

The LASERS Vision:

To improve the quality of life of
LASERS members and their families
by increasing their financial security

iBEAM

the LASERS Beam Interactive



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DROP interest rate established, COLA proposed

The DROP interest rate for Fiscal Year 2006-2007 is 13.71 percent.

The Public Retirement Systems' Actuarial Committee (PR SAC) determined the rate for eligible DROP accounts at its February 1, 2008, meeting. Self-directed DROP accounts are not eligible.

The rate of interest your account will earn is equal to the actuarial rate of return on LASERS investments for the prior fiscal year minus 0.5 percent. The rate of return is calculated and established by the LASERS actuary after the end of each fiscal year.

Members' DROP accounts will be credited with interest for each month of the fiscal year ended June 30, 2007, based on the balance in the account at the end of each month.

DROP interest rates are not guaranteed. Previous positive returns are neither indicators nor guarantees that DROP accounts will always earn similar rates of interest.

In other news, the LASERS Board of Trustees is requesting authorization from the legislature to grant a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to the pensions of eligible LASERS retirees.

The Board is recommending a 3.0 percent COLA, to become effective July 1, 2008. Representative Joel Robideaux and Senator Butch Gautreaux, the chairs of the House and Senate committees on retirement, will be the lead author and co-author of the COLA resolution for LASERS retirees.

A COLA is possible when the employee Experience Account reaches a sufficient balance to pay for it. The Experience Account is funded with excess returns from LASERS investments. Fifty percent of earnings above the legislatively-mandated 8.25 percent annual return are deposited into the account until such time as it reaches a balance to fund a COLA.

In order to be eligible for the proposed 2008 COLA, a retiree must have reached the age of 55, and have been receiving a retirement benefit for at least one year as of June 30, 2008.

More than 33 thousand LASERS retirees received a COLA in 2007.

2008 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature is underway

LASERS is sponsoring the following pieces of legislation in the 2008 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature:

HB 229 – Robideaux

Provides with respect to the number of years and type of service for retirement eligibility in the Corrections Secondary Component:

- 10 years at age 60 eligibility, as authorized by an Attorney General opinion
- Last 10 years in hazardous duty, as required by Department practice

HB 230 – Robideaux

Pop-up provision which allows the automatic change to the maximum benefit of a retiree based upon the death of his named beneficiary on the first day of month following death. Current law allows pop-up based on the date of notification of death.

HB 233 – Doerge

Changes the accrual rate for Act 75 disability retirees from 1.8 percent to 2.5 percent.

HB 1077 – Robideaux

Provides for transfers of service for members of existing hazardous duty plans and rank-and-file members to the Hazardous Duty Services Plan proposed in HB 1084.

HB 1078 – Robideaux

Updates statutory provisions for computation of maximum benefits to be consistent with the Internal Revenue Code.

HB 1084 – Robideaux

Establishes the Hazardous Duty Services Plan with the following provisions:

- For new hires January 1, 2009, and thereafter
- 3.33 percent accrual rate
- 60 month final average compensation
- 9 percent employee contribution rate
- 80 percent survivor benefit, if killed in line of duty
- 75 percent disability benefit, if injured in line of duty

HCR 2 – Robideaux

Grants approval of a 3 percent cost-of-living increase requested by the LASERS Board of Trustees.

A number of bills have been pre-filed for the session, which affect LASERS and its members. At its March 28, 2008, meeting, the LASERS Board of Trustees took positions on these bills as indicated.

HB 89 – Doerge

Board Position: Oppose based on current language

Makes the Self-Directed Plan (SDP) for DROP participants in LASERS and TRSL optional. A member must sign a waiver acknowledging that if negative earnings occur, their account balance will be affected. The bill has a July 1, 2008, effective date, and persons who are currently in the SDP have 60 days to switch.

HB 108 – Arnold

Board Position: Oppose

Makes permanent the requirements that state retirement systems direct 10 percent of certain types of investments through Louisiana broker-dealers. Quarterly and annual reports by the systems are still required.

HB 259 – St. Germain

Board Position: Support

Provides Fiscal Year 2008-2009 appropriation for additional payments against the Unfunded Accrued Liability of the public retirement systems. (\$70 million for LASERS)

HB 467 – Richard

Board Position: Neutral

Provides for early retirement (10 years at age 50) of LASERS members with actuarial reduction of benefits; requires abolition of positions vacated by early retirement and permits re-establishment and filling of such positions under limited circumstances. Substantially the same as early retirement acts of 2001, 2004 and 2006.

HB 577 – Peterson

Board Position: Oppose

Requires divestment of pension system holdings in a company having facilities or employees in Sudan.

