Membership Handbook

LASERS

Louisiana State Employees' Retirement System

Louisiana State Employees' Retirement System

as of December 2016

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Welcome to LASERS

The LASERS Mission: To provide a sound retirement plan for our members through prudent management and exceptional service.

The Louisiana State Employees' Retirement System (LASERS) was established by an Act of the Louisiana Legislature in 1946. LASERS administers a qualified pension and retirement plan under section 401(a) of the Internal Revenue Code. LASERS is a trust fund created to provide retirement and other benefits for state officers, employees, and their beneficiaries.

The LASERS Board of Trustees governs your retirement system. The Board is composed of 13 members, nine of whom are elected by the membership. Six of the elected Trustees are chosen by active members of LASERS. Three of the elected Trustees are chosen by retirees. Four ex officio seats are occupied by the Louisiana State Treasurer, the Chair of the Louisiana Senate Committee on Retirement, a member of the Louisiana House of Representatives Committee on Retirement appointed by the Speaker of the House, and the Commissioner of Administration. Monthly Board meetings are open to the public, and take place in the fourth floor board room of the Louisiana Retirement Systems Building, located at 8401 United Plaza Boulevard, in Baton Rouge.

The LASERS trust fund is the source of all benefits paid to LASERS members and their beneficiaries. Funding comes from three sources:

- Employee contributions
- Employer contributions
- Earnings from investments

LASERS manages one-third of its investments portfolio internally, saving millions of dollars per year in professional management fees.

This *Membership Handbook* is intended to summarize provisions of law. It does not purport to fully state the law. If any conflict arises between this handbook and the law, the law controls.

General Membership

Membership (La. R.S. 11:411 and 11:413)

Membership in LASERS is mandatory for all state employees whose employing agencies are LASERS participants, except those exempted by state law.

Examples of excluded employees include:

- Employees who receive a per diem allowance instead of earned compensation
- Students, interns, and resident physicians employed for temporary, part time, or periodic work
- Independent contractors
- Certain pool positions
- Certain temporary seasonal employees at the Department of Revenue

The following employees are excluded if they have less than ten years of service credit:

- Job appointments (employment for a fixed period not to exceed two years)
- Intermittent employees (employment for an indefinite schedule, on an as needed basis)
- Part-time employees (employees who work 20 hours per week or less)
- Seasonal employees (employees who work less than five months in a year)
- Temporary employees (employees performing services under a contractual arrangement for less than two years)

Membership in LASERS is mandatory for all state employees whose employing agencies are LASERS participants, except those exempted by state law.

Employees with non-refunded service credit in one of the four state retirement systems, Louisiana State Employees' Retirement System, Teachers' Retirement System of Louisiana, Louisiana School Employees' Retirement System, or Louisiana State Police Retirement System, prior to July 1, 2015, must be enrolled under the provisions of their prior retirement plan.

If their non-refunded service credit was earned in a state system other than LASERS, they must submit *Form 01-10: Certification of Membership in a State System Prior to July 1, 2015*, *to* make this election. Otherwise, they will be enrolled pursuant to the provisions of Act 226 of the 2014 Legislative Session.

Contribution Rates (La. R.S. 11:62)

Any Regular Member of LASERS whose first employment began ***on or before June 30, 2006,*** pays a contribution rate of 7.5 percent. This means that 7.5 percent of your salary is deducted from each of your paychecks, and placed in a trust account that is used to pay benefits.

Any Regular Member of LASERS whose first employment began ***on or after July 1, 2006,*** pays a contribution rate of 8 percent.

If you were employed on or before June 30, 2006, but terminated state service and refunded all of your contributions, you will be considered a newly hired employee if you return to state service. If employed as a Regular Member, you will pay a contribution rate of 8 percent.

The employer contribution rate for contributing agencies is set by the Public Retirement Systems' Actuarial Committee (PRSAC) and changes annually. Employer contributions are not credited to individual member accounts but are deposited in the LASERS trust account to help fund the defined benefits payable to all members and their beneficiaries.

Please note that the contribution rates listed above are for Regular Members only. The contribution rates for specialty classes are discussed in separate chapters of this handbook. All contribution rates are subject to change.

Optional Retirement Plan (ORP) (La. R.S. 11:502, et seq.)

The Optional Retirement Plan (ORP) is a defined contribution plan established in July 2000 to provide retirement and death benefits to eligible participants, while affording portability of these benefits. Eligible members with an effective hire date between July 1, 2004, and December 7, 2007, were required to make an election to enroll in the ORP by filing an application with LASERS within 60 days of their appointment. No person appointed to an otherwise eligible position after December 7, 2007, is eligible to enroll in ORP. If an ORP member subsequently becomes employed by a LASERS reporting agency in a non-ORP position, they must continue participation in ORP.

The following employees were eligible to make an irrevocable election to participate in ORP:

- Any unclassified state employee who was appointed by a statewide elected official whose appointment was subject to confirmation by the Louisiana Senate
- Any unclassified state employee who was a member of the immediate staff of such employee described above
- The CEO of the Office of State Group Benefits Program
- Members of the Executive Career Service as defined by the Civil Service Commission

If you are a member in the ORP, you may regain membership in the defined benefit plan by transferring any funds in the ORP to the defined benefit plan. You will be responsible for paying any deficiency after the transfer of funds. To determine the cost of joining the defined benefit plan, you should submit *Form 15-01A: Application for Transfer to LASERS Defined Benefit Plan from the Optional Retirement Plan* and pay a non refundable actuarial calculation fee of $150.00 made payable to LASERS.

LASERS Website

The website contains information about the LASERS Board of Trustees, our investment allocations and experience, LASERS staff, recent legislation, forms, and much more.

Please visit the LASERS website, www.lasersonline.org, for valuable information about your retirement system. The website contains information about the LASERS Board of Trustees, our investment allocations and experience, LASERS staff, recent legislation, forms, and much more. Also, you may subscribe to the Daily Beam weblog to receive updates on current events.

In addition to the general information on the website, active members and retirees can use the site to securely access their LASERS records as described below:

Active Member Self-Service

Once at the LASERS website, select Actives, and then Active Member Self-Service. On your first visit you will be asked to enter your Social Security number, date of birth, and zip code. You will then create a User ID, password, and security question. For subsequent visits you will sign in with your User ID and password.

Self-Service allows you to access the following information:

- Personal information
- Phone/Email updates
- Account summary
- Account history
- Recent requests
- Create benefit estimate
- Create repay refund estimate
- Annual statements
- Tax documents
- Request an appointment

The Benefit Estimates and first eligible date for retirement generated are not guaranteed. They are estimated based on information currently available to LASERS. The actual pension benefit that you are entitled to as a member of LASERS is determined by applicable laws as well as finalized service credit, earnings, and leave balances at the time you retire.

Retired Member Self-Service

Once at the LASERS website, select Retirees, and then Retired Member Self-Service. On your first visit you will be asked to enter your Social Security number, date of birth, and the net amount of your last check. You will then create a User ID, password, and security question. For subsequent visits you will sign in with your User ID and password.

Self-Service allows you to access the following information:

- Personal information
- Address updates
- Phone/Email updates
- Account summary
- Payment history
- Account history
- View tax documents
- Tax withholding updates
- Income verification
- DROP/IBO activity report

Service Credit

(La. R.S. 11:421)

Once you are enrolled as a member of LASERS, you will begin paying employee contributions and accruing service credit. You will be sent an annual member statement at the beginning of each calendar year which details the employee contributions you paid during the previous year and the total contributions you paid since your enrollment. This statement also contains the service credit that you earned during the previous year along with your total service credit.

Eligibility service credit is the service that will be used to determine your entitlement for benefits provided by LASERS. Computation service credit is the service that will be used to compute the amount of your LASERS benefit. Depending on your situation, your eligibility service credit may be different from your computation service credit.

The annual member statements are unaudited. You should review your annual member statement each year and notify LASERS in writing if any discrepancies are found.

Full-Time Employees

If you are a full-time employee, your service credit is calculated by taking your actual earnings for a year and dividing by your yearly base salary which is your annual expected salary. This figure is then rounded up to the nearest tenth. A member cannot receive more than one year of service credit for any calendar year.

Sue worked full time in 2010. She earned $37,273.06. Her annual expected salary was $37,355.00. Her service credit for 2008 would be calculated in the following manner:

$37,273.06	/	$37,355.00	=	.998 (rounded up to one year)
Actual earnings		*full-time yearly base salary*		

Part-Time Employees

If you are a part-time employee, your service credit is calculated by taking your actual earnings for a year and dividing by the yearly base that you would have received as a full-time employee. You will not earn an entire year of computation credit, but you may earn a year of eligibility credit if you worked part time for at least 11 months during that calendar year.

Amy worked part time in 2010 and was paid $22.00 per hour. She earned $33,587.84. Her annual expected salary if she had worked full time was $45,760.00. Her computation service credit for 2008 would be calculated in the following manner:

$33,587.84	/	$45,760.00	=	.734 (rounded up to .80)
Actual earnings		*full-time yearly base salary*		

Since Amy worked the full year in 2010 as a part-time employee she will get one year of eligibility credit, but only .80 of a year computation credit.

Service credit and retirement eligibility for part-time members are determined on a case-by-case basis.

First Eligible Dates

If you are a full-time member, you can estimate your service credit for a partial year and your first eligible date for retirement by using the chart below. If you work from January 1 through the dates listed below, you will be given the corresponding service credit. Your termination date is the last day of your employment. These estimated first eligible dates are subject to change based on when contributions are made from your agency.

Termination Date	Retirement/DROP Start Date	Service Credit
January 1*	January 2	.10
February 14	February 15	.20
March 31	April 1	.30
April 30	May 1	.40
May 31	June 1	.50
July 14	July 15	.60
August 14	August 15	.70
September 29	September 30	.80
October 29	October 30	.90
November 30	December 1	1 year

* Assuming contributions are reported for this day

Jane is 53 years old and had 29.80 years of service credit at the end of 2010. She will be first eligible to retire with 30 years of service, so she needs .20 of a year of service credit. Using the chart above, we find that her tentative first eligible date for retirement is February 15, 2011.

Refund of Contributions

(La. R.S. 11:537)

Persons who leave state service may, under certain circumstances, be eligible for a refund of their accumulated contributions in the retirement system. Accumulated contributions include all employee contributions paid by a member, excluding interest paid on the repayment of a refund. All funds paid to purchase Air Time are considered "accumulated contributions" and will be included in the refund. If you have terminated from state service and would like to apply for a refund, please complete *Form 02-01: Refund of Accumulated Contributions*, found on the LASERS website.

Once the completed form is received, receipt will be confirmed, and you will be notified by mail if any additional information is required. LASERS will issue your refund only after all required documents have been received, and all of your contributions have been processed. Most refunds are paid within 60 days. It is not necessary to contact LASERS regarding the status of your refund.

Refunds of contributions automatically cancel all service credit in LASERS. In other words, a refund cancels your membership in the retirement system, and renders you ineligible for benefits. The refund will only be of your contributions, not your employer's contributions, and will not include interest.

If you have received a refund of contributions and return to work in a LASERS-eligible position, your eligibility for retirement is based on the date you returned to State service. See Chapter 8, Retirement Eligibility and Final Average Compensation for furthur information.

The amount of contributions sheltered from federal income tax (amounts paid after January 1, 1984) are subject to federal taxes when refunded, unless the sheltered refund amount is rolled over into another qualified retirement plan (such as an IRA). If not rolled over, these funds are subject to a mandatory 20 percent federal withholding tax. You may also be subject to a 10 percent federal early withdrawal penalty. LASERS does not withhold Louisiana taxes on your refund. An IRS tax notice is attached to each refund application. You should read this tax notice carefully before applying for a refund. The tax notice is a summary and should not be taken as tax advice. **LASERS encourages you to contact a tax consultant to determine if the provisions are applicable to your specific situation.**

To accept a rollover you must have established an account at a financial institution prior to the refund distribution. Your financial institution must complete Section 5 of *Form 02-01: Refund of Accumulated Contributions*. Your refund of employee contributions will be direct deposited into the bank account indicated in Section 3 of *Form 02-01: Refund of Accumulated Contributions*.

Your IRS Form 1099-R will be mailed in January of the following year to your address on file with LASERS.

Application Process

To apply for a refund, you must submit the following to LASERS:

- *Form 02-01: Refund of Accumulated Contributions*
- A copy of your Social Security card

Repayment of Refunds (La. R.S. 11:537(D))

In order to repay a refund, you must have 18 months of non-refunded service credit on record with LASERS. To restore your prior service credit, you must repay the refunded amount plus the actuarially assumed rate of interest compounded annually from the date of the refund until payment is made. Payment must be made in a lump sum for any service restored; however, you are not required to restore all of your refunded service at once. You may elect to restore only a portion of the total refunded service by repaying the service, as earned, by calendar year.

