



IRTA ACTION

Spring 2024

Newsletter

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President's Message

Mike Schmidt



All About Change

Spring brings along change: change such as brown grass turning green, buds breaking out on the leafless trees, and the 3% compounded raise to our retirees' pensions (once past the age of 61). And for us, members of the IRTA, the coming of this spring has brought the change of new leadership to our association. That's right, you might have heard that at the state convention last October, our delegates elected three brand-new officers. LaVonne Chaney is our new secretary, Rainy Kaplan is our new vice-president, and I, Mike Schmidt, am the new president. And at the convention, Jessica Hoselton was introduced as the new IRTA executive director. But we leaders are just the beginning of the change that has come to the association.

As a result of constitutional changes, IRTA members, regardless of whatever state one lives in, can now move out of one's comfort zone and become members of the majority of our state committees. So, why don't you try out being a member of the legislative committee, just for a change? Why don't you try out being a member of the member benefits committee, just for a change? Why don't you volunteer as a member of the political action committee, just for a change? Perhaps try out joining the membership committee, just for a change? Just contact the Springfield office to join and volunteer. And in late 2025, every one of us members will be able to vote for the association's elected leaders, any proposed constitutional changes, and possible dues increases, if any, just for a change.

Being proud to be the president of the IRTA, I am looking forward to all of the recent changes as a unique opportunity to improve our association, and the help of all of our members is always appreciated. So, join in the changes, changes that will keep the IRTA strong as the only state organization solely dedicated to protecting the pensions and health insurance benefits of us retired educators.

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.*



A Look Under the Dome

The Spring 2024 legislative session is underway and is scheduled to adjourn on May 24th. IRTA's government affairs team identified bills of interest to IRTA members and looks forward to representing IRTA members on these important matters.

Earlier this spring, Governor Pritzker delivered his joint State of the State and Budget Address. The joint address included discussion of interest to retired teachers. Governor Pritzker announced he is seeking the full certified funding amount for both TRS pensions and for the TRIP and TRAIL programs. This will ensure those programs have the funding necessary to meet their obligations to retired teachers.

The Governor went beyond this upcoming year in his recommendations. He is pursuing contributing over \$5 billion to the pension systems as the pension obligation bonds are retired between 2030 and 2045. He called on the state to create a 100% funding target and outlined that under this proposed plan, the State will reach 90% funding by 2045 and 100% funding by 2048.

In addition, Governor Pritzker proposed a rolling amortization for certain actuarial gains and losses that occur after 2035, which results in less payment volatility as the state nears the closed end of the payment plan. This is based on commonly accepted accounting and pension funding practices.

Governor Pritzker advocated the legislature to continue their work on addressing the benefit shortfalls experienced under Tier II and charged TRS with helping them to resolve these important issues. Overall, the Governor expressed support for and action on issues that IRTA has long advocated for.

It is important to note that Governor Pritzker's Budget Address provides him with the opportunity to lay out his spending priorities. Additional spending priorities of legislators and other budgetary details will be negotiated during the remaining weeks of the spring 2024 legislative session. IRTA's government affairs team will be closely monitoring these negotiations as they progress.

Legislation of Interest

HB 4580 (Rep. Ryan Spain)

Synopsis As Introduced

Amends the State Employees Group Insurance Act of 1971.

Provides that the eligibility of an annuitant or TRS benefit recipient to participate in the program of health benefits established under specified provisions of the Act shall not be suspended for any period during which he or she accepts employment from a school board or other employer in accordance with a provision of the Downstate Teacher Article of the Illinois Pension Code that allows annuitants to accept employment as a teacher without impairing retirement status if certain conditions are met, including a limit on the number of paid days the annuitant may work, or a provision for annuitants returning to teach in a subject shortage area. Provides that an annuitant or TRS benefit recipient shall not be deemed an active teacher based solely on the annuitant's or TRS benefit recipient's employment exceeding the limit on the number of paid days an annuitant may work without impairing retirement status. Amends the Downstate Teacher Article of the Illinois Pension Code to make conforming changes. **IRTA Supports this legislation.**

HB 4662 (Rep. Amy Elik)

Synopsis As Introduced

Amends the Downstate Teacher Article of the Illinois Pension Code. In a provision defining "eligible employment" for the purpose of allowing a teacher to return to teaching in subject shortage areas without impairing his or her retirement status or retirement annuity, changes the ending date of the employment from no later than June 30, 2024 to no later than June 30, 2029. Effective immediately. **IRTA Supports this legislation.**

HB 4972 (Rep. Brandun Schweizer)

Synopsis As Introduced

Amends the State Employees Group Insurance Act of 1971. Provides that, at least 120 days prior to making any changes to the health benefits for TRS benefit recipients, the Department of Central Management Services shall post those changes on its website and shall submit the planned changes to the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability. Provides that at least 120 days prior to making any changes to funding for the Teacher Health Insurance Security Fund, the Department shall post those changes on its website and shall submit the planned changes to the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability. **IRTA Supports this legislation.**

The IRTA government affairs team will keep a watchful eye on these issues and more as the spring legislative session moves forward.



Grant Program & Unit Award Program

“Excellence in Education Grants for Teachers” 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 and looking under the IRTA Foundation section. All proposals must be submitted by **June 1, 2024**. 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.*

2023 IRTA "Unit of Distinction" Program Award

The following units (below) are being recognized as a **2023 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.

- Blackhawk RTA
- Champaign County RTA
- Christian County RTA
- Clinton County RTA
- Douglas County RTA
- Franklin-Williamson Counties RTA
- Grundy County RTA
- Hamilton County RTA
- Joliet Area RTA
- Land of Lincoln RTA
- McHenry County RTA
- Mercer County RTA
- Moultrie County RTA
- Northwest Suburban RTA
- Ogle-Lee Counties RTA
- Peoria Area RTA
- Stephenson County RTA
- Wayne County RTA
- West Lake Shore RTA
- White County RTA
- Whiteside County RTA
- Winnebago County RTA





Member Benefits

IRTA 2024: Save the Dates

Save the Dates! We invite all our valued members to actively join and participate in these upcoming area virtual events, as your presence and engagement contribute significantly to the success and enjoyment of these gatherings. Don't miss out on these exciting opportunities to connect and share with our community!

June

- 13 Virtual Area 1 Conference – 9:30 AM
- 20 Virtual Area 2 Conference - 9:30 AM
- 27 Virtual Area 3 Conference – 9:30 AM

July

- 10 Virtual Area 5 Conference – 9:30 AM
- 17 Virtual Area 4 Conference – 9:30 AM
- 24 Virtual Area 6 Conference – 9:30 AM



BENEFITS STILL FIT?

CONSIDER ADDITIONAL INSURANCE COVERAGE

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

- Dental & Vision Plans
- Long-Term Care & Home Health Care
- Emergency Ground and Air Transportation Coverage
- Cancer, Heart, and Stroke Insurance
- Final Expenses Whole Life & Guaranteed Acceptance Life Insurance
- Tax-Deferred Asset Protection
- Hearing Benefits
- Discounts on Travel, Dining & more

1.877.556.4582

myambabenefits.info/ilrta

Illinois Retired Teachers Association



IRTA Political ACTION Committee – Will You Join Our Fight?

One of the most important member benefits IRTA provides is the maintenance of a strong lobbying presence at the Illinois State Capitol. IRTA's government affairs program provides a well-rounded approach to representing retired teachers on important legislative matters. Our government affairs program includes a talented lobbying team, grassroots mobilization capabilities, and the Illinois Retired Teachers Association Political Action Committee (IRTAPAC).

IRTAPAC is organized to aid in protecting, preserving, and improving benefits for individuals receiving a pension from the Illinois Teachers' Retirement System (TRS). IRTAPAC is a bi-partisan committee that makes financial contributions and endorsements to elected officials who are supportive of legislative issues that are important to IRTA's members. To achieve its mission, IRTAPAC utilizes funds to support political candidates seeking election to the Illinois General Assembly. IRTAPAC is funded by voluntary contributions from IRTA members – just like you. By contributing to IRTAPAC, you are playing a vital role in raising political awareness among IRTA members and enhancing our engagement with elected officials.

The IRTAPAC aids your government affairs team in building and maintaining relationships with elected officials. The IRTAPAC exists to elect, educate, and build rapport with legislators who understand the importance of preserving pensions and healthcare benefits and elect those who make pension and healthcare funding a priority in our state's fiscal policies. The decisions made by lawmakers directly impact the policies and benefits you receive. By actively participating in the political process and supporting initiatives such as IRTAPAC, you can help shape legislation that affects your well-being.

Currently, the projected deficit for the state's FY 2025 operating budget is \$891 million. In response to the state's ongoing dire fiscal outlook, the Illinois General Assembly will continue looking for avenues to reduce expenditures, which may include pursuing legislation aimed at reducing expenditures to our pension funds. This is why it is critical that retired educators remain politically engaged. Without a strong collective voice, your interests may not be adequately represented. IRTA must remain vigilant and prepared to fight against legislation that would jeopardize our pension and healthcare benefits.

An easy way for retired educators to participate in the political process and speak with one collective voice is by contributing to IRTAPAC. Contributing to IRTAPAC is simple and every contribution makes a difference in advancing the protection of your pension and healthcare benefits. Here's how you can join our fight:

- Visit www.irtaonline.org
- Click on PAC and choose the DONATE option.
- If you are a TRS annuitant, you can fill out the online form that allows TRS to donate \$1 each month from your monthly pension check.
- You can also mail a check payable to IRTAPAC and mail to: 828 S. 2nd Street, 4th FL, Springfield, IL 62704.

Your continued support of IRTAPAC ensures that IRTA has the resources to continue fighting for you. By working alongside our members, and speaking with one collective voice, the IRTA will continue to maintain its presence as a powerful advocate on behalf of the Illinois retired teacher community.

A copy of our report filed with the State Board of Elections is (or will be) available on the Board's official website (www.elections.il.gov) or for purchase from the State Board of Elections, Springfield, IL.



