



Oconee, Illinois

Shelby County Retired Teachers Association Newsletter



Kindergarten on Broadway, Shelbyville

Shelby County Retired Teachers Association
April 2022
Volume 9, Issue 1

Jim Sparks, President
Nancy Wilhelm, Vice-President
Ione Elliott, Secretary
Kim Sparks, Treasurer

April Meeting Wednesday, April 6

**At the Lake Shelbyville Visitor Center (where there is plenty of room to spread out)
Social Time at 8:45 followed by 9:00 Program and Business Meeting
Light refreshments provided**

(Water will be available. Feel free to bring your own coffee, tea, etc.)

President Message

Happy 2022 SCRTA members! I hope that this message reaches you feeling happy and healthy. I'm sure that you have been delighted to see that Covid-19 has not taken center stage lately since restrictions have been scaled back as infections and deaths have been falling. According to the state's own statistics there has been a decrease in health insurance claims by the retired teachers. Unfortunately, this has resulted in a decrease in TRIP/TRAIL state funding for 2023. A lawsuit is in the works as indicated by our guardians, the IRTA, to recover this lost funding. Please do what you can to support your local Shelby County Retired Teachers Association and the Illinois Retired Teachers Association as we move forward with this effort. It is very important to us all.

More recently all the world's eyes have been sadly watching the Russian attacks on Ukraine. This tragic assault on democracy and the lives of innocent people along with other reasons have caused our cost of living and traveling to increase immensely. We can only hope that justice will prevail in the Ukraine and that the cost of living will moderate in the near future.

On a much happier note the officers of SCRTA have been working hard to provide our membership with a lively calendar of events for 2022 starting with our first meeting on April 6, 2022. We really enjoy seeing many of you at our meetings as we did last November. Although we will continue to keep you up to date regarding the goings-on at Teacher Retirement System and with our political representatives, we are zeroing in on our local community to bring topics of interest to the retired teachers of Shelby County!

Best Regards,
Jim Sparks



Shelby County Retired Teachers News

Stay informed by visiting state and local websites. The Shelby County website has information on our county meetings as well IRTA, TRS, and current legislation. The IRTA website has recently been revamped, making it much easier to navigate. Be sure to check them out.

2022 Meeting Dates

April 6 September 7
June 1 November 2

<http://www.shelbycountyretiredteachers.com>

<https://www.irtaonline.org>

SCRTA November Meeting



We braved the cold to meet in the Forest Park Chautauqua Auditorium where Mark Shanks, City Commissioner of Public Places, gave us a tour and showed us the improvements that have been made. We retreated to the warmth of the Senior Center where we heard two presentations from speakers with ties to Shelby County.

IRTA Vice-President and TRS board member (and Shelbyville graduate) Larry Pfeiffer spoke about TRS and its return on investments. Olivia Koester, Director of Development and External Relations for the EIU College of Education, spoke about programs and changes in the College of Education. Another topic of interest to retirees is EIU's Academy of Lifelong Learning, a program that provides adults with educational opportunities that encourage connecting with people and organizations in the community.

SCRTA April Speakers: Yolanda Nation and Joe Houk



Yolanda Nation, the U of I Extension Youth Development Program Coordinator, works with children around the county through 4-H as well as outreach activities in schools.

Joe Houk is a member of the Shelbyville Police Department. He (and possibly Chief Chad Brachbill) will be speaking to us about the K-9 program.

Retired Teachers Sue State of Illinois After Administration Decimates Healthcare

-excerpts from the IRTA website

(January 24, 2022 - Springfield, Ill.) - The Illinois Retired Teachers Association (retired teachers, administrators, coaches, counselors, school nurses, et. al) filed a lawsuit Monday seeking to correct an unconstitutional move by the State of Illinois which dramatically reduced contributions made to the Teacher Health Insurance Security Fund. That move worsens the financial footing of the fund, which is already on the verge of default, and places the health benefits of retired teachers in dire jeopardy.

The lawsuit, filed in Springfield, states that more than 100,000 retired educators depend on the committed funding of the health insurance fund and that personal and family decisions have been made in justifiable reliance on the promises made by Illinois law makers and guaranteed by the Illinois Constitution.

