dier

October

Aurora Area RTA in memory of:

- Ted Crawshaw

Champaign County RTA in memory of:

- Rita Gentry-McCartney

Clinton County RTA in memory of:

- Leon Luber

Douglas County RTA in memory of:

- Rita Goodman

JoDaviess County RTA in memory of:

- Carol Bundy
- Sue Cording
- Carol Grzelak
- Charlene Huso
- Carol Koester
- Ray Kumor
- Andy Leake

Sandy McClain

Jean Meier

Barb Norman

John O'Boyle

Nancy Ray

Bill Wilmarth

Rita Winter

Lake County RTA in memory of:

David Dier

Judy Sample

John Schockmel

Livingston County RTA in memory of:

Gary Cunningham

Michael Hatfield

Dorothy Roche

Richard Trchsel

Madison County II in memory of:

Darrell Cozad

Marshall-Putnam Counties RTA in memory of:

Norma Miller

Richland County RTA in memory of:

Claudia Morgan

John Wiley

Stephenson County RTA in memory of:

Mae Abraham

Al Abromowitz

Claire Abromowitz

Eleanor Chance

Harlan Corrie

Elizabeth Corrigan

Dave Lathrop

Lenora Luecke

Tom Migliore

Larry Nelson

Bill Niles

Eleanor Ray

Judith Roskam

Faye Sanders Hughes

Phyllis Seaman

Joyce Spahn

Marlene Vorthmann

Rick Vrstal

Tazewell County RTA in memory of:

Paul Pearson

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.



IRTA Foundation Donation Form

828 S. Second St., 4th Floor Springfield, IL 62704

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

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