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

Decatur Area RTA in memory of:

- George Samuel Batson*
- David O. Coopriders*
- Norma Lee Hazelrigg*
- Phyllis Marie Morris*
- Willa Spoonamore*
- Don Allen Walker*
- Jerilyn Wenberg*
- Kenneth Wolf*

DuPage County RTA in memory of:

- Thomas Buller*

Greene-Jersey Counties RTA in memory of:

- Unit members who have passed away*

Livingston County RTA in memory of:

- Mary Corrigan*

Madison County II RTA in memory of:

- Geri Jones*

McDonough County RTA in memory of:

- William Setser*
- Mary Stipanowich*

Northwest Suburban RTA in memory of:

- Joyce Mackert*
- J. Milton McGinnis*
- Pamela Petersen*
- Rosalie Streng*
- Donald Tantillo*

Peoria Area RTA in memory of:

- Jeanette Behrends*
- Marchia Forber*
- Earlene Hanlon*
- Joan Reider*
- Patricia Seymour*

Dale Spurgeon
Gary Wooley
Tazewell County RTA in memory of:

- Lois Deputy*
- Pat Pearson*

Winnebago County RTA in memory of:

- Elaine Arco*
- Pamela Curry*
- Ruth Eck*
- Carolyn Harker*
- Cynthia Katte*
- Randy Sarlo*
- Gayle Scheuer*
- Harvey Share*
- Larry J. Smith*
- Debra Smrekar*
- Donald Swanson*
- Ruth Ulander*
- George Whinna*
- Joan Yarwood*

Other Memorials:

James Earl Barr in memory of:

- DARTA members who passed away*

Patricia Barr in memory of:

- DARTA members who passed away*

Nancy Cairns in memory of:

- Kim Cannon*

Ruth Cortright in memory of:

- DARTA members who passed away*

Barbara C. Hannon in memory of:

- Jeri Wenberg*

Barbara A. McCoy in memory of:

- Norma Hazelrigg*
- Judy Riedel*

Priscilla Palmer in memory of:

- Norma Hazelrigg*

Nancy M. Peterson in memory of:

- DARTA members who passed away*

Elizabeth L. Query-Smith in memory of:

- DARTA members who passed away*

Verlyn Rosenberger in memory of:

- DARTA members who passed away*

December

Blackhawk RTA in memory of:

- Unit members who passed away*

Clint County RTA in memory of:

- Don Stalcup*

Iroquois-Ford Counties RTA in memory of:

- Raymond Gibson*
- Silas Light*

Joliet Area RTA in memory of:

- Virginia Gigliette*
- Millie Graham*
- Rae Hinton*
- Pryce Keagle*
- Catherine Pisha*

Montgomery County RTA in memory of:

- James Dickson*
- Glen Greenwood*
- Brian Hart*
- Nancy Munsell*

Tazewell County RTA in memory of:

- Carol Guenther*
- Karl Jordan*

Warren County RTA in memory of:

- Kathy Lowe-Arthur*

Whiteside County RTA in memory of:

- Clayton Linscheld*

Other Memorials:

Sara Ellen Anderson in memory of:

- Vera Nyberg*

Richard A. Schurter in memory of:

- Paul Pearson*
- Linda Springer*

January

Champaign County RTA in memory of:

- Carol Williams*

Coles County RTA in memory of:

- Dick Considine*
- Sabra Jo Culp*
- Suellyn Garner*
- Mary Lou Gaskill*
- Alesia Grigg*
- Jean Johnston*
- Norman Kerans*
- Jean Lowe*
- Betty Jean Simon*

Hancock County RTA in memory of:

- Teresa Adair*
- Mary Hohe*

Land of Lincoln RTA in memory of:

- Donald Augspurger*
- Georgianna Boesdorfer*

James Caruso
Dixie Lee Dalbey

- Jackie Franks*
- Robert Hart*

Louise Henderson

- Garey Hodge*
- Alvera Knox*
- Mary Lawson*
- Corinne Mills*
- Margaret Robertson*

Alice Roderick

- Clemmie Webster*

Livingston County RTA in memory of:

- Mae Brewer*
- Cathryn Frisby*
- Gladys Knudson*

McHenry County RTA in memory of:

- Unit members who passed away*

Moultrie County RTA in memory of:

- Jerry Lane*
- John Ruscini*
- Marlene Wirth*

Northwest Suburban RTA in memory of:

- Timothy Dunn*
- Marcia Hammond*

Pope-Hardin Counties RTA in memory of:

- Joyce Ashby*

Warren County RTA in memory of:

- Patricia Cooper*
- Rosemary Pullen*

West Lake Shore RTA in memory of:

- Barbara Appelson*
- Ellen Bell*
- Carl Cutsinger*
- Barbara Kohut*
- Rosemary Lucas*
- Carl Nemecek*
- John Roethke*
- Elizabeth Zika*

Williamson-Franklin Counties RTA in memory of:

- Margaret Childers*
- Lydia Glodo*
- Richard Walter*

Other Memorials:

Mary Gibbs in memory of:

- Joann Ford*

Judith Quiram in memory of:

- Richard Small*

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:

Donation \$

Name

Street

City

State

Zip

E-mail

Latest News!

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