The lawsuit details how the Department of Central Management Services reduced the contribution rates to the retirement healthcare fund from active employees and the State from 1.3% to .9% in FY2023. **This decreases the funding to the teachers' health insurance fund by \$45.6M. Since the State of Illinois's contribution is a matching amount, this automatically reduces the State's contribution.**

For FY2023, the employer's percentage is reduced from .9% to .67%, which will represent a deficit of millions more being paid into the teachers' health insurance fund.

Actuarially, these actions are causing the healthcare insurance fund to become rapidly insolvent. According to an independent actuarial review conducted by the Retired Teachers' Association, the negative cash flows to the fund will result in a 'total depletion of the Fund's assets at some point during fiscal year 2023.

The entire article as well as a link to the lawsuit and the actuarial report can be found on the IRTA website.

IRTA Region 13 Director LaVonne Chaney pointed out that **no other state pension insurance rate was reduced... just retired teachers.** Plus **we are the only one of the five state pension systems where we pay a portion of our insurance.** She has been monitoring this situation and can address your questions at the April 6 meeting.

As the voice of Illinois' retired educators, the Illinois Retired Teachers Association defends pension and healthcare protection via its lobbying efforts. You are supporting these efforts through your continued membership. If you want to do more, encourage other retirees to join IRTA. We can't fight these unconstitutional moves individually. As individuals, we could never file a lawsuit. IRTA is the entity that is going to do this for us. We need to stand strong as a group!



Virtual Winemaking Class

Join us on April 26, 2022, for a Winemaking Class with IRTA Vice President Larry Pfeiffer at 2:00 PM (central time)! Please register on the IRTA website.

IRTA Excellence in Education Grants for Teachers

The Illinois Retired Teachers Association Foundation continues to work toward the future by offering grant money to educators. The IRTA Foundation is making \$36,500 available statewide in Illinois. This grant money will allow public school educators (Pre-K through 12) to enrich their instruction with materials not otherwise available to them. Their students are the real winners!

If you know current educators who might be interested in this program, please direct them to the IRTA website for more information. There they can download, complete, and submit the application online. All proposals must be submitted by June 1, 2022. A special committee will select the recipients over the summer. Grant awards will be presented in the fall.

Last year's recipients included two teachers from **Okaw Valley Elementary School**.

Erin Barker used the grant money for speech and language therapy resources for students with delayed language or language disorders. The funds made new resources available to improve their specific language needs.

Hope Robertson wanted her classroom to be more prepared to meet the needs of every individual student. She used the grant money for sensory items that are not only fun, but truly help students with a variety of abilities to learn in ways that are best for them.



IRTA Foundation Board Member Jim Barr, Hope Robertson, and Principal Heidi Vander Burgh

From Springfield

In his FY 2023 state budget proposal, Gov. Pritzker said he wants to add \$500 million to the minimum annual contribution required by law to TRS and the other pension systems to reduce unfunded liabilities. In FY 2023, the state's minimum statutory payment is \$9.6 billion, with \$5.9 billion dedicated to TRS. With the additional funds, the state's total contribution to the pension systems will be \$10.1 billion. It's expected the payment to TRS will total \$6.16 billion.

Pending Bills in Education:

HB 4798 would make college students eligible for a substitute teaching license if they are enrolled in an approved educator preparation program and have earned at least 90 hours credit hours.

SB 3907 would increase the number of consecutive days people with short-term substitute teaching licenses can teach per licensed teacher to 15 days from 5 days. Another bill would lower paraprofessional minimum age requirement to 18 from 19.

HB 4246 would lower renewal fees for retired teachers with lapsed educator licenses to \$50 from \$500.

HP 3254 would require any school literature curriculum to include books written by "diverse authors"; might include, but are not limited to, authors who are African-American, women, Native American, Latinx (all people of Latin descent), and Asian.

SB 4028 would require health education programs to include instruction on finding mental health resources and treatment and would also create a council focusing on youth mental health.

SB 3914 would allow full-time employees of school districts to cite mental health as a reason for claiming paid sick days – up to two without a medical note; three or more with a note