HB 740 – Ligi

Board Position: Oppose

(Constitutional Amendment) Provides for forfeiture of public retirement benefits of persons who are convicted of felony acts associated with their positions.

HB 827 – Cortez

Board Position: Support

Supplemental appropriations for Fiscal Year 2007-2008 for additional accelerated payments on the Unfunded Accrued Liability of the state retirement systems. (\$327 million for LASERS)

HB 942 – Smiley

Board Position: Oppose as written

Allows a legislative assistant to participate in LASERS if paid at least 60 percent of the total compensation available to the legislator for employing assistants. Current law requires the assistant to be full time and have at least one year experience or receive at least 80 percent of available compensation before participation is allowed.

HB 1022 – Ligi

Board Position: Oppose

Requires forfeiture of public retirement benefits by persons convicted of enumerated state or federal public corruption felony acts associated with public service.

HB 1063 – Tucker

Board Position: Oppose as written

Allows a legislative assistant to participate in LASERS if paid at least 60 percent of the maximum authorized salary for a primary legislative assistant. Current law requires the assistant to be full time and have at least one year experience or receive at least 80 percent of available compensation before participation is allowed.

HB 1068 – Kleckley

Board Position: Oppose

Changes retirement eligibility for certain enforcement personnel within the Office of Alcohol & Tobacco Control of the Department of Revenue from 30 years at any age and 25 years at age 55, to 25 years at any age. Also, changes the calculation of the fund used to pay for ATC

benefits. Current law provides that 50 percent of a sum otherwise allocated to the Tobacco Regulation Enforcement Fund be used for benefits. Proposed law would allocate the lesser of: 20 percent of the Tobacco Regulation Enforcement Fund or \$14,000. The Department of Revenue is still responsible for any shortfall of funding but may use the funds in the Fund.

SB 27 – Gautreaux, B.

Board Position: Neutral

Allows garnishment of public retirement or pension system, plan, or fund benefits of an elected official to pay fines or restitution imposed for a felony associated with his office.

SB 45 – Gautreaux, B.

Board Position: Oppose

Provides for benefits for certain adult probation and parole officers. This bill is similar to the final version of HB 845, which was vetoed in 2007.

SB 315 – Nevers

Board Position: Oppose

Provides for arson investigators in the Fire Marshal's Office to receive the same enhanced retirement benefits as peace officers.

SB 317 – Nevers

Board Position: Neutral

Provides for secondary component benefits for certain juvenile detention center employees.

Area code change for lower Plaquemines Parish

The communities in lower Plaquemines Parish will complete the change from area code 985 to area code 504, marking the end of the nine-month transition period begun July 29, 2007. Beginning May 1, 2008, everyone must use the 504 area code when placing calls to the communities of Buras, Point-a-la-Hache, Port Sulphur and Venice. For more information, visit the BellSouth website at www.bellsouth.com/areacode.

LASERS Board elects new officers



Sheryl M. Ranatza



Trudy M. White

The governing body of the Louisiana State Employees' Retirement System (LASERS) elected new officers as the 2008 LASERS Board of Trustees took their seats.

The trustees chose Sheryl M. Ranatza as 2008 Board Chair. Ms. Ranatza is an active-member trustee who was elected in October, 2007, to her second term on the board. She is employed as Deputy Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections, and is a former deputy warden of the Louisiana State Penitentiary.

Trudy M. White, a Baton Rouge City Court judge, was elected 2008 Vice Chair. Judge White is serving her second term on the Board of Trustees.

U.S. Census Bureau seeks workers for 2010 survey

If you are a retiree, or just someone who would like a chance to earn some extra income, the U.S. Census Bureau is looking for thousands of people to help gather information for the 2010 Census.

Some local Census offices will begin opening in late 2008. In Louisiana, Early Local Census Offices are proposed for Baton Rouge and Lafayette.

There are numerous reasons why it is important to help the Census paint a complete picture of your community.

Census data have a direct effect on the distribution of hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funds for public transportation, education, public health, and other state and local needs.

The Census is also used to determine each state's allocation of congressional seats in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The Census Bureau is embracing new technology for the 2010 survey. The Census will use 500 thousand hand-held computers for data collection, which will make the process faster and more efficient than ever.

The Bureau provides training for all Census workers. Work schedules vary, but much of the work can be done during the evening and on weekends.

If you would like more information on opportunities to help conduct the 2010 Census, visit www.census.gov.

