



the BEAM Membership Newsletter

Winter, 2015 | Volume 26, Number 1

The LASERS Vision:

Confidence in our service,
assuring financial security
for your future

LASERS Board of Trustees:

Thomas Bickham

2015 Board Chair

225.342.6739

Janice Lansing

2015 Board Vice Chair

225.342.4698

Connie Carlton

225.928.4265

Senator Elbert Guillory

225.342.2040

Beverly Hodges

225.342.8844

Hon. John Kennedy,

State Treasurer

225.342.0010

Judge William Kleinpeter

225.346.4702

Barbara McManus

337.433.8910

Commissioner Kristy Nichols

225.342.7086

Rep. Kevin Pearson

985.646.6487

Lori Pierce

225.342.7012

Kathy Singleton

504.896.2379

Shannon Templet

225.342.8273

2015 LASERS Board of Trustees Election

2015 is an election year for the LASERS Board of Trustees with five seats on the Board up for a vote. LASERS members are asked to cast their ballots for candidates every two years for the thirteen-member Board. Nominations open March 1 and close July 14. Voting occurs in September and October. Election results are certified by the Board and published in November.

Three open seats must be filled by active members. Retirees will cast their votes for two positions. If you are interested in running for the Board, you may obtain a nominating petition from your agency's human resources office, the LASERS website, www.lasersonline.org, or by calling LASERS.

Trustees serve four-year terms unless they are filling an un-expired portion

of a term. No Trustee may serve more than three consecutive terms.

Six of the 13 trustees are elected by the LASERS active membership. Three are chosen by our retirees. Four serve as ex-officio members. Those seats are reserved for the State Treasurer, the chair of the House Committee on Retirement, the chair of the Senate Committee on Retirement, and the Commissioner of Administration.

The LASERS 2015 Board of Trustees Election will be conducted by a third party vendor experienced in handling balloting for public pension plans. LASERS members will receive election ballot packets by mail, and will be able to vote by mail, telephone, or the Internet. We look forward to your participation in this important and exciting process.

Schedule of Election Events

March 1, 2015	Nominations Open.
July 14, 2015	All nominating petitions, platforms, and photos due to LASERS by 4:30 p.m. (Central Time).
July 20, 2015	Drawing to determine candidate positions on ballot.
September 25, 2015	Final day information on candidates/ballots mailed to members.
October 23, 2015	Votes must be received by 4:30 p.m. (Central Time).
October 28, 2015	Votes tallied and verified by this date.
November 20, 2015	Board certifies and authorizes publication of ballot count.
January 2016	Newly elected Trustees receive orientation and are sworn in.

Election continued on page 3



Working Today for Your Tomorrow

Statewide RSEA Tour Kicks Off March 3

RSEA will begin their annual statewide chapter tour in March. LASERS officials will speak at each of the nine meetings. Active and retired members are encouraged to attend their respective chapter meetings for up-to-date information on current issues affecting state employees and retirees. Please review the schedule below to find out where you can attend a chapter meeting.

Alexandria

Tuesday, March 3 at 9:30 a.m.
Kees Park Community Center, Pineville

Monroe

Wednesday, March 4 at 9:00 a.m.
West Monroe Convention Center

Shreveport

Thursday, March 5 at 10:00 a.m.
NWLA Technical College

Lake Charles

Tuesday, March 10 at 9:30 a.m.
Sowela Technical Community College

Acadiana

Wednesday, March 11 at 9:30 a.m.
Scott Events Center

North Shore

Tuesday, March 17 at 9:30 a.m.
Greater Covington Center, Bogue Falaya Hall

Coastal

Wednesday, March 18 at 9:30 a.m.
Quality Hotel, Houma

New Orleans

Thursday, March 19 at 10:00 a.m.
Landmark Hotel, 2601 Severn Ave, Metairie

Baton Rouge

Wednesday, April 1 at 9:30 a.m.
Holiday Inn South

March Benefits Payment Reminders



Please note that March benefit payments will have an effective date of March 1 which falls on a Sunday.

If the first of the month falls on a holiday or weekend, your financial institution determines if the funds will be available on the first or on the following business day after the first.



PAPERLESS Annual Statements

Active members now have the option to receive paperless Annual Statements through Self-Service. Members who choose to receive their Annual Statement via Self-Service only, will no longer be mailed a paper copy. When statements are ready in March, an email will be sent notifying members that statements are available online.



To sign-up for Paperless Annual Statements:

1. Go to www.lasersonline.org.
2. Click *Access Member Self-Service*, under *Quick Links*.
3. Log on to your Self-Service account.
4. Select *Paperless Settings* from the menu options.
5. Choose "online only."
6. Click Save.



DROP Interest Rate Approved

The rate of interest paid on eligible (non Self-Directed Plan) DROP accounts for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2014, was 12.95 percent. Interest is paid based on the LASERS investment earnings, which are then smoothed as part of the System's annual valuation. Although the market value of earnings was higher for FY 2013-2014 than the previous year, not all of the gains were recognized. The Public Retirement Systems' Actuarial Committee (PR SAC) approved the interest rate at its November 19, 2014 meeting, much earlier than usual. The interest was posted to accounts in January.

Participants in the Self-Directed DROP plan do not receive this interest, but participate in earnings or losses based upon the choices they have made in their investment allocations through Empower Retirement (*formerly Great West Financial*). Eligible LASERS members received DROP annual statements in January.

Qualifications for Candidates Seeking a Seat on the Board:

Responsibilities of the Trustee

Election continued from page 1

- A trustee should have knowledge of, background in, or the ability to understand and utilize investment principles and terminology for a retirement system whose current assets exceed \$11 billion.
- A trustee should become familiar with all applicable retirement laws in order to adequately rule on appeals submitted by members of the retirement system.
- Trustees are expected to attend all regularly scheduled meetings of the Board; assigned committee meetings; and workshops.
- Trustees must act in the sole and exclusive interest of LASERS members and retirees. Breach of fiduciary duty can result in personal liability.
- Trustees must file annual personal financial disclosure reports with the Board of Ethics detailing, among other requirements, income received from the state, political subdivisions, and gaming interests.

Active Candidate 2015 LASERS Board of Trustees Election

- An active member candidate must have at least 10 years of credited service with LASERS (excluding any military service credit) by the closing date for nominations, July 14, 2015.
- Each active candidate must submit a nominating petition bearing the names and signatures of at least 25 active LASERS members. Each signature must be accompanied by the last four digits of the signatory's Social Security number.
- Each petition should be accompanied by the candidate's photo, qualifications, and platform.

Retired Candidate 2015 LASERS Board of Trustees Election

- A retired member candidate for a position as a trustee must be retired by the closing date for nominations, July 14, 2015. The term "retired member" shall not include any person still employed by the state, including retired status under the Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP). A LASERS retiree who is re-employed pursuant to La. R.S. 11:416 (1) and (3) is still considered a "retired member."
- Each retired candidate must submit a nominating petition bearing the names and signatures of at least 25 retired members of LASERS. Each signature must be accompanied by the last four digits of the signatory's Social Security number.
- Each petition should be accompanied by the candidate's photo, qualifications, and platform.

New Chair & Vice Chair Elected to Board

The LASERS Board of Trustees unanimously elected Thomas Bickham and Janice Lansing as new Chair and Vice Chair, respectively, at its January meeting.

Thomas Bickham, Undersecretary of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, will lead the LASERS Board as Chair. Bickham has served as an active member Trustee since 2012. He most recently chaired the Management Committee of the LASERS Board.

Janice Lansing, Chief Financial Officer of the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, will serve as the new Vice Chair. Lansing has served as an active member Trustee since 2010. She most recently chaired the Investment Committee of the LASERS Board.



L TO R: Thomas Bickham, 2015 Board Chair; Janice Lansing, 2015 Board Vice Chair

The Board MEMO

Shannon Templet, 2014 Board Chair



January brought about the end of my term as Board Chair. It has been rewarding to serve the LASERS members and to work with this dedicated staff over the past year. I am confident your new Board Chair, Thomas

Bickham, will continue to lead the System in meeting its mission of excellence.

The 2015 LASERS Board of Trustees Workshop, held January 21-22, gave Trustees the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of System investments, portfolio structure, and performance. Much of the information was presented by LASERS professional investment staff. Trustees also earned continuing education credit at the workshop, which is required by law. You may trust that the Board continually

strives to improve its understanding of this very complex retirement system.

The annual RSEA Tour for active and retired members kicks off March 3 in Pineville. As RSEA travels around Louisiana, please join us in your community to receive the latest retirement information. You will have the chance to meet Lorry Trotter, the new Executive Director of RSEA, and hear LASERS staff and other experts present at each meeting.

If you have not taken the opportunity to check out LASERS Video Library on the website, I encourage you to do so. You will find some great information on topics such as the Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP), Initial Benefit Option (IBO), and the federal offsets to Social Security. LASERS has more educational videos planned in 2015, so stay tuned.



Great-West Financial Has New Name, EMPOWER™ Retirement

Great-West Financial's retirement services division has a new name, EMPOWER™ Retirement, and a new logo. The recent announcement was made when Great-West Financial®, Putnam Investments, and Great-West Financial Retirement Plan Services (formerly J.P. Morgan Retirement Plan Services) combined their retirement businesses.

The Empower name replaces Great-West Financial this month. This is the firm that acts as the third party administrator for certain LASERS accounts.

LASERS members who have a DROP, IBO, or ORP account currently administered by Great-West will notice the name change. Also, the Louisiana Public Employees Deferred Compensation Plan is impacted by this name change.

According to Great-West, the change only affects the name and does not impact how accounts are serviced. Members will continue to use the same website, www.louisianadcp.com, and all phone numbers remain unchanged: 800.937.7604 and 225.926.8082 for the Baton Rouge office, and 800.701.8255 for KeyTalk.



OGB Has Left the Building, Literally

The Office of Group Benefits has relocated to the Claiborne Building in downtown Baton Rouge.

Visit the OGB website for a map to the new location. Members who wish to speak with an OGB representative in person should check in at the security desk.

New Physical Address:

1201 N. 3rd Street
Suite G-159
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

OGB Mailing Address: *(Remains the same)*

Office of Group Benefits
P.O. Box 66678
Baton Rouge, LA 70896

OGB Customer Service:

225.925.6625 or
toll-free at 1.800.272.8451

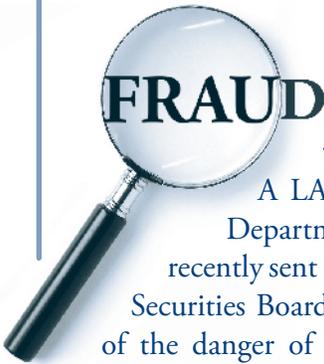


LASERS Recognized Nationally for Eleventh Year

LASERS has received the 2014 Public Pension Standards Award for plan funding and administration excellence for the eleventh consecutive year. Awarded by the Public Pension Coordinating Council (PPCC), public employee retirement system recipients are recognized for high professional standards in the areas of plan design and administration, benefits, actuarial valuations, financial reporting, investments, and membership communications.

The PPCC is an alliance of the National Association of State Retirement Administrators, the National Conference on Public Employee Retirement Systems, and the National Council on Teacher Retirement.

LASERS Executive Director Cindy Rougeou commented, “Our System has once again been recognized for outstanding management on a national level. Eleven years of excellence is an accomplishment we proudly share with our members and our state. The 2014 Public Pension Standards Award is another example of how LASERS Benefits Louisiana.”



Investment Fraud... Are you at Risk?

A LASERS member with the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality recently sent us a press release from the Texas State Securities Board that warned public-sector workers of the danger of risky trade-offs in retirement plan withdrawals and roll overs. Our member commented that the information could benefit Louisiana state employees.

The press release went on to say that some untrustworthy investment salespeople may try to convince public employees “to roll over some or all of their pension money into other investments,” allowing the salespeople to earn windfalls in commissions and fees.

If you have been approached by such a person and received an investments sales pitch, err on the side of caution. The LASERS website has a link on the Retirees page, *Reduce Investment Fraud*, which will take you to the Securities Division of the Office of Financial Institutions (OFI). OFI offers free services to Louisiana residents which include:

- Confidential reports on your investment professional’s background, certifications, criminal history, pending arbitration, and employment history;
- Answering questions about a suspicious investment;
- A confidential complaint process for victims of securities fraud.

If you would like more information, visit the OFI website at www.ofi.la.gov or call 225.925.4512 in Baton Rouge or 1.877.516.3653 toll-free.

Have you attended a PREP Seminar?

Whether you are a new LASERS member or approaching retirement, a Pre-Retirement Education Program (PREP) Seminar can provide you with essential information and tools to help you plan for your retirement. Register for a PREP seminar online, www.lasersonline.org, under *Seminars*. Additional PREP dates will be added to the website as they are confirmed.

March – April 2015 PREP Schedule

Seminars are held from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

DATES	LOCATION
March 31 April 23	Baton Rouge Louisiana State Police Training Academy Building A, Classroom 1 7901 Independence Boulevard
April 14	Hammond Southeastern Louisiana University University Center Entrance 1, Room 139 800 W. University Avenue
April 15	New Orleans UNO, University Center Atchafalaya Room, Room 208 2000 Lakeshore Drive
April 21	Lake Charles McNeese State University Holbrook Student Union La Jeunesse Room 375 Beauregard Drive

MEET THE Faces OF LASERS

Colleen Hill, R.N., B.S.N.

Medicare Program Coordinator, Louisiana War Veterans Home
Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs

The Louisiana War Veterans Home in Jackson, Louisiana is what most would refer to as a nursing home, but the word that sets it apart is “veterans.” Veterans who have served in the United States military are residents, but there are a few remarkable staff members who are also veterans. Registered nurse Colleen Hill, the War Veterans Home Medicare Program Coordinator, is a four-year peace-time Navy veteran.

Hill joined the nursing staff in 2009 and said with a smile, “I was glad to give back and work with the vets.” She explained that she uses Medicare benefits and key Veterans Affairs (VA) programs to help them get everything they need. Some of the veterans have full benefits, while others may not have served as long in the military. Hill said, “My goal is to promote them to their highest level of well-being, to make sure they are as good as they can get, and to enjoy their lives.”

Hill, a native Cherokee, was born in Oklahoma and was the youngest of three children. She grew up farming and fishing. At the age of five, she was christened with the nickname “Catfish,” after one particular fishing trip. In 1968, the family moved to Louisiana.

Growing up, Hill observed her parents’ sacrifices to help her older brother and sister with their education. So when she graduated from East Ascension High School, she decided to enlist in the Navy as a corpsman. Her Dad was a Marine, and she felt the Navy would give her an opportunity to gain experience. Since the 8th or 9th grade, she had been interested in medicine and was fortunate enough to become a medic in the enlistment process. During her four-year stint, Hill was primarily stationed in Pensacola, where she distinguished herself as Corpsman of the Quarter, and then Corpsman of the Year. During this time, she witnessed outdated, open hospital wards transition to a newly-built state of the art hospital.

In 1982, Hill graduated from Southeastern Nursing School. Her first job was at Baton Rouge General, where she worked for 17 years in different capacities. She also worked in home health.

Hill’s primary responsibility at the War Veterans Home is to follow and ensure that the Medicare guidelines are met. Hill believes she is making a difference in the lives of the veterans under her care. Long-Term Care Hospital Administrator Jon Salter said, “Colleen Hill has been an extraordinary addition to our medical team. As a Navy Veteran herself, she has a special place in her heart for the Veterans we serve. She works tirelessly and with diligence to ensure that our highest acuity residents that are returning from the hospital have a



L TO R: Pamela Sharp, LPN; Chad Porter, LPN; Colleen Hill, RN, BSN

word of encouragement and are given outstanding medical care. She has a true passion for those in her care, and we are privileged to have someone of her caliber to work on our team of caregivers.”

Hill has been a LASERS member over nine years. To her, being a civil servant means, “providing a service, giving yourself to God and country, serving and protecting, and making Louisiana the best it can be in a positive manner.” She describes herself as “a dedicated state employee, focused on addressing problems, and making the system work more efficiently.”

Hill is satisfied with her career choice. She said, “I love nursing and practice continuing education. I need to know what’s new, such as the best medicines, so I can take care of my veterans.” Her advice to new nurses coming into the field is, “try not to compare yourself with others; look at yourself as an individual. No one is perfect.” She also commented, “If you’re not happy with what you’re doing, get out.”

Hill stated that she plans to work until she’s 65 – 70, as long as she remains healthy. She enjoys activities such as sewing and crafts. She makes holiday-themed wreaths and has decorated one of the veterans’ visiting areas with her creations. Hill is passionate about jewelry making, incorporating positive karma from her Indian heritage such as the four elements of earth, fire, wind, and water into each piece. She is a member of Grace Episcopal Church in St. Francisville. She also loves her horses, five dogs, and cat. Her companion dog visits the veterans for pet therapy. Hill has two children. Gus is 26 years old and constructs new homes as well as remodeling. Jean Marie is a 20-year old college student, following in her footsteps in nursing.

Hill said, “Be proud of who you are. I’m proud to be an Okie, an American-Indian, vet, nurse, mother, daughter, and sister. People get in too big of a hurry. It’s a small world and everything comes back around.”

LASERS salutes Colleen Hill.

BUILD YOUR NEST EGG



New Deferred Compensation Option:

Is It Right for *You*?

In January, a new option to make ROTH contributions to your Deferred Compensation account became available. If you so choose, ROTH contributions can begin this month, but how do you know if it is right for you?

The Roth 457 Option essentially “locks in” today’s tax rates on all contributions.

For some people—especially those who expect to be in a higher tax bracket when they retire—the Roth 457 option may make the most sense. If you’re one of those people, the Roth option allows you to pay taxes on your contributions when they are contributed (presumably at a lower tax rate than you would expect to pay at retirement).

If you expect to be in a lower tax bracket when you retire, you might want to consider contributing to your 457 on a before-tax basis. You won’t pay taxes on your contributions or any earnings on your contributions until you take a distribution, which is usually at retirement (when many people expect their retirement earning power and tax burden to be lower than they are today).

Regardless of which type of contributions you choose, the important thing is to contribute as much as you can today for your retirement tomorrow. If after completing your research and consulting the experts, you decide that Roth 457 contributions are right for you, make the appropriate changes to your account by completing a Salary Deferral Agreement form. Soon you will be able to make changes to this designation by visiting the website at www.LouisianaDCP.com or calling KeyTalk® at 800.701.8255.

Submitted by Empower



Employee of the 4th Quarter, 2014

Charles Hooker

In his relatively short time at LASERS, Charles has proven himself invaluable to Member Services and Information Technology (IT) divisions by helping to correct long-standing issues in the State of Louisiana Retirement Information System (SOLARIS). Notably, Charles took the lead in repairing the significant deficiencies and workarounds in the Repay Refund module and other key modules.

Charles shows a willingness to learn processes and a strong desire to get things right the first time. He quickly implements last minute changes and responds to any problems that arise during testing periods.

“Charles shows a willingness to learn processes and a strong desire to get things right the first time.”

Recently, when a particular SOLARIS module required a significant process change after his code fixes were already implemented, Charles simply buckled down and executed the changes. These corrections were vital to LASERS ability to quickly serve our members and their beneficiaries with timely invoices and benefit payments.

Charles’ willingness to work as part of a team and always take on new challenges with a smile makes him an asset not only to IT and Member Services, but LASERS as a whole. It is for these reasons, and for many others, that LASERS recognizes Charles Hooker as our EOQ.

Sign-up & Connect!



Stay Connected with LASERS

Social media and Member Connection emails are just a couple of the ways LASERS will continue to keep you informed of the most up-to-date action on bills impacting our System during the 2015 Legislative Session.

Follow LASERS on Facebook and Twitter for quick, real-time updates. On our blog, The eBeam, you will find more in-depth news articles and important messages relevant to LASERS and our members.

The Member Connection email service is your trusted source for personal and direct communication. If you do not already receive our emails, please sign-up by going to www.lasersonline.org/email_services.

Links to our respective social media sites are on the home page of our website, www.lasersonline.org.



From the Desk of
Cindy Rougeou

LASERS Executive Director

As talk of pension sustainability continues both nationally and in Louisiana, I think it is important to recognize the work of the Louisiana Legislature over the past 10 years in adopting significant pension reforms that are expected to save LASERS nearly \$3 billion; thereby reducing taxpayer costs while significantly improving LASERS sustainability. It is surprising that the passage and immense impact of these reforms often seems to be the best kept secret in our state. In fact, those reforms enabled the LASERS Board of Trustees to approve and recommend additional reforms to our cost method and actuarially assumed rate of return that will provide greater budget stability going forward.

LASERS investment performance has, for over a decade, ranked in the top tier nationally among public retirement systems. While the market continues to show volatility this year, it is reassuring to know that, as of the end of our last fiscal year, LASERS 30-year average actuarial return was 8.34 percent, while our assumed rate of return has been lowered from 8.25 percent to 7.75 percent. At fiscal year-end, our one-year market return was 18.8 percent, our three-year market return was 10.2 percent, and our five-year market return exceeded 14 percent. Over 69 percent of LASERS funding in FY 2014 came from investment earnings.

This is also an election year for our System. If you are interested in serving as a Trustee on the LASERS Board, both active and retiree positions will be on the ballot. Trustees work with the staff to ensure *LASERS Benefits Louisiana*. Information on this important election is on pages one and three in this issue of *The Beam* and will soon be on our website.

Shannon Templet and Kathy Singleton deserve recognition for their exemplary leadership over the past year as Board Chair and Vice Chair. They have both shown great dedication to LASERS members and take their responsibility very seriously.

Shannon is a recent recipient of the Dunbar Award, bestowed by the Louisiana Civil Service League to workers in classified systems "who have distinguished themselves by service over and above the call of duty." Congratulations to Shannon on this achievement.

I also want to recognize our outstanding staff. 2014 was a productive year at LASERS. Our Member Services staff counseled 6,401 members in-house and assisted 68,843 callers. These are impressive numbers and demonstrate LASERS commitment to exceptional customer service for our members.

The Louisiana State Employees' Retirement System (LASERS) distributed this document digitally. No publication costs were incurred.

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