Susan worked from October 30, 1995, to May 1, 1998, left state service, and received a refund of her contributions on July 5, 1998. Susan returned to state service for more than 18 months, and is eligible to repay the refund. Interest is calculated through May 15, 2013, when she applied for the purchase. She may repay the entire amount of the refund or she can make a partial repayment of the refund. In either instance, the payment to LASERS must be made in a lump sum. **Under no circumstances can the repayment of a refund be made by paying monthly installments.**

Year	Service credit	Earnings	Contributions	Interest	Total Due
1995	.80	$23,000.00	$1,725.00	$3,866.47	$5,591.47
1996	1.00	$29,500.00	$2,212.50	$4,959.17	$7,171.67
1997	1.00	$31,350.00	$2,351.25	$5,270.16	$7,621.41
1998	.40	$12,800.00	$960.00	$2,151.78	$3,111.78

Susan refunded her contributions, reflecting a total of 3.20 years of service credit. If she does not want to purchase the entire 3.20 years, she can purchase the time on a year-by-year basis beginning with the last year of employment. Susan would have to pay back the contributions plus interest from 1998 first and then she could repay the refund for the prior years (beginning with 1997).

You may repay a refund at any time prior to the date of your retirement. The calculation will be done at no cost to you for up to three invoices within a 12-month period. However, each additional invoice is subject to a $75.00 nonrefundable calculation fee. You can also calculate an estimate of your repayment amount by using our online calculator located under the Active Member Self-Service section of our website at www.lasersonline.org.

Application Process

To apply to repay a refund, you must submit the following to LASERS:

- *Form 02-11: Application for Repayment of Refunded Service*

LASERS will provide invoices based on the date of the request. It is highly recommended that an invoice be requested several months prior to the date needed. All purchases must be completed prior to retiring.

Purchases of Service Credit

Service credit is earned for time that you worked in a LASERS-eligible position, and made contributions to the system. In certain instances you may be able to purchase additional service credit.

Some examples are:

- Full-time state service was worked, but no service credit was received
- Service credit was denied due to an administrative error
- Service credit was not received due to leave without pay
- Furlough time (postsecondary employees)
- "Air Time" purchase of up to five years service credit for time not worked
- Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act (USERRA)
- Military Service not under USERRA
- National Guard, Coast Guard, and Reserve Forces Credit
- Service credit based on time worked in a federal position

All payments for purchases of service must be made in a lump sum. Payment can be made by personal check, cashier's check, certified check, money order, or rollover from a qualified plan.

For all purchases of service credit (except refunded service and military service under USERRA), you will be required to pay a nonrefundable actuarial calculation fee of $150.00. This fee may be paid by personal check, cashier's check, certified check, or money order made payable to LASERS. The payment should accompany your application.

After all necessary documents and the actuarial calculation fee are received, LASERS will forward the information to our actuary for calculation (except refunded service and USERRA). You will then be sent an invoice from LASERS showing the cost to purchase the service credit. When you receive the invoice, you are under no obligation to complete the purchase. However, if you decide to purchase the credit, you must submit the payment by the given deadline. If the invoice expires, you must reapply, and pay an additional calculation fee.

All payments for purchases of service must be made in a lump sum. Payment can be made by personal check, cashier's check, certified check, money order, or rollover from a qualified plan. In the case of a rollover, *Form 02-13: LASERS Acceptance Letter of Rollover of Assets* must be submitted to LASERS. A copy of your invoice should accompany your payment. No service credit will be granted until the total payment is received, which could include employer contributions.

You may not purchase credit for any period for which you already have LASERS service credit, and no more than one year of LASERS credit may be obtained for any one calendar or fiscal year.

You should apply to purchase any service credit at least six months in advance of applying for retirement.

Purchasing Full-Time State Service (La. R.S. 11:422)

You may purchase full-time service for which you have not received credit provided that your previous or current employer is a LASERS agency, and the service was LASERS eligible. The employer must provide certification of state service dates and salary information. You must pay the greater of:

- The employee contributions and employer contributions plus interest, or
- The actuarial amount which offsets the increased liability to the system resulting from the service credit being purchased.

LASERS does not allow purchases of service credit for periods in which per diem allowances were paid instead of earned compensation (excluding legislative service). The law also excludes purchases of service for the following:

- Contractual employees
- Employment as a patient or inmate
- Student employment, medical interns, or resident physicians
- Employment as a teacher in a state educational institution
- Employment while a member of any other retirement system established by state law
- Employment with any state agency or governing body whose employees are not contributing members of LASERS
- Part-time, seasonal, and temporary employment after July 1, 1991

In order to purchase this credit, you must submit to LASERS:

- *Form 02-05: Certification for Purchase of In-State Service*
- A $150.00 nonrefundable actuarial calculation fee made payable to LASERS

Purchasing Credit Denied Due to Administrative Error (La. R.S. 11:423)

You may purchase credit for state service if you were employed in a position in which LASERS membership was mandatory, but you were not enrolled due to an administrative error made by the employing agency. In some instances purchases of this credit may be mandatory.

In order to purchase this credit you must pay the employee portion of the contributions that should have been paid plus interest. Your employing agency, or its successor, where such credit was denied, must pay LASERS the greater of:

- The current rate of employer contributions plus interest that should have been paid for the service credit, or
- The actuarial cost of additional benefits payable as a result of the service credit, less the employee contributions plus interest.

In order to purchase this credit, the agency must submit to LASERS:

- Administrative error letter including the dates of employment during which the error occurred, and a monthly breakdown of your base pay, actual earnings, employee contributions, and employer contributions for the period in question
- A $150.00 nonrefundable actuarial calculation fee made payable to LASERS

Purchasing Credit for Furlough/ Leave Without Pay (LWOP) (La. R.S. 11:163(B))

If you are a LASERS member who is involuntarily furloughed, placed on leave without pay, or who voluntarily takes leave without pay, you are entitled to purchase service credit for each day that you were on leave without pay, provided there is no duplication of service credit resulting from the purchase. This service credit can be purchased once the furlough/LWOP is complete. This service credit shall be used for the calculation of benefits and for eligibility for retirement, but not salary credit. You must pay into the system the greater of:

- The employee contributions and employer contributions plus interest, or
- The actuarial amount which totally offsets the increased liability to the system resulting from the service credit being purchased.

In order to purchase this credit, you must submit to LASERS:

- *Form 02-10: Application for Purchase of Leave*
- A $150.00 nonrefundable actuarial calculation fee made payable to LASERS

Receiving Credit for Furlough Time (La. R.S. 11:163.1)

If you are a LASERS member employed at a public college or university or by the governing board or management board of a public college or university who is furloughed, you may be entitled to continue contributions for the period of such furlough. This service credit shall be used for the calculation of benefits and for eligibility for retirement. You may not contribute on more than 30 days of furlough time in any fiscal year. You must continue to make your employee contributions. Your employing agency will submit your contributions along with the employer contributions to LASERS. The earned compensation will be taken into account when determining your average compensation for retirement.

In order to receive credit, you must submit to LASERS:

- *Form 02-17: Postsecondary Employee Furloughs*

"Air Time" Purchase (La. R.S. 11:429(B))

If you have at least five years of service credit in LASERS, you may purchase up to five years of additional service credit, or Air Time, in one-year increments. The Internal Revenue Code prohibits purchasing more than five years of time not actually worked. An Air Time purchase can be used to increase your retirement benefits, or to change your retirement eligibility. You must pay the system the greater of the actuarial cost to the system or the employee contributions for each additional year of service credit being obtained based on the greater of your current salary or your final average compensation.

If you previously purchased Air Time for computation of benefits only, you may upgrade that purchase to also use the Air Time for retirement eligibility by paying the necessary cost.

Important Note about Health Insurance: If you purchase Air Time for retirement eligibility after July 1, 2011, and use that time to retire earlier than you would otherwise be eligible, you must pay the increase in your employer's share of your health insurance premium until you reach the age at which you would have reached regular retirement eligibility. Twenty years at any age is considered a regular retirement. Therefore, if you actually worked 20 years, you would not pay a premium increase. However, 20 year retirement eligibility does not apply to Corrections Secondary or to members of the Wildlife Plan hired on or after July 1, 2003.

In order to purchase this credit, you must submit to LASERS:

- *Form 02-07: Application for Purchase of Service Under La. R.S. 11:429(B)*
- A $150.00 nonrefundable actuarial calculation fee made payable to LASERS.

Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act (USERRA) (38 U.S.C.A. § 4301 et seq.)

The Federal Law known as USERRA applies to purchases of service credit for active military time served after August 1, 1990. While on military leave, you may elect to remit contributions to LASERS. If this option is not exercised, you can elect to purchase the leave after you have been re-employed for 90 days after the leave has expired.

The purchase must be made before the deadline of either the lesser of:

- Three times the years of service served, or
- Five years after re-employment in a LASERS eligible position.

Under the provisions of USERRA, any LASERS member who leaves employment for active duty in the uniformed services shall be eligible to purchase such service in the retirement plan, provided you meet all of the following criteria:

- You returned to LASERS-covered employment within 90 days after you were discharged from your military duties. NOTE: Any such date of re-employment must occur on or after August 1, 1990.
- You did not change LASERS employers immediately before and after your military service.
- You received an honorable discharge for your military service.

Under USERRA, you must pay your member contributions, and your employer must pay the employer contributions prior to the purchase deadline. The employer contributions must be paid within 30 days after your payment is received. You are eligible to purchase up to five years of service under USERRA. Once the deadline expires, you must apply to purchase this time under the regular military provision in accordance with La. R.S. 11:153, which requires a $150.00 nonrefundable actuarial calculation fee.

In order to purchase credit under USERRA, you must submit to LASERS:

- *Form 02-06: Application for Purchase of Military Service*
- Copy of release or discharge from active duty (DD214, verifying dates of service and honorable discharge)
- Certification of salary information from your agency, including a monthly breakdown of the base, earnings, employee contributions, and employer contributions that would have been paid to LASERS if you were not on military leave

Military Service not under USERRA (La. R.S. 11:153)

You may purchase up to four years of credit for active military service. However, credit for military service cannot be used to meet eligibility requirements for disability benefits or survivor benefits, and shall only be used for purposes of acquiring eligibility for normal retirement benefits. In addition, such military service credit shall not be used to meet the minimum eligibility requirement of any retirement of 20 years or less.

Effective July 1, 2001, any member who receives a military retirement benefit pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 1223 of Title 10 of the United States Code, shall be eligible to purchase credit for military service. Any such service purchase may be for regular or non-regular military service provided that the service being purchased was rendered prior to the initial date of employment which made you eligible to participate in LASERS.

You must pay the system an actuarial amount which totally offsets the increased liability to the system resulting from the service credit being purchased.

In order to purchase this credit, you must submit to LASERS:

- *Form 02-06: Application for Purchase of Military Service*
- Copy of release or discharge from active duty (DD214, verifying dates of service and honorable discharge)
- A $150.00 nonrefundable actuarial calculation fee made payable to LASERS

National Guard, Coast Guard, and Reserve Forces Credit (La. R.S. 11:153)

You may purchase retirement credit for time served with the National Guard, Coast Guard, and reserve forces. To purchase this service, you must pay the actuarially calculated cost, unless the time qualifies under USERRA. You must submit an official copy of your retirement points as maintained by your respective military branch. You may purchase one day of retirement credit for each point, not to exceed a total of four years. This service can only be purchased provided you do not have a full year of service credit in LASERS for the fiscal or calendar year that you served. You must pay the system an actuarial amount which totally offsets the increased liability to the system resulting from the service credit being purchased.

In order to purchase this credit, you must submit to LASERS:

- *Form 02-06: Application for Purchase of Military Service*
- Official copy of your retirement points from your respective military branch
- Copy of release or discharge from active duty (DD214, verifying dates of service and honorable discharge)
- A $150.00 nonrefundable actuarial calculation fee made payable to LASERS

Federal Service (La. R.S. 11:428)

You may purchase service credit for any period of time you worked and contributed to a retirement plan for federal employees. You must have been an active contributing member of LASERS for at least one year to make such a purchase. You must pay into the system the greater of:

- The employee contributions and employer contributions plus interest, or
- The actuarial amount which totally offsets the increased liability to the system resulting from the service credit being purchased.

The amount must be paid in a lump sum and may be through a direct rollover. You must forfeit your credit in the federal system upon making this purchase.

In order to purchase this credit, you must submit to LASERS:

- *Form 02-20: Application for Purchase of Certain Federal Service*
- A $150.00 nonrefundable actuarial calculation fee made payable to LASERS

Transfers and Reciprocals From Other Retirement Systems

If you have service credit in more than one state, municipal, or parochial retirement system in Louisiana, you may apply for a reciprocal recognition or an actuarial transfer of service credit. All transfers, upgrades, and reciprocals must be completed prior to your retirement date. A list of retirement systems eligible for transfers, reciprocals, and upgrades is located at the end of this chapter.

Reciprocal Recognition (La. R.S. 11:142)

A reciprocal agreement is the recognition of your service credit in one Louisiana retirement system by another Louisiana retirement system. To be eligible for retirement, you must meet the highest age and years of service requirement of each system for which you hold membership. At the time of retirement, you will receive benefits from both retirement systems. If you retire with a reciprocal agreement and return to active service in any state, municipal, or parochial system, you must notify the systems from which you are receiving benefits so that the benefits can be stopped to avoid overpayments.

To apply for a reciprocal recognition of service, you must submit to LASERS:

- *Form 02-03: Application for Reciprocal Recognition of Service*

Actuarial Transfer and/or Upgrade (La. R.S. 11:143)

An actuarial transfer of service is the transfer from one Louisiana retirement system to another of your service credit, accumulated employee and employer contributions, and interest. A transfer of service into LASERS will allow you to receive benefits from LASERS for all service. Service credit transferred on or after June 30, 2013, may be upgraded if a higher accrual rate is currently earned at LASERS. The system actuary will determine the cost to upgrade the service. You must be employed in a LASERS eligible position for at least six months before you can apply for a transfer and/or upgrade.

To apply for an actuarial transfer, you must submit to LASERS:

- *Form 02-04: Application for Transfer and/or Upgrade of Creditable Service*
- A nonrefundable actuarial calculation fee made payable to LASERS. The fee is $150.00 or $200.00 depending on the calculation requested.

Restoring Refunded Service Credit to Transfer/Reciprocate (La. R.S. 11:144)

If you are currently a member of another Louisiana state retirement system with at least six months of service credit, you may repay a prior refund from LASERS for the purpose of either actuarially transferring or reciprocating this service credit.

In order to restore the refunded service credit, you must submit to LASERS:

- *Form 02-12: Application for Repayment of Refunded Service to Reciprocate/Transfer*

You will receive an invoice for the cost to restore the service. You must contact your current Louisiana retirement system to apply for either an actuarial transfer or a reciprocal recognition of this service. Please see the chapter on Refunds for additional information.

Systems Eligible for a Transfer, Reciprocal, or Upgrade

- Teachers' Retirement System of Louisiana
- Louisiana State Police Retirement System
- Louisiana School Employees Retirement System
- Retirement systems for: Assessors, Clerks of Court, District Attorneys, Registrars of Voters, and Sheriffs
- Municipal Employees' Retirement System
- Parochial Employees' Retirement System
- Firefighters' Retirement System
- Retirement systems for the cities/parishes of: Alexandria, Baton Rouge, Bogalusa, Jefferson, New Orleans, and Shreveport
- Municipal Police Employees' Retirement System
- Firefighters Pension and Relief Fund in the City of New Orleans
- Employees' Retirement System of the Sewerage and Water Board in New Orleans

Retirement Eligibility and Final Average Compensation

Retirement benefits are paid monthly and are guaranteed for your lifetime. Benefits are funded by employee contributions, employer contributions, and earnings from investments. To apply for retirement, a member must meet the eligibility requirements as described below.

Retirement Eligibility (La. R.S. 11:441)

If you are a Regular Member of LASERS, and were hired ***on or before June 30, 2006,*** you become eligible for retirement upon reaching one of the criteria below:
NOTE: Your LASERS Member Annual Account Statement will identify you as a "Regular Member," and you will have these retirement eligibilities.

- 30 years of service at any age
- 25 years of service at age 55
- 10 years of service at age 60
- 20 years of service at any age, actuarially reduced (Deferred Retirement Option Plan [DROP] participation and retirement with an Initial Benefit Option [IBO] are not available to members who choose this option). The actuarial reduction is based on the number of months you are away from eligibility for an unreduced retirement. This reduction can be affected depending on whether you are in state service or out of state service at the time of your retirement.

If you are a Regular Member of LASERS hired ***on or after July 1, 2006, and on or before June 30, 2015,*** you become eligible for retirement upon reaching one of the criteria below:
NOTE: Depending on your date of hire, your LASERS Annual Account Statement will identify you as "Regular Employee 2" or "Regular Employee 3," and you will have these retirement eligibilities.

- 5 years of service at age 60
- 20 years of service at any age, actuarially reduced (Deferred Retirement Option Plan [DROP] participation and retirement with an Initial Benefit Option [IBO] are not available to members who choose this option). The actuarial reduction is based on the number of months you are away from eligibility for an unreduced retirement.

If you are a Regular Member of LASERS hired on or after July 1, 2015, you become eligible for retirement upon reaching one of the criteria below:
NOTE: Your LASERS Annual Account Statement will identify you as "Regular Employee 4" and you will have these eligibilities.

- 5 years of service at age 62
- 20 years of service at any age, actuarially reduced (Deferred Retirement Option Plan [DROP] participation and retirement with an Initial Benefit Option [IBO] are not available to members who choose this option). The actuarial reduction is based on the number of months you are away from eligibility for an unreduced retirement.

You cannot use unused annual and sick leave to reach eligibility for retirement. Also, certain service purchases may not be used to meet retirement eligibility.

Benefit Accrual and Final Average Compensation (La. R.S. 11:231 and 11:444)

If you are a Regular Member of LASERS, you will accrue benefits at 2.5 percent of your average compensation per year.

- If you were hired ***on or before June 30, 2006,*** your average compensation will be based on your highest successive **36** months of earnings.
  - If you were hired before July 1, 1986, and did not terminate employment and receive a refund of your contributions, you will receive an additional $300.00 per year added to your retirement benefit.
- If you were hired ***on or after July 1, 2006,*** your average compensation will be based on your highest successive 60 months of earnings.

Retirement benefits are paid monthly and are guaranteed for your lifetime.

Limits on Final Average Compensation (La. R.S. 11:403(5))

When calculating your retirement benefit, the earnings used for your average compensation may be capped in order to avoid excessive spikes in compensation.

If hired on or before June 30, 2006: The earnings to be considered for the 13th through the 24th month shall not exceed 125 percent of the earnings of the 1st through the 12th month. The earnings to be considered for the final 12 months shall not exceed 125 percent of the earnings of the 13th through the 24th month.

If hired on or after July 1, 2006: The earnings to be considered for the 13th through the 24th month shall not exceed 115 percent of the earnings of the 1st through the 12th month. The earnings to be considered for the 25th through the 36th month shall not exceed 115 percent of the earnings of the 13th through the 24th month. The earnings to be considered for the 37th through the 48th month shall not exceed 115 percent of the earnings of the 25th through the 36th month. The earnings for the final 12 months shall not exceed 115 percent of the earnings of the 37th through the 48th month.

Part-time Members: If you are employed on a part-time basis and have not accrued 36 months (if employed before July 1, 2006) or 60 months (if employed on or after July 1, 2006) of full-time employment, your average compensation will be calculated on the base pay you would have received if employed on a full-time basis. If you had the requisite full-time service, your base pay will be calculated using that time.

We encourage you to obtain estimates for regular retirement, DROP, and IBO before making a retirement decision. You can calculate your own estimates by accessing Member Self-Service on the LASERS website at www.lasersonline.org. You can also submit *Form 05-01: Request for Retirement Benefit Estimate* **when you are within 18 months of eligibility for retirement, and LASERS will provide you with estimates.**

Unused Annual and Sick Leave

(La. R.S. 11:424)

At the time of retirement, you may receive additional benefits for your unused, accumulated annual and sick leave.

At the time of retirement, you may receive additional benefits for your unused, accumulated annual and sick leave. Upon certification by your agency of the leave, you will be given the option to have the leave converted to additional credit or to receive a one-time, lump-sum payment. Should you retire out of state service, you will not be given credit for your unused annual and sick leave unless you were eligible for retirement when you terminated state service. (For example, if you are in the rank-and-file plan and had 20 years of service credit when you terminated, you may receive credit for your leave as certified by your agency.) If you terminate employment, and later become re-employed you must contribute to LASERS for at least 18 months before you are eligible to receive credit for any unused leave for retirement purposes. **No unused leave can be used for retirement eligibility purposes.**

Your agency is required to submit *Form 07-01: Certification of Unused Annual and Sick Leave* to LASERS after you terminate employment. This form shows the balance of your unused annual and sick leave. The balance should not include any amounts that were paid to you by your agency, such as the 300 hours of annual leave paid by most Civil Service agencies.

Your unused leave is converted to days by adding the hours of annual and sick leave and dividing these hours by eight, representing an eight-hour day. Any fractional day of one-half or more will be granted as one day and less than half a day will be disregarded. Your unused leave will be converted to credit based on the following table:

Days of Unused Leave	Credit
1 – 26	.10
27 – 52	.20
53 – 78	.30
79 – 104	.40
105 – 130	.50
131 – 156	.60
157 – 182	.70
183 – 208	.80
209 – 234	.90
235 – 260	One year

Cathy has 609 days of unused annual and sick leave. By using the chart to the left, the credit for her unused leave is calculated as follows:

260	days	=	1	year
260	days	=	1	year
89	days	=	0.40	year
609	total days	=	2.40	years

Cathy will receive a total of 2.4 years credit for her unused leave.

Your application for retirement will include a section for you to make a choice about the payment of unused annual and sick leave. You will have two options:

- Convert your unused annual and sick leave to credit, or
- Take a lump-sum payment of the actuarial value (not the hourly salary rate) of the unused annual and sick leave. This payment may be rolled over to an IRS qualified plan.

Members who participate in DROP will make their leave selection at the time of their retirement. Disability retirees must convert their unused annual and sick leave to credit.

Convert Leave to Credit

If you decide to convert your unused leave to credit, it will be included in the total credit used to compute your retirement benefit.

Fred is retiring at age 54 with 30 years service credit. He has a final average compensation of $50,000.00. He has 57 days of unused leave, which converts to .30 years of credit. His maximum retirement benefit would be calculated in the following manner:

$50,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.025 *accrual rate*	x	30.0 *years of service credit*	=	$37,500.00 per year ($3,125.00 per month)
$50,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.025 *accrual rate*	x	.30 *years of unused leave*	=	$375.00 per year ($31.25 per month)

Total retirement benefit =	**$3,125.00** ***retirement benefit***	**+**	**$31.25** ***converted leave benefit***	**=**	**$3156.25 per month**

By converting his unused leave, Fred's monthly benefit has increased from $3,125.00 to $3,156.25, or $31.25 per month.

Lump-Sum Payment of Leave Balance

If you decide to take a lump-sum payment of your unused annual and sick leave, the amount paid will be at an actuarial rate, and not at your regular hourly rate. Lump-sum payments are calculated by multiplying the additional annual benefit by the actuarial reserve factor for your age at the time of retirement. The actuarial reserve factor is based on life expectancy.

Fred converted his 57 days of unused leave to additional credit. If Fred decided to take a lump-sum payment for his unused leave, the payment would be calculated in the following manner:

$50,000.00	x	.025	x	.30	=	$375.00
average compensation		*accrual rate*		*years of unused leave*		*annual benefit*

$375.00	x	10.454	=	$3,920.25
additional annual benefit		*actuarial reserve factor*		*lump-sum payment*

Fred must decide whether to take an additional $31.25 monthly for his lifetime or accept a one-time lump-sum of $3,920.25.

Lump-sum payments are subject to mandatory 20 percent federal income tax withholding. You may also be subject to a 10 percent federal early withdrawal penalty. LASERS encourages you to contact a tax consultant to determine if the provisions are applicable to your specific situation. However, you may roll over the lump-sum payment to an IRS qualified plan to avoid the mandatory 20 percent withholding. For a rollover, *Form 02-01A: Authorization for Direct Rollover* must be completed by your financial institution and submitted to LASERS.

You cannot convert all of your unused leave to credit if this will cause your retirement benefit to exceed 100 percent of your final average compensation. In this case, your unused leave will be converted to credit to reach 100 percent of your average compensation, and any remainder of leave will be paid to you in a lump-sum.

Retirement Options and the Self-Funded COLA

(La. R.S. 11:446)

When you retire you must select a retirement option and a beneficiary(is). You can name anyone as a beneficiary. Generally, a married member must choose a retirement option which provides a benefit for their spouse that is at least fifty percent of the benefit payable to the retiree. (Please see the chapter on Community Property and Divorce if you and your spouse have a separate property agreement.) You may choose an option that does not leave a monthly benefit for your spouse or name another beneficiary, if your spouse agrees with the choice, and signs *Form 04-04: Spousal Consent* in the presence of a Notary Public. Depending on the retirement option chosen, your beneficiary may receive a lifetime benefit in the case of your death. Below are the seven retirement options:

Maximum Option pays the maximum monthly benefit to you for your lifetime. This option does not pay a monthly benefit to a beneficiary(ies). Should you die before your member contributions are depleted, your beneficiary(ies) will receive a lump-sum payment of your remaining member contributions. Contributions are typically exhausted within two to three years after your retirement or entry into DROP.

Option 1 pays you a slightly reduced monthly benefit for your lifetime. The benefit reduction is based on your employee contributions, your age, and your life expectancy at the time of your retirement. It does not pay a monthly benefit to a beneficiary(ies). Should you die before your member contributions are depleted, your beneficiary(ies) will receive a lump-sum payment of your remaining member contributions. Your contributions are depleted at an actuarially reduced rate, and are typically exhausted in approximately eight or more years after your retirement or entry into DROP. *This option is not available to members who choose the Initial Benefit Option (IBO).*

Option 2A pays you a reduced monthly benefit for your lifetime, and a benefit to your beneficiary after your death. The benefit reduction is based on the ages of you and your beneficiary at the time of your retirement. Upon your death, your beneficiary will receive a lifetime benefit of the same monthly amount for their lifetime. You can only select one beneficiary, and this beneficiary cannot be changed after retirement.

Option 2B is only available to members with a mentally handicapped child or children and pays you a reduced monthly benefit for your lifetime. The benefit reduction is based on the ages of you, your beneficiary, and your mentally handicapped child or children at the time of your retirement. Upon your death, your beneficiary will receive the same amount for their lifetime. At the beneficiary's death, a benefit is paid to the legal guardian of any mentally handicapped child or children. You must submit *Form 06-03: Option 2B Mentally Handicapped Designee*, along with your retirement application. This form must be certified by a physician.

Option 3 pays you a reduced monthly benefit for your lifetime, and a benefit to your beneficiary after your death. The benefit reduction is based on the ages of you and your beneficiary at the time of your retirement. Upon your death, your beneficiary will receive 50 percent of your benefit for their lifetime. You can only select one beneficiary, and this beneficiary cannot be changed after retirement.

If your named beneficiary dies, you may request to have your retirement benefit increased to the amount that you would have received had you initially selected the Maximum Option.

Option 4A is only available to members who have been married at least two years at the time of their retirement. Only your spouse may be named as your beneficiary. This option pays you 90 percent of the Maximum Option benefit for your lifetime. Upon your death, your spouse will receive 55 percent of your Maximum Option benefit for their lifetime. *This option is not available to Disability retirees.*

Option 4B pays you a reduced monthly benefit for your lifetime. The benefit reduction is based on the ages of you and your beneficiary at the time of your retirement. Upon your death, your beneficiary will receive 55 percent of your benefit for their lifetime. You can only select one beneficiary, and this beneficiary cannot be changed after retirement.

For all options other than the Maximum Option or Option 1, only one beneficiary may be named, and the beneficiary cannot be changed after your retirement. If your named beneficiary dies, you may request to have your retirement benefit increased to the amount that you would have received had you initially selected the Maximum Option. If you named your spouse as your beneficiary, and you are now divorced, you may request to have your benefit increased to an actuarially reduced Maximum amount. You must provide a court order showing that your former spouse has irrevocably relinquished all rights to a benefit, submit *Form 10-06: Application for Change in Retirement Benefit due to Divorce*, and pay a $150.00 nonrefundable actuarial calculation fee.

If you choose an option which will leave your spouse a monthly benefit in the event of your death, they will receive this benefit for their lifetime, even if they remarry.

Martha is retiring with 13.20 years of service at age 60 and her beneficiary is age 64. She has an annual final average compensation of $31,668.00 and an accrual rate of 2.5%, so her Maximum retirement benefit is $895.87 per month. This amount will be reduced if she chooses a retirement option other than the Maximum. The chart below shows the monthly amount that she will receive depending on which retirement option she chooses:

	Maximum	**Option 1**	**Option 2A**	**Option 3**	**Option 4A**	**Option 4B**
Member Retirement Payment	100 percent	Reduced amount from maximum	Reduced amount based on ages at retirement	Reduced amount based on ages at retirement	90 percent of maximum	Reduced amount based on ages at retirement
Monthly Benefit to Member	$895.87	$890.27	$813.94	$852.94	$806.28	$848.88
Beneficiary Payment (after your death)	Lump sum of remainder of unused employee contributions	Lump sum of remainder of unused employee contributions	Same amount as retiree	50 percent of retiree's benefit	55 percent of maximum	55 percent of retiree's benefit
Monthly Benefit to Beneficiary	None	None	$813.94	$426.47	$492.73	$466.88

Self-Funded COLA (La. R.S. 11:247 and La. R.S. 11:446:(A)(6))

Unlike the system generated cost-of-living adjustments, which are funded by the retirement system upon legislative approval, the Self-Funded cost-of-living adjustment is funded by the member/retiree through the actuarial reduction of your monthly retirement benefit. You will receive the actuarially reduced benefit for your lifetime. It can take many years to regain the benefits initially reduced in order to fund the Self-Funded COLA.

At the time of retirement or entry into DROP, you may elect to receive an actuarially reduced retirement allowance plus a 2.5 percent annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), which will be effective on your retirement anniversary date. If you are not 55 at the time of retirement or entry into DROP, you are eligible to select the Self-Funded COLA, but it will not be payable to you until the anniversary date after you turn age 55. If you choose a retirement option which leaves your spouse a monthly benefit, the Self-Funded COLA will be added to their monthly benefit after your death. However, if you name a non-spouse beneficiary, the Self-Funded COLA will not be added to their monthly benefit after your death. *The Self-Funded COLA is not available for Disability retirement. If you selected the COLA at the time of retirement or entry into DROP, the COLA will apply to benefits received during your DROP participation period. The Self-Funded COLA also applies to supplemental benefits.*

If you elect to receive the Self-Funded COLA, you are also able to receive the system generated COLAs for which you are eligible. There is no guarantee of system generated COLAs. The amount of these COLAs are dependent upon the amount of excess investment returns deposited in the Experience Account used to fund COLAs, system funding, and legislative approval. No forms are used and no action is required by members to select these COLAs. For more information, see the chapter on Cost-of-Living-Increases.

Example: Mary is retiring at age 60 with 20.00 years of service credit. She has a final average compensation of $50,000. Her maximum benefit would be calculated as follows:

Average compensation	$50,000
x	x
Accrual rate	2.5%
x	x
Years of service credit	20.00
=	=
Maximum Benefit	**$25,000 per year ($2,083.33 monthly)**

Mary's monthly maximum benefit with the Self-Funded COLA would be calculated as follows:

Monthly Maximum Benefit	$2,083.33
x	x
Self-Funded COLA Reduction	0.792440
=	=
Reduced Monthly Maximum Benefit	**$1,650.91 monthly**

If Mary selects the Self-Funded COLA, she would initially receive a benefit of $432.42 less per month ($2,083.33 - $1,650.91) than she would have received had she not chosen the Self-Funded COLA. Depending upon the option Mary chooses, her benefit could be further reduced.

Regular Retirement versus Self-Funded COLA

Example: Mary is retiring at age 60 with 20.00 years of service credit. She has a final average compensation of $50,000. This is a comparison of a Regular retirement benefit to a Regular retirement benefit with a Self-Funded COLA benefit.

Regular Retirement Benefit

- Maximum benefit is $2,083.33
- No actuarial reduction to benefit
- After 15 years, Mary would have received $374,999.40 in retirement benefits.

Monthly Retirement Benefit		
After 5 Years	After 10 Years	After 15 Years
$2,083.33	**$2,083.33**	**$2,083.33**

Regular Retirement with a Self-Funded COLA Benefit

- Reduced initial maximum benefit is $1,650.91
- 2.5% Self-Funded COLA granted yearly on anniversary date after member turns age 55
- After 15 years, Mary would have received $355,247.96 in retirement benefits.

Monthly Retirement Benefit		
After 5 Years	After 10 Years	After 15 Years
$1,822.30	**$2,061.76**	**$2,332.69**

Even though Mary's monthly benefit would be higher after 15 years, she would have received **$19,751.44 less in total benefits** by choosing the Self-Funded COLA.

Self-Funded COLA Break-even Point

Based on the example above, this chart shows a yearly comparison of retirement benefits when choosing a Regular retirement with a Self-Funded COLA versus the benefit when choosing only a Regular retirement.

If Mary had chosen Regular retirement with a Self-Funded COLA, her break-even point would be between year 19 and 20. Since she retired at age 60, she would reach her break-even point at age 80.

	Regular Retirement Benefit		Self-Funded COLA Benefit		Difference of Benefits (Break-even Point)
	Yearly	Total Benefits	Yearly	Total Benefits	
Year 5	$24,999.96	$124,999.80	$21,867.55	$104,132.70	**-$20,867.10**
Year 10	$24,999.96	$245,999.60	$24,741.12	$221.949.30	**-$28,050.30**
Year 15	$24,999.96	$374,999.40	$27,992.31	$355,247.96	**-$19,751.44**
Year 19	$24,999.96	$474,999.24	$30,898.27	$474,392.44	**-$606.82**
Year 20	$24,999.96	$499,999.20	$31,670.73	$506,063.17	**$6,063.97**

The choice to take the Self-Funded COLA is irrevocable, and you will receive this actuarially reduced benefit for your lifetime. We strongly suggest that you obtain a retirement estimate prior to making this selection.

Estimates

If you are within 18 months of retirement eligibility you may request a benefit estimate from LASERS. You may request estimates for the following types of retirement:

- Regular retirement
- Regular retirement with an actuarially reduced benefit
- Initial Benefit Option (IBO)
- Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP)
- Retirement after DROP
- Disability Retirement
- Self-Funded COLA

If you are within 18 months of retirement eligibility you may request a benefit estimate from LASERS.

If you include your balance of unused annual and sick leave on the estimate request, LASERS will provide you with estimates for benefits without credit for unused leave, benefits with credit for unused leave, and the lump-sum payment amount of actuarial value of leave according to La. R.S. 11:424(E).

Application Process

To apply for a benefit estimate, you must submit the following to LASERS:

- *Form 05-01: Request for Retirement Benefit Estimate*

You may also visit Active Member Self-Service to generate your own estimates. Please see the chapter on the LASERS website for more information.

If you need to know your first eligible date for retirement, please submit a written request to LASERS.

Benefit estimates are not guaranteed benefits. These calculations are merely estimated. The actual pension benefit that you are entitled to as a member of LASERS is determined by applicable laws as well as finalized service credit, earnings, and leave balances at the time of your retirement.

Regular Retirement

(La. R.S. 11:444)

If there is a break in service between your date of termination and your effective date of retirement, you will be considered out of state service and your monthly benefit may be reduced.

You are responsible for knowing when you are eligible for retirement. Once you plan to retire, you should contact your agency's human resources office to obtain a retirement application. You should submit your retirement application to LASERS at least six months before your planned retirement date. Your retirement application must be received on or before your termination date for your retirement to be considered while in state service. Your retirement will be effective the day the application is received at LASERS, or the day after termination, whichever is later. If there is a break in service between your date of termination and your effective date of retirement, you will be considered out of state service and your monthly benefit may be reduced. Also, eligibility to receive credit for your leave balances may be impacted if you are out of state service when you retire.

Calculating the Benefit

John began employment on January 15, 1986, and is now retiring at age 55 with 29 years of service credit. He has an annual final average compensation of $50,000.00, so his base retirement benefit would be calculated in the following manner:

average compensation	x	accrual rate	x	years of service credit	+	$300.00 (if hired before July 1, 1986)	=	Maximum benefit
$50,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.025 *accrual rate*	x	29.0 *years of service credit*	+	$300.00 *(since hired before July 1, 1986)*	=	$36,550.00 per year ($3,045.84 monthly)

Application Process

To apply for retirement, you must submit the following to LASERS:

- *Form 06-01: Application for Retirement*
- *Form 04-04: Spousal Consent* (if you are married and select the Maximum Option or Option 1, or name a beneficiary who is not your spouse). Alternately, you may submit a Certified Matrimonial Contract, Pre-nuptial Agreement, Separate Property Agreement, etc. (if applicable).
- Copies of Social Security cards and birth certificates for you and your beneficiary(ies)
- Certified Copy of a Judgment of Divorce from your former spouse and/or a copy of the death certificate of your former spouse (if applicable)
- Copy of Marriage Certificate (if Option 4A was selected)
- *Form 02-01A: Authorization for Direct Rollover* (if rolling over your payment for unused leave)
- *Form 04-05: Authorization for Direct Deposit*
- *Form 06-02: Insurance Premium Deduction Authorization* (if applicable)
- *Form W-4P: Withholding Certificate for Pension or Annuity Payments*. This form is not required. If the form is not submitted to LASERS, your federal tax withholding will be set to the IRS default, which is currently "Married with three allowances".

No retirement benefits will be paid until LASERS receives all of the required documents. You can assist LASERS in promptly paying your monthly benefit upon your retirement by having all necessary documents on file prior to your retirement. LASERS recommends that you complete all of your retirement paperwork six months prior to your anticipated retirement date. Your human resources personnel will assist you with all of the paperwork as you begin the retirement process.

Initial Benefit Option

(La. R.S. 11:446(A)(5))

The Initial Benefit Option (IBO) is an optional method of retirement which allows you to receive a lump-sum equivalent of up to 36 months of your maximum retirement benefit at the time of your retirement.

The Initial Benefit Option (IBO) is an optional method of retirement which allows you to receive a lump-sum equivalent of up to 36 months of your maximum retirement benefit at the time of your retirement. Any member who is eligible for an unreduced Regular Regular retirement may select the Initial Benefit Option (IBO). Members who take an actuarially reduced retirement, Disability retirement, or who participate in DROP are not eligible to select the IBO. At the time of your retirement, you will select the dollar amount you will be paid, up to an equivalent of 36 months of your maximum retirement benefit. All future monthly benefits will be reduced based on your age at retirement, and the amount of the IBO selected. All IBO participants must select a retirement option at the time of retirement. However, IBO participants cannot select retirement Option 1.

Mark began employment on April 10, 1980, and is now retiring at age 52 with 30 years of service credit. He has selected the Maximum Option and the maximum IBO amount. His benefit amount is calculated in the following manner:

$55,000.00	x	.025	x	30.0	+	$300.00	=	$41,550.00 per year
average compensation		*accrual rate*		*years of service credit*		*(since hired before July 1, 1986)*		($3,462.50 per month)

Since he chose the maximum IBO amount he will receive a lump-sum payment of 36 times $3,462.50 or $124,650.00.

To estimate the approximate monthly cost of the one-time IBO payment, use the following chart to find your age and the corresponding cost per $1,000.00, in this case $7.12. The approximate monthly cost to receive a $124,650.00 IBO would be $7.12 times 124, or $882.88. The $882.88 is subtracted from the $3,462.50 monthly maximum benefit to determine the actuarially reduced monthly benefit. Therefore, $3,462.50 minus $882.88 leaves a monthly benefit of $2,579.62.

Mark will receive an IBO of $124,650.00 and a lifetime monthly benefit of $2,579.62. If Mark had selected Regular retirement with no IBO his lifetime monthly benefit would be $3,462.50. By selecting the IBO, Mark will receive an initial lump-sum payment of $124,650.00, but his monthly benefit is reduced from $3,462.50 to $2,579.62. He will receive this benefit for his lifetime.

Age and Approximate Cost per $1,000.00
(Chart changes periodically)

35 – 6.48	46 – 6.80	57 – 7.53	68 – 9.15	79 – 12.90
36 – 6.50	47 – 6.84	58 – 7.63	69 – 9.36	80 – 13.45
37 – 6.52	48 – 6.89	59 – 7.74	70 – 9.60	81 – 14.06
38 – 6.54	49 – 6.94	60 – 7.86	71 – 9.86	82 – 14.72
39 – 6.57	50 – 7.00	61 – 7.99	72 – 10.13	83 – 15.44
40 – 6.60	51 – 7.06	62 – 8.12	73 – 10.43	84 – 16.24
41 – 6.62	52 – 7.12	63 – 8.26	74 – 10.76	85 – 17.10
42 – 6.65	53 – 7.19	64 – 8.42	75 – 11.12	86 – 18.04
43 – 6.69	54 – 7.27	65 – 8.58	76 – 11.51	87 – 19.05
44 – 6.72	55 – 7.35	66 – 8.76	77 – 11.93	88 – 20.12
45 – 6.76	56 – 7.44	67 – 8.94	78 – 12.40	89 – 21.24

Application Process

To apply for retirement with an IBO, you must submit the following to LASERS:

- *Form 06-01A or 06-01B: Application for Retirement with IBO*
  - Form 6-01A is for members who were eligible to retire on or after January 1, 2004
  - Form 6-01B is for members who were eligible to retire before January 1, 2004
- *Form 04-04: Spousal Consent* (if you are married and select maximum or Option 1, or name a beneficiary who is not your spouse). Alternately, you may submit a Certified Matrimonial Contract, Pre-nuptial Agreement, Separate Property Agreement, etc. (if applicable).
- Copies of Social Security cards and birth certificates for you and your beneficiary(ies)
- Certified Copy of a Judgment of Divorce from your former spouse and/or a copy of the death certificate of your former spouse (if applicable)
- Copy of Marriage Certificate (if Option 4A was selected)
- *Form 02-01A: Authorization for Direct Rollover* (if rolling over your payment for unused leave)
- *Form 04-05: Authorization for Direct Deposit*
- *Form 06-02: Insurance Premium Deduction Authorization* (if applicable)
- *Form W-4P: Withholding Certificate for Pension or Annuity Payments*. This form is not required. If the form is not submitted to LASERS, your federal tax withholding will be set to the IRS default, which is currently "Married with three allowances."
- *Form 07-01: Certification of Unused Annual and Sick Leave* (submitted by your agency)

No retirement benefits will be paid until LASERS receives all of the required documents. You can assist LASERS in promptly paying your monthly benefit upon your retirement by having all necessary documents on file prior to your retirement.

LASERS will make the first deposit into your IBO account once your preliminary benefit calculation has been performed. When all final earnings have been received, we will finalize your retirement benefit, and make the second and final deposit into your IBO account. Therefore, the entire balance of your IBO will not be available for withdrawal until your retirement benefit has been finalized.

Self-Directed Plan (LAC 58:I.4101 et seq.)

Members eligible for Regular retirement **before January 1, 2004,** have the option to leave their IBO at LASERS or to transfer it to the Self-Directed Plan. If a member elects to join the Self-Directed Plan this selection is irrevocable.

Members eligible for Regular retirement **on or after January 1, 2004,** will have their IBO transferred to the Self-Directed Plan. EMPOWER Retirement™ will administer the IBO account, so all withdrawals and account changes must be made through EMPOWER Retirement™, not LASERS.

Please see the chapter on DROP/IBO Account Withdrawals and the Self-Directed Plan for information relating to making withdrawals from your IBO account.

Interest on IBO Accounts Held at LASERS

IBO accounts held at LASERS may accrue interest until the IBO balance is depleted. The interest rate is equal to the LASERS actuarial rate of return on investments for the prior fiscal year minus 0.5 percent. This interest rate changes from year to year and is based on investment earnings. Interest, if applicable, will be retroactively credited to your account based on your month-end account balance. If interest is earned it will be shown on your IBO annual statement which is issued in the first quarter of each year. For example, an annual statement received in March 2013 would show the interest posted for July 2011 – June 2012.

Deferred Retirement Option Plan

(La. R.S. 11:447)

The Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP) is an optional retirement method that allows you to defer your retirement benefit for a maximum period of 36 months while you continue to work. Neither you nor your employer will pay contributions to LASERS, and you do not earn additional service credit during the participation period. Your monthly DROP benefit will be deposited into an individual DROP account which you can access after you have retired. You will continue to earn your regular salary and accrue annual and sick leave while in DROP.

Eligibility

A Regular Member must be eligible for retirement before participating in DROP. Members who take an actuarially reduced retirement may not participate in DROP. See the chapter on Retirement Eligibility for more information.

You may participate in DROP if you have service credit with another retirement system recognized by LASERS pursuant to the provisions of La. R.S. 11:142 (reciprocal recognition). Your combined service credit must meet the minimum eligibility requirements of each retirement system. You must submit an Application for DROP to both of the retirement systems.

Participation Period

If you were eligible to retire **on or before December 31, 1995**, you are eligible to participate in "Old DROP" and may enter DROP at any time prior to retirement. There is no defined window of participation. Your DROP account will remain at LASERS unless you make the irrevocable choice to transfer your DROP account to the Self-Directed Plan.

If you were eligible to retire **between December 31, 1995, and December 31, 2003**, and participated in DROP, you were in "New DROP." Your DROP account will remain at LASERS unless you make the irrevocable choice to transfer your DROP account to the Self-Directed Plan. The "New DROP" plan is no longer available.

If you are eligible to retire **on or after January 1, 2004**, you are required to enter the Self-Directed Plan. Self-Directed Plan DROP accounts will be transferred to the third party administrator, EMPOWER Retirement™, as soon as your DROP participation period ends. You will have a three year and 60-day DROP window. You must begin DROP participation within 60 days of your first eligible date for retirement in order to participate for the full 36 months. If you enter DROP later than 60 days from your first eligible date, the 36-month participation period is reduced.

Steve is first eligible for regular retirement on June 1, 2011, so his 60 day window ends on July 30, 2011. If he wants to participate in DROP for the entire 36 months, he must start DROP prior to July 30, 2011. If he begins DROP on June 15, 2011, he can participate until June 14, 2014 (36 months). However, if he does not begin DROP until September 1, 2011, he can only participate in DROP until July 29, 2014. He will not get the full 36-month participation period.

You may elect to participate in DROP for fewer than 36 months. However, once you have chosen a DROP end date, this end date cannot be extended. You cannot exit DROP prior to your stated ending date unless you terminate employment.

Retirement Options and DROP Beneficiaries

When you decide to participate in DROP you will select a retirement option, a retirement option beneficiary, and a DROP account beneficiary. The retirement option selected upon participation in DROP cannot be changed. Your DROP account beneficiary can be different from your retirement option beneficiary, and may be changed at any time by submitting *Form 01-06: Designation of Beneficiary* to LASERS (*Form 04-04: Spousal Consent* may be required). Should you die during DROP participation, your named retirement beneficiary will receive benefits according to the retirement option you selected. Your DROP account beneficiary will be entitled to the remaining funds in your DROP account. See the chapter on Retirement Options for more information.

Your DROP account beneficiary can be different from your retirement option beneficiary, and may be changed at any time.

Calculating the DROP Benefit

Your DROP benefit is based on the amount that you would have received as a monthly retirement benefit if you had selected regular retirement. This monthly benefit will be deposited into an individual DROP account as long as you continue participation in DROP. Your unused annual and sick leave are not calculated when you go into DROP. Only when you terminate State service during or after DROP will your leave be calculated.

Beth is eligible for regular retirement with 19.20 years of service credit at age 60. Her first eligible date for regular retirement was January 2, 2011, so she must enter DROP within 60 days of this date to participate for the entire 36 months. She chose to enter DROP on January 2, 2011, so she is eligible to participate until January 1, 2014. She selected the Maximum Option so her DROP benefit is calculated in the following manner:

$40,000.00	x	.025	x	19.20	=	$19,200.00 per year
Average compensation		*accrual rate*		*years of service credit*		($1,600.00 per month)

While Beth continues working, a monthly amount of $1,600.00 will be deposited into her DROP account. These monthly deposits will continue until Beth either ends DROP participation on January 1, 2014, or terminates employment, whichever occurs first. If Beth participates in DROP for the full 36 months she will have $57,600.00 in her DROP account at the end of her participation period.

Application Process

To apply for DROP, you must submit the following to LASERS:

- *Form 09-01 or 09-01A: Application for Deferred Retirement Option Plan* ***(DROP)***
  - Form 9-01 is for members who were eligible to retire on or after January 1, 1995
  - Form 9-01A is for members who were eligible to retire before January 1, 1995
- *Form 04-04: Spousal Consent* (if you are married and select Maximum or Option 1, or name a beneficiary who is not your spouse)
- Copies of Social Security cards and birth certificates for you and your beneficiary(ies)
- Certified Copy of a Judgment of Divorce from your former spouse and/or a copy of the death certificate of your former spouse (if applicable)
- Copy of Marriage Certificate (if Option 4A was selected)
- Certified Matrimonial Contract, Pre-nuptial Agreements, Seperate Property Agreements, ect. (if applicable)

You will not be enrolled in DROP until LASERS has received all required documents. LASERS recommends that you complete all of your retirement paperwork six months prior to your DROP start date. Your human resources personnel will assist you as you begin the retirement process.

You cannot change your decision to participate in DROP after the effective date.

End of DROP Participation

Once a member completes the DROP participation period, they must choose to either terminate employment and retire, or continue employment and resume contributions to LASERS. If you terminate employment while in DROP or on your DROP end date, you will begin receiving a monthly retirement benefit from LASERS. This monthly retirement benefit will be the same as your DROP benefit, unless you convert your unused annual and sick leave to retirement credit and/or make any purchases during DROP. If you continue employment after DROP, your agency must submit *Form 09-02A: Certification of Continued Employment* ***after DROP Participation*** to LASERS.

Once a member completes the DROP participation period, they must choose to either terminate employment and retire or continue employment, and begin contributing again to LASERS.

Interest on DROP Accounts

If you are eligible to leave your DROP account at LASERS, it may accrue interest once you have ended DROP participation or retired. Interest can be accrued until your DROP balance is depleted. The interest rate is equal to the LASERS actuarial rate of return on investments for the prior fiscal year minus 0.5 percent. This interest rate is based on a five-year actuarially smoothed return. Interest, if applicable, will be retroactively credited to your account based on your month-end account balance. If interest is earned it will be shown on your DROP annual statement which is issued in the first quarter of each year. For example, a DROP annual statement received in January 2015 would show the interest posted for July 2013 – June 2014.

Although LASERS DROP accounts do not earn interest during the DROP participation period, they are eligible to accrue interest once the participation period ends. Self-Directed Plan DROP accounts will be transferred to the third-party administrator, EMPOWER Retirement™, as soon as the DROP participation ends. LASERS will not pay any interest on these accounts; instead, you will have a selection of investment options for these funds through EMPOWER Retirement™.

Working after DROP

You may choose to continue working after your DROP participation ends. Monthly deposits to your DROP account will cease and your employee contributions as well as employer contributions will resume. When you terminate employment, you will begin receiving a monthly retirement benefit from LASERS. This will include a supplemental benefit for employment after DROP. If you work less than three months after DROP, your service credit will not be rounded up, but will be rounded to the nearest tenth.

The calculation of your supplemental benefit for working after DROP depends on whether you had a 36 month or 60 month final average compensation period when you entered DROP.

- If you had a 36 month final average compensation period when you entered DROP and you work less than three years after your DROP participation ends, your supplemental benefit will be based on your pre-DROP final average compensation. If you work three or more years after your DROP participation ends, your supplemental benefit will be based on your new 36 month after-DROP final average compensation.
- If you had a 60 month final average compensation period when you entered DROP and you work less than five years after your DROP participation ends, your supplemental benefit will be based on your pre-DROP final average compensation. If you work five or more years after your DROP participation ends, your supplemental benefit will be based on your new 60 month after-DROP final average compensation.
- Any unused annual and sick leave will be calculated based on the final average compensation calculation period when you entered DROP (36 or 60 Months). See the "Unused Annual and Sick Leave" chapter of the *Membership Handbook*.

Beth entered DROP when she had a final average compensation of $40,000.00 based on 36 months. She participated in DROP for the full 36 months and worked five years after her DROP participation ended. Her final average compensation for the time she worked after DROP was $62,000.00 based on 36 months. She has now retired and her retirement benefit is calculated in the following manner:

Drop Benefit

$40,000.00	x	.025	x	19.20	=	$19,200.00 per year
36 month average compensation		*accrual rate*		*years of service credit*		($1,600.00 per month)

Since Beth participated in DROP for the full 36 months she has $57,600.00 in her DROP account.

After DROP supplemental benefit

$62,000.00	x	.025	x	5.0	=	$7,750.00 per year
new 36 month average compensation		*accrual rate*		*after DROP service credit*		($645.83 per month)

Beth's supplemental benefit is added to her DROP benefit to find her monthly retirement benefit: $1,600.00 + $645.83 = $2,245.83, so Beth will receive $2,245.83 per month for her lifetime.

Susie entered DROP when she had a final average compensation of $35,000.00 based on 60 months. She participated in DROP for the full 36 months and worked five years after her DROP participation ended. Her final average compensation for the time she worked after DROP was $55,000.00 based on 60 months. She has now retired and her retirement benefit is calculated in the following manner:

Drop Benefit

$35,000.00	x	.025	x	19.20	=	$16,800.00 per year
60 month average compensation		*accrual rate*		*years of service credit*		($1,400.00 per month)

Since Susie participated in DROP for the full 36 months she has $50,400.00 in her DROP account.

After DROP supplemental benefit

$55,000.00	x	.025	x	5.0	=	$6,875.00 per year
new 60 month average compensation		*accrual rate*		*after DROP service credit*		($572.92 per month)

Susie's supplemental benefit is added to her DROP benefit to find her monthly retirement benefit: $1,400.00 + $572.92 = $1,972.92, so Susie will receive $1,972.92 per month for her lifetime.

Application Process

To apply for retirement after DROP, you must submit the following to LASERS:

- *Form 09-02: Certification at End of Employment*
- Form 02-01A: Authorization for Direct Rollover (if rolling over your payment for unused leave)
- *Form 04-05: Authorization for Direct Deposit*
- *Form 06-02: Insurance Premium Deduction Authorization* (if applicable)
- *Form W-4P: Withholding Certificate for Pension or Annuity Payments*. This form is not required. If the form is not submitted to LASERS, your federal tax withholding will be set to the IRS default, which is currently "Married with three allowances".
- *Form 07-01: Certification of Unused Annual and Sick Leave* (submitted by your agency)

No retirement benefits will be paid until LASERS receives all of the required documents. You can assist LASERS in promptly paying your monthly benefit by having all necessary documents on file prior to your retirement.

DROP/IBO Account Withdrawals and the Self-Directed Plan

(LAC 58:I:4101-4135)

DROP/IBO Accounts Held at LASERS

If you were eligible to retire before January 1, 2004, and have a LASERS DROP or IBO account, you can make withdrawals from your account after you terminate state service and LASERS has finalized your retirement benefit.

You may choose from the following disbursement methods:

- Rollover to a qualified tax annuity plan or IRA
- Lump-sum payment of the entire balance
- Payment of a specified amount (as requested)
- Monthly withdrawals of a specified amount
- Monthly withdrawals of an amount based on your expected lifetime
- Annual withdrawal of a specified amount

Tax penalties may apply depending on the withdrawal method selected. Lump-sum payments, one-time payments, and monthly payments where the distributions will be paid out in less than 10 years, will be subject to a mandatory 20 percent federal income tax withholding. If you are under age 59 ½, payments may also be subject to a 10 percent early withdrawal penalty. LASERS recommends that you consult a qualified tax advisor before making any decision about the withdrawal of these funds.

IRS laws dictate that withdrawals must begin no later than the year you reach age 70 ½, provided that you have retired, and are receiving monthly retirement benefits. At the beginning of each year, LASERS will notify you of the amount of your minimum required distribution for that year. If you have not met this minimum distribution by December 1, a check for the required amount will automatically be issued to you so that you will avoid any IRS penalties.

Should you die, your DROP/IBO account beneficiary will be entitled to the remaining funds in your DROP/IBO account. LASERS encourages you to consult a tax advisor for withdrawal restrictions.

Application Process

To make a withdrawal from your LASERS DROP/IBO account, you must submit the following to LASERS:

- *Form 09-03: Request for Withdrawal from DROP-IBO*
- *Form 04-05: Authorization for Direct Deposit* (for Direct Deposit only)
- *Form 02-01A: Authorization for Direct Rollover* (for rollovers only)

Self-Directed Plan DROP/IBO Accounts

Members eligible to retire on or after January 1, 2004, automatically have their DROP/IBO accounts transferred to the third-party administrator, EMPOWER Retirement™. Members who have a DROP/IBO account held at LASERS can make the irrevocable decision to transfer the balance of their DROP account to EMPOWER Retirement™.

Once your DROP/IBO account balance has been transferred to EMPOWER Retirement™, you may choose from a wide array of fixed and variable investment options. Each option is explained in the EMPOWER Retirement™ Services booklet and fund data sheets. Participation in the Self-Directed Plan (SDP) may result in the loss of principal or earnings based on market performance. Each participant agrees that neither the State of Louisiana nor LASERS is obligated for any loss in account funds.

Please contact EMPOWER Retirement™ to find out about your withdrawal options and submit all forms requesting a withdrawal to EMPOWER Retirement™. Upon your death, your designated beneficiary should contact EMPOWER Retirement™ for information regarding the DROP/IBO account.

Visit the EMPOWER Retirement™ website, www.LouisianaDCP.com, or call KeyTalk, toll free, at 800.701.8255. The website and KeyTalk are available to you 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

EMPOWER Retirement™
9100 Bluebonnet Centre Blvd., Suite 203
Baton Rouge, LA 70809
225.926.8082 or toll free 800.937.7604

Taxes

All DROP/IBO Distributions from LASERS and the SDP are exempt from Louisiana state income tax. Ordinary federal income tax will apply to any benefit received during the calendar year, and some penalties may apply for early withdrawal. Form 1099-R (federal tax) will be issued to you annually and will include any DROP/IBO withdrawals.

Disability Retirement

(La. R.S. 11:212, 217, 461-463, and LAC 58:I:2501-2523)

If you are a Regular Member and become totally disabled and incapable of performing your normal job duties, you may be eligible to start receiving a Disability retirement benefit. Disability retirement must be approved by a LASERS authorized physician.

Eligibility

You are eligible to apply for Disability retirement if you are a Regular Member, are unable to perform your work duties, and you meet both of the following criteria:

- 10 years of service at any age
- Active member at the time the disability application is submitted

If you are a Regular Member eligible for Regular retirement, including the 20 years at any age actuarially reduced retirement, you cannot apply for Disability benefits.

Benefit Accrual

Regular Members approved for Disability retirement will receive a maximum Disability retirement benefit based on an accrual rate of 2.5%. (Accrual rates for transferred service may vary.)

Chris is age 52 and has accrued 10.90 years of service credit. He has an annual final average compensation of $40,000.00. His maximum Disability retirement benefit would be calculated in the following manner:

$40,000.00	x	.025	x	10.90	=	$10,900.00 per year
average compensation		*accrual rate*		*years of service credit*		($908.33 per month)

Application Process

To apply for Disability retirement, you must submit the following to LASERS:

- *Form 04-01: Disability Retirement*. A complete application must consist of all three parts:
  - Disability Retirement Application (completed by you)
  - Disability Report (completed by your agency)
  - Attending Physician's Statement (completed by a physician)
- Copy of your medical records

If you are approved for disability retirement, your benefits will be paid in accordance with the retirement option you select on your *Form 04-01: Disability Retirement Application*. You cannot change your retirement option selection after you have submitted the *Form 04-01: Disability Retirement Application*.

Once the required documents are received by LASERS, a physician on the State Medical Disability Board will review your medical records. Based on that review, the physician will either:

- Ask for additional records or testing,
- Request an Independent Medical Exam (IME) at LASERS expense, or
- Approve you for Disability retirement.

If additional records and/or examinations are needed, the physician will not make a determination of disability until the necessary records and/or reports have been received. The physician will then submit the medical evaluation and his conclusions as to whether the member should be approved or denied for Disability retirement.

If You are Denied for Disability Retirement

If you are denied for Disability retirement, you have the right to appeal. To challenge the Board physician's denial, you must file a written appeal within 30 days of the determination.

A second examination will be performed by a State Medical Disability Board physician. You must pay the cost of the second examination. If the second physician agrees with the original physician that you are not disabled, any further appeal must be made through State court.

If the second examining physician disagrees with the findings of the first physician, a third Board physician is selected to provide a decision. The majority opinion of the three examining physicians shall be final, and any further appeal must be made through State court. You must pay the cost of the third examination, but will be reimbursed by LASERS if you are certified as disabled. If your disability claim is denied no reimbursement will be issued. If you fail to appear for an examination and the physician charges a cancellation fee, you will be responsible for this fee.

If You are Approved for Disability Retirement

If you are approved for Disability retirement, you must submit the following information to LASERS:

- *Form 04-04: Spousal Consent* (if you are married and select Maximum or Option 1, or name a beneficiary who is not your spouse) . Alternately, you may submit a Certified Matrimonial Contract, Pre-nuptial Agreement, Separate Property Agreement, etc. (if applicable).
- Copies of Social Security cards and birth certificates for you and your beneficiary(ies)
- Certified Copy of a Judgment of Divorce and/or copy of the death certificate from your former spouse (if applicable)
- *Form 04-05: Authorization for Direct Deposit*
- *Form 06-02: Insurance Premium Deduction Authorization* (if applicable)
- *Form W-4P: Withholding Certificate for Pension or Annuity Payments*. This form is not required. If the form is not submitted to LASERS, your federal tax withholding will be set to the IRS default, which is currently "Married with three allowances".
- *Form 07-01: Certification of Unused Annual and Sick Leave* (submitted by your agency)

(continued on next page)

No retirement benefits will be paid until LASERS receives all of the required documents. Your Disability retirement will be effective the day the application is received by LASERS or the day after you terminate state service, whichever is later. At the time of your Disability retirement, any unused annual and sick leave will be converted to service credit.

Earnings Limits While Disabled

If you receive Disability retirement, you may accept employment that you can perform with your disability. Earnings from employment are limited to the difference between your final average compensation, adjusted for inflation based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), and your Disability benefit. You are required to submit a notarized annual earnings statement to LASERS along with a copy of your W-2s and 1040 by May 1 of each year. These statements will be mailed to you by LASERS and require you to detail income earned from employment in the previous calendar year. LASERS may suspend and eventually revoke your disability benefit if this statement is not received in a timely manner.

Chris was approved for Disability retirement in 2005 and is currently receiving a Disability retirement benefit of $908.33 per month. He was working as an Electrical Specialist when he injured his back and could not perform his normal job duties, which included heavy lifting. He has now been offered a position as an office manager, which is acceptable and consistent with his disability since the position will not involve any lifting. His earnings will be limited as follows:

$40,000.00	x	603.9/568.9	-	$10,899.96	=	$31,560.94
average compensation		*2008 CPI/2005 CPI*		*annual disability benefit*		(annual earnings limit)

Certification of Continuing Disability

If you receive Disability retirement, you must complete *Form MSD12: Annual Attending Physician Statement* (AAPS) once each year during the first five years following your Disability retirement, and once every three years thereafter until you reach your Regular retirement age. Each year LASERS will mail the AAPS to you. This form must be completed by a physician and returned to LASERS within 30 business days. Failure to comply with certification requirements will result in the termination of your Disability benefits.

Once the AAPS is received, LASERS may require you to undergo a medical examination. If a medical examination is required, LASERS will schedule the appointment with a State Medical Disability Board or appointed alternate physician, and notify you of the appointment time and place in writing. LASERS must pay the cost of this examination. If you fail to appear for this examination and the physician charges a cancellation fee, you will be responsible for this fee.

Returning to Active Service (La. R.S. 11:224 and 11:225)

If you return to active state service you have two choices:

- Return to work and terminate your Disability retirement benefits. You will become a contributing member of LASERS, and any service credit accrued prior to your Disability retirement will be restored, or
- Return to work for a six-month trial period. Your Disability benefits will be suspended while you return to work. Employee and employer contributions should be paid during the length of the trial period. If you terminate employment during the six-month trial period, your benefits will resume without you having to reapply for Disability retirement and employee contributions will be refunded to you. If you continue working for six months or longer, your Disability benefits will be terminated, and employee and employer contributions will resume.

If you return to work for at least three years, the time for which you received Disability benefits will be credited to you for retirement eligibility, but not for the calculation of benefits. In the event that this occurs, your eligibility for Regular retirement or DROP may be affected.

Chris had 10.90 years of service credit when he began Disability retirement on January 1, 2005. He returned to work on May 1, 2005, for a six-month trial period. He continued to work past this six-month trial period so his Disability benefits were terminated, and all previous service credit was restored. He has now worked over three years so he receives retirement eligibility for the time which he was on Disability retirement. His total service credit is calculated below:

	Eligibility Service Credit	Computation Service Credit
Initial service credit	10.90	10.90
Credit for time while on Disability retirement	.40	0
Service credit earned after returning to work	3.40	3.40
Total service credit	14.70	14.30

He currently has 14.70 years for retirement eligibility, and 14.30 years for the calculation of benefits.

Application Process

To return to active service after disability retirement, you must submit the following to LASERS:

- *Form 10-02A: Re-employment of Disability Retiree*

Survivor Benefits for Regular Members

Hired Prior to January 1, 2011 (La. R.S. 11:471 and LAC 58.I.1901 - 1909)

As a Regular Member hired prior to January 1, 2011, survivor benefits may be payable at your death to your spouse and/or child(ren). If you die while in active state service or have at least 20 years of service, and are not retired, your spouse, minor children, and totally physically handicapped or mentally disabled children may be eligible to receive survivor benefits.

The maximum total benefit payable to all survivors is 75 percent of your average compensation if you have qualified surviving children; or 50 percent to your surviving spouse, if you have no qualified surviving children. If there is a benefit for a surviving spouse and qualified surviving children, the surviving spouse receives one-third of the total benefit payable, and the children receive two-thirds of the total benefit. If there is more than one surviving child, the surviving child portion is divided equally among all qualified children. Monthly benefits will become effective the day after death. If your spouse and/or child(ren) are not eligible for survivor benefits, a refund of your employee contributions wil be paid to the last named beneficiary on file with LASERS.

The maximum total benefit payable to all survivors is 75 percent of your average compensation if you have qualified surviving children; or 50 percent to your surviving spouse, if you have no qualified surviving children.

LASERS should be notified immediately of a member's death. LASERS may require survivors to provide proof annually or at other times that they are still legally entitled to survivor benefits. Survivor benefits are not subject to Louisiana inheritance taxes. Survivor benefits are not payable to survivors of retired members or survivors of participants in the DROP program (except for members in the Judicial Plan).

Children Qualified to Receive a Survivor Benefit

In order for your child(ren) to be eligible for survivor benefits, the child must qualify as a minor child or a totally physically handicapped or mentally disabled child.

A minor child is an unmarried child under age 18 or an unmarried full-time student under age 23. A full-time student must be enrolled in a high school, vocational-technical school, GED program, college, or university. Students must attend at least 80 percent of enrolled classes to remain eligible for benefits. Full-time status must be certified at the beginning of the school semester by submitting Form MSD14: Certification of Student Status, and verified mid-way through the school semester by submitting *Form MSD40: Verification of Student Status* to LASERS. This form must be certified by a school or college official.

A totally physically handicapped or mentally disabled child must have met this criterion at the time of death of the member and they must be dependent upon the surviving spouse or other legal guardian.

The qualified child must also meet one of the following criteria to be eligible for benefits:

- Child of a marriage of a member
- Biological child of a female member
- Child of a male member acknowledged under Louisiana law
- Legally adopted child of a member

LASERS will pay your qualified surviving children 75 percent of your average monthly compensation or $300.00 per month, whichever is greater, if:

- You are in state service at time of your death, and accumulated at least five years service credit, at least two years of which were earned immediately prior to your death, or
- You accumulated 20 or more years service credit, whether or not you were in state service at time of your death.

Benefits for minors under age 18 are paid in care of their legal guardian under the minor's Social Security number. If your surviving spouse is entitled to a benefit, one-third of the benefit will be assigned to your spouse, and two-thirds will be designated to your minor children. Minor children over age 18 who are not disabled, if still eligible, will be paid directly.

Spouse Qualified to Receive a Survivor Benefit

If you are married at the time of your death, your spouse may be eligible to receive a survivor benefit. A surviving spouse without minor children will receive 50 percent of your average monthly compensation or $200.00 per month, whichever is greater, if:

- You accumulated at least 10 years service credit with two years being earned immediately prior to death, and you are in state service at time of death, or
- You accumulated at least 20 years service credit, whether or not you are in state service at time of death, and
- You and your surviving spouse were married for at least one year before your death.

This is a lifetime benefit regardless of whether your spouse remarries or has other income.

Physically Handicapped or Mentally Disabled Children Qualified to Receive a Survivor Benefit

Your surviving physically handicapped or mentally disabled children may be eligible for a benefit not to exceed 75 percent of your average monthly compensation or $300.00, whichever is greater. This benefit is payable, regardless of the child's age, if the child is incapacitated at the time of your death. The child must be dependent on your surviving spouse or other legal guardian. This benefit is payable for their lifetime. If there is more than one qualified surviving child, the benefit will be divided equally among all qualified children, including disabled children.

Form MSD52: Certification for Disabled Survivor must be submitted to LASERS annually.

Alternate Distribution of Benefits for Surviving Spouse and Adult Children

There are two options for an alternate distribution of survivor benefits available if you have adult children and a surviving spouse. One of these options may be chosen even if you have minor children at the time of the election, but it shall not become effective until there are no longer any children of your current or prior marriage who are qualified to receive survivor benefits. The benefit established is based on the age and mortality of your surviving spouse and will terminate upon the death of your surviving spouse. The benefit is payable to the children and surviving spouse only for the lifetime of your surviving spouse.

The first option is available under the following circumstances:

- You have no minor children from either current marriage or prior marriage,
- You have adult children from a prior marriage, and
- You have adult children from your current marriage.

If the above conditions are met, you and your spouse can submit a written agreement to direct LASERS to divide what would normally be your spouse's benefit in any agreed proportion to your children and your spouse. The written agreement must clearly set forth the agreed proportionate amounts. The agreement is automatically revoked if you and your spouse divorce. Also, either you or your spouse can revoke the agreement by written notice to LASERS prior to your death.

The second option is available under the following circumstances:

- You have no minor children from either current marriage or prior marriage,
- You have adult children of a prior marriage, and
- You have no adult children from your current marriage.

If the above conditions are met, you may direct, in writing, the benefit be split between your spouse and adult children of your prior marriage. The split is proportional, with your surviving spouse receiving a share based on the ratio of the length of your current marriage while in state service to your total state service.

If you were in state service 18 years and were married to your current spouse nine years, the ratio would be nine-eighteenths (9/18)--or one-half (1/2). Your surviving spouse would receive one-half (1/2) of the benefit and the adult children of your prior marriage would share one-half (1/2) of the benefit.

Trust for Minor Children

Any benefit due the qualified surviving children may be paid to a trust created under Louisiana law for each child.

Lump-sum Payment to a Beneficiary

If you have less than five years service credit, or have no surviving spouse or qualified surviving children, your survivors are not entitled to monthly benefits. In this case, your last named beneficiary or your estate will receive a lump-sum payment of your total employee contributions. Funds received by a beneficiary are not subject to Louisiana inheritance taxes. However, if the funds become part of your estate, they then become subject to state inheritance taxes.

Application Process

To apply for survivor benefits, your beneficiary(ies) must submit the following to LASERS:

- *Form 03-01: Application for Survivor Benefits*
- Copy of the death certificate for the member
- Copies of Social Security cards and birth certificates for all survivors and the member
- Certified Copy of a Judgment of Divorce and/or copy of the death certificate of the member's former spouse (if applicable)
- Copy of Marriage Certificates of all survivor applicants
- *Form MSD14: Certification of Student Status* for all student survivor applicants
- *Form MSD52: Certification for Disabled Survivor* for any physically handicapped or mentally disabled child applicants
- *Form 04-05: Authorization for Direct Deposit* (required for the spouse of the deceased member)
- *Form 06-02: Insurance Premium Deduction Authorization* (if applicable)
- *Form W-4P: Withholding Certificate for Pension or Annuity Payments*. This form is not required. If the form is not submitted to LASERS, your federal tax withholding will be set as "Married with three exemptions."

Survivor Benefits for Regular Members

Hired on or After January 1, 2011 (La. R.S. 11:471.1)

As a Regular Member hired on or after January 1, 2011, survivor benefits may be payable at your death to your beneficiary(ies). If you die while in active state service or have at least 20 years of service, and are not retired, your spouse, minor children, and totally physically handicapped or mentally disabled children may be eligible to receive survivor benefits. If there is more than one surviving child, the surviving child portion is divided equally among all qualified children. Monthly benefits will become effective the day after death. Survivor benefits are also payable to minor child survivors of retired members or participants in the DROP program.

Monthly benefits will become effective the day after death. Survivor benefits are also payable to minor child survivors of retired members or participants in the DROP program.

LASERS should be notified immediately of a member's death. LASERS may require survivors to provide proof annually or at other times that they are still legally entitled to survivor benefits. Survivor benefits are not subject to Louisiana inheritance taxes.

Children Qualified to Receive a Survivor Benefit

In order for your child to qualify for survivor benefits, you must have at least five years of service credit. The child must qualify as a minor child or a totally physically handicapped or mentally disabled child.

A minor child is an unmarried child under age 18 or an unmarried full-time student under age 23. A full-time student must be enrolled in a high school, vocational-technical school, GED program, college, or university. Students must attend at least 80 percent of enrolled classes to remain eligible for benefits. Fulltime status must be certified at the beginning of the school semester by submitting *Form MSD14: Certification of Student Status*, and verified mid-way through the school semester by submitting *Form MSD40: Verification of Student Status* to LASERS. This form must be certified by a school or college official.

A totally physically handicapped or mentally disabled child must have met this criterion at the time of death of the member and they must be dependent upon the surviving spouse or other legal guardian.

The qualified surviving child must also meet one of the following criteria to be eligible for benefits:

- Child of a marriage of a member
- Biological child of a female member
- Child of a male member acknowledged under Louisiana law
- Legally adopted child of a member

LASERS will pay your qualified surviving children 50 percent of the benefit for a surviving spouse with children (even if there is no surviving spouse) for each child up to a maximum of two children (see the section below on Children and Spouse Qualified to Receive a Survivor Benefit to determine the benefit for a surviving spouse). This amount will be divided equally among all eligible children. When one child is no longer eligible, the benefit will be redistributed among the eligible children. A totally physically handicapped or mentally disabled child will remain eligible for benefits, regardless of age, unless subsequent changes in the child's condition cause the child to no longer be dependent.

Benefits for minors under age 18 are paid in care of their legal guardian under the minor's Social Security number. Minor children over age 18 who are not disabled, if still eligible, will be paid directly.

No surviving child may receive more than one survivor's benefit. If two benefits are applicable, only the larger benefit will be paid.

Spouse Qualified to Receive a Survivor Benefit

If you are married at the time of your death, your spouse may be eligible to receive a survivor benefit. A surviving spouse without minor children will receive the Option 2A equivalent of the retirement benefit that would have been due the member based upon their years of service and applicable accrual rate (regardless of years of service) or $600.00, whichever is greater, if:

- You accumulated at least 10 years service credit with two years being earned immediately prior to death, and you are in state service at time of death, or
- You accumulated at least 20 years service credit, whether or not you are in state service at time of death, and
- You and your surviving spouse were married for at least one year before your death.

If you are eligible for Regular retirement on your date of death, this will be a lifetime benefit regardless of whether your spouse remarries or has other income. If you are not eligible for Regular retirement on your date of death, this is not a lifetime benefit and will cease upon remarriage. Benefits will resume upon the death or divorce from the new spouse.

Children and Spouse Qualified to Receive a Survivor Benefit

If you are married at the time of your death and have a qualified surviving child/children, your spouse and qualified child/children may be eligible to receive a survivor benefit. A surviving spouse will receive 50 percent of the maximum retirement benefit that would have been due

the member based upon their years of service and applicable accrual rate (regardless of years of service) or $600.00, whichever is greater, and the qualified child/children will each receive 50 percent of the spouse's benefit (up to a maximum of two children), if:

- You accumulated at least five years service credit with two years being earned immediately prior to death, and you are in state service at time of death, or
- You accumulated at least 20 years service credit, whether or not you are in state service at time of death.

The total benefits paid to a surviving spouse and qualified surviving child/children (as long as the spouse and child/children are both eligible for benefits) shall not be less than the Option 2A equivalent for the surviving spouse. The children's benefit will be divided equally among all eligible children. When one child is no longer eligible, the benefit will be redistributed among the eligible children.

Benefits for minors under age 18 are paid in care of their legal guardian under the minor's Social Security number. Minor children over age 18 who are not disabled, if still eligible, will be paid directly.

No qualified surviving child may receive more than one survivor's benefit. If two benefits are applicable, only the larger benefit will be paid.

If you are eligible for Regular retirement on your date of death, this benefit will be paid to your spouse until your qualified surviving children cease to be eligible for survivor benefits, regardless of whether your spouse remarries or has other income. When all children cease to be eligible for a survivor benefit, your spouse's eligibility and benefit amount will be determined based upon the provisions for a Spouse Qualified to Receive a Survivor Benefit. If you are not eligible for Regular retirement on your date of death, the spouse's benefit will cease upon remarriage. Benefits will resume upon the death or divorce from the new spouse.

Physically Handicapped or Mentally Disabled Children Qualified to Receive a Survivor Benefit

Your surviving physically handicapped or mentally disabled children may be eligible for a benefit. This benefit is payable, regardless of the child's age, if the child is incapacitated at the time of your death. The child must be dependent on your surviving spouse or other legal guardian. This benefit is payable for their lifetime. If there is more than one qualified surviving child, the benefit will be divided equally among all qualified children, including disabled children.

Form MSD52: Certification for Disabled Survivor must be submitted to LASERS annually.

Trust for Minor Children

Any benefit due the qualified surviving minor children may be paid to a trust created under Louisiana law for each child.

Lump-sum Payment to a Beneficiary

If you have less than five years of service credit, or have no surviving spouse or qualified surviving children, your survivors are not entitled to monthly benefits. In this case, your last named beneficiary or your estate will receive a lump-sum payment of your total employee contributions. Funds received by a beneficiary are not subject to Louisiana inheritance taxes. However, if the funds become part of your estate, they then become subject to state inheritance taxes.

Application Process

To apply for survivor benefits, your beneficiary(ies) must submit the following to LASERS:

- *Form 03-00: Application for Survivor Benefits*
- Copy of the death certificate for the member
- Copies of Social Security cards and birth certificates for all survivors and the member
- Certified Copy of a Judgment of Divorce and/or copy of the death certificate of the member's former spouse (if applicable)
- Copy of Marriage Certificates of all survivor applicants
- *Form MSD14: Certification of Student Status* for all student survivor applicants
- *Form MSD52: Certification for Disabled Survivor* for any physically handicapped or mentally disabled child applicants
- *Form 04-05: Authorization for Direct Deposit* (required for the spouse of the deceased member)
- *Form 06-02: Insurance Premium Deduction Authorization* (if applicable)
- *Form W-4P: Withholding Certificate for Pension or Annuity Payments*. This form is not required. If the form is not submitted to LASERS, your federal tax withholding will be set as "Married with three exemptions"

Re-employed Retirees

(La. R.S. 11:416)

If you retired regularly and return to state service in a LASERS eligible position, you must select from one of three options when you are rehired (if you retired under Disability, see the Disability Retirement section for re-employment options). The selection is irrevocable, and is effective for the full term of your re-employment. If you return to state service in any capacity, you will be considered a re-employed retiree.

LASERS retirees who retired with at least ten years of service credit are subject to re-employed retiree provisions when returning to work in positions including, but not limited to:

- Part time
- Work-as-needed (WAE), except under the Department of Revenue
- Temporary
- Job appointments
- Seasonal employees

These restrictions do not apply to any member who retired prior to June 30, 2001, was re-employed prior to May 9, 2002, and has remained continually employed. These options do not apply if you are employed in private industry or you are in a public position that is not eligible to participate in LASERS.

Re-employed Retiree Option 1A – 50 Percent Earnings Limitation

You may elect to limit your earnings in any fiscal year to 50 percent of your annual retirement benefit. The earnings limit is calculated by taking your monthly benefit, adjusted for inflation based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U), divided by two, multiplied by 12. You will continue to receive your monthly retirement benefit, and no contributions will be paid to LASERS. You should consider other options if your anticipated earnings for the fiscal year will exceed the earnings limit. At the end of each fiscal year, your agency will report your actual earnings to LASERS. If your actual earnings exceed the limit, you will owe LASERS the amount of the excess earnings. You are responsible for monitoring your earnings limit.

Mary retired in 2005, and currently receives a monthly retirement benefit of $4,500.00. She returned to work in August 2008 under Option 1A, so her earnings limit for the 2008-2009 fiscal year is calculated as follows:

$54,000.00 *annual retirement benefit*	x	211.05/191.0 *2008 CPI-U / 2005 CPI-U*	/	2	=	$29,834.19 (earnings limit for the fiscal year)

Mary's earnings limit for the 2008–2009 fiscal year is $29,834.19. Regardless of when the time is worked within the fiscal year, her total earnings for the fiscal year cannot exceed this limit.

You may be exempt from an earnings limitation under Re-employed Retiree Option 1A if you have been retired one year, and are appointed by the Secretary of State to fill the position of Commissioner of Elections.

Re-employed Retiree Option 1B

If you retired with 30 years of service credit and are at least 70 years of age, you can select Re-employed Retiree Option 1B. You will be exempt from any suspension or reduction in benefits so that you may receive your full retirement benefit and your salary without any limits. If you elected to convert your unused leave to credit at the time of retirement, it cannot be used to meet the 30 year service credit requirement.

Re-employed Retiree Option 2 – Regain LASERS Membership

You may regain membership in LASERS by repaying all benefits received since you retired plus interest at an actuarial rate. LASERS will send you an invoice stating the total amount owed. Once the invoice is paid in full, all of your service credit will be restored as if you had not retired. You will become an active member of LASERS, and employee and employer contributions will resume. ***This option is not available if you participated in the Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP), took the Initial Benefit Option (IBO), or retired with an early retirement. (Note: The 20 years at any age retirement option is not an early retirement.)***

Re-employed Retiree Option 3 – Suspension of Retirement Benefits

You may suspend your retirement benefits effective the date of your re-employment, and become a contributing member of LASERS. Employee and employer contributions must be paid, and there is no limit on earnings. Upon subsequent retirement, your original retirement benefit will resume.

As an Option 3 Re-employed Retiree, if you work less than three years, your employee contributions will be refunded to you. If you work three or more years, a supplemental benefit will be calculated for the additional employment based on your service credit and average compensation for that time. Your benefit will resume effective the day following your termination date. If you should die during this period of employment, benefits will be paid to your named beneficiary based on the retirement option you selected at the time of your original retirement.

You may be exempt from suspension of retirement benefits under Re-employed Retiree Option 3 if you have 30 years of service credit with LASERS, have been retired for one year, and you are appointed by the Governor to an unclassified position.

Application Process

To return to work as a re-employed retiree, you must submit the following to LASERS:

- *Form 10-02: Re-employment of Retiree*. If the form is not submitted within 45 days of your employment date, you will be re-employed under the provisions of Re-employed Retiree Option 3. You and the employing agency shall be responsible for retirement contributions from the date of your employment to your date of termination. You shall be responsible for the repayment of all funds received from LASERS since the date of your re-employment.

Community Property and Divorce

Retirement benefits, including DROP or IBO funds received or accumulated during marriage, are generally considered community property. Any contributions to a retirement plan made during the marriage will also be viewed as community property by a Louisiana court, and may be subject to division.

Louisiana is a community property state. All property and debts acquired during the marriage are typically split equally, unless the spouses have a legally binding agreement or are subject to a court ruling to the contrary. Retirement benefits, including DROP or IBO funds received or accumulated during marriage, are generally considered community property. Any contributions to a retirement plan made during the marriage will also be viewed as community property by a Louisiana court, and may be subject to division. Members should be aware that an ex-spouse might be entitled to a portion of your retirement benefit according to that spouse's community property interest.

LASERS requires that a legally acceptable court order be on file before any community assets are divided. This court order will dictate how your benefits will be divided between you and your former spouse. If such an order is not presented to the system, the retiree, not LASERS, will be held responsible for the payment of funds which may have been due a former spouse.

Prenuptial Agreements

State law allows spouses to elect to continue under the separate property regime they had as unmarried persons under limited circumstances. If you and your spouse have an agreement known as a marriage contract, marital agreement, or prenuptial agreement, you must provide a certified copy to LASERS. You must also file a notarized affidavit, ***Married Members with Separate Property Agreements,*** affirming the continuing existence of this agreement. The affidavit is available on LASERS website and should be filed no sooner than 90 days prior to your retirement date.

Remarriage

If you have been married multiple times, your retirement benefits might be split with more than one of your former spouses. You should contact an attorney with any questions that you may have.

Common Law Marriages

Louisiana does not recognize common law marriages. A member is not required to split benefits unless they were legally married.

Spousal Consent

If you select an option that does not provide a monthly benefit of at least 50 percent for your spouse or you name a beneficiary who is not your spouse, your spouse must complete *Form 04-04: Spousal Consent*, and submit the notarized form to LASERS.

Spousal Consent is not required when there is:

- An agreement or court judgment to maintain separate property,
- Judgment of Divorce,
- Interdiction or court order appointing a guardian for your spouse (in which case, the guardian or curator may sign), or
- If you were abandoned by your spouse you must submit:
    - A notarized affidavit attesting to the fact that you have been abandoned and have taken steps to locate your spouse. The methods used to locate your spouse should be detailed in the affidavit, and
    - A certificate from the local newspaper certifying that a legal notice has been run for three days requesting information on the whereabouts of