LASERS PREP SCHEDULE

April 18	• • •	Hammond
May 15	• • •	Alexandria
May 20	• • •	Baton Rouge
May 21	• • •	New Orleans
May 22	• • •	Thibodaux
June 18	• • •	Hammond
June 19	• • •	New Orleans
June 26	• • •	Baton Rouge

Register for a PREP seminar at
lasersonline.org

Winter 2008 Employee of the Quarter Linda Harris



The multi-talented Linda Harris is an Accountant Manager in the LASERS Fiscal Division. Her leadership, professionalism, and commitment to customer service make her an asset to LASERS staff and members alike.

Linda has played integral roles in improving many of the system's most important processes and projects, including distribution of 1099 federal tax forms to LASERS retirees.

Congratulations, Linda, and thanks for all you do!

Spring 2008 Employee of the Quarter Laney Sanders



Laney Sanders, former Policy and Research Director and now an Investment Officer is an invaluable asset to LASERS. As Policy and Research Director, Laney created the LASERS Disaster Recovery plan, which has been presented throughout the country to interested public systems.

Not only is Laney an asset to LASERS, but to the Baton Rouge community, as well. She provides instruction to children through the Junior Achievement program in Baton Rouge and teaches finance classes at LSU.

THE BOARD MEMO

SHERYL M. RANATZA, 2008 BOARD CHAIR

I am very excited about the great things in store for LASERS and its members in the year ahead.

We have completed work on a comprehensive upgrade of the LASERS pension administration computer system, which contains powerful new tools that you can use to manage your account information with unprecedented speed and efficiency. We call the new system SOLARIS, the State of Louisiana Retirement Information System.

The Retiree Self-Service features of SOLARIS give you the ability to review and change your tax withholding, mailing address, contact information, and to request income verification for your personal business transactions.

In order to take full advan-

tage of these great features, it will be necessary to create a new online login and password for the LASERS website. You will need to know your Social Security number, date of birth and your net monthly benefit amount to create the new login and password.

In addition, SOLARIS will issue enhanced annual statements that will provide detailed account information, along with adjustments made to your retirement records for such actions as transfers of service credit, purchases of service, and repayment of refunded contributions.

2007 Annual Member Account Statements were mailed in early March. Your personal copy of

the statement will be sent directly to your home. For this reason, it is important for LASERS to have your current home mailing address in our files.

If you have moved in the last year, and have not updated your address, please do so as soon as possible. You can download the Change of Address (01-02) form directly from lasersonline.org. The form must be filled out, signed, and mailed to LASERS headquarters. We cannot accept Change of Address forms by e-mail or FAX.

If you need to request a replacement copy of your annual statement, call (225) 922-0600 (Baton Rouge) or (800) 256-3000 (toll-free, statewide).

FROM THE DESK OF CINDY ROUGEOU LASERS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



LASERS Trustee Lorry Trotter with LASERS Executive Director Cindy Rougeou and LASERS Trustee and RSEA President Connie Carlton at an RSEA meeting in Louisiana.

The staff, management, and trustees of LASERS had a wonderful time in March talking with members of the **Retired State Employees' Association (RSEA)**. We look forward every year to getting out of our offices and hitting the road to meet with RSEA members during the association's series of annual spring meetings across the state.

RSEA is an important partner in our effort to make a positive difference in the lives of LASERS members. The

mission of RSEA is, "to advance the quality of life of the men and women who have given generously of their talents to the State of Louisiana and are now retired." The association's two main concerns are protecting the pension checks of retirees and insuring that retirees have access to affordable and effective healthcare.

RSEA plays a critical role in keeping your retirement benefits secure. As a state agency, LASERS is not permitted to lobby the legislature on retirement-related measures. RSEA has no such restrictions. Anne Tillman, RSEA's new executive director, works closely with the LASERS Board of Trustees to guide helpful legislation through the process, and to keep special-interest retirement bills from placing a burden on your LASERS trust fund.

During the March RSEA meetings, we were pleased to have the opportunity to speak with you about many exciting and positive developments over the past year, including the 2007 COLA, the proposed 2008 COLA, and the phenomenal investment returns that made them possible. Over the past year, the LASERS trust fund has grown to more than \$9 billion dollars, with an average return of 14.2 percent, far above the legislatively-mandated minimum return of 8.25 percent.

Your retirement system has never been stronger, and we look forward to having many more good things to report to you next year.

This public document was published at a total cost of \$11,064.84 or about 10 cents a copy. One-hundred thousand copies of this public document were published in this first printing at a cost of \$11,064.84. The total cost of all printings of this document, including reprints is \$11,064.84. This document was published by the Louisiana State Employees' Retirement System to disseminate plan benefit information to its members and to Louisiana policy-makers under authority of La. R.S. 43:31. This material was printed in accordance with the standards of printing for state agencies established pursuant to La. R.S. 43:31. Printing of this material was purchased in accordance with the provisions of Title 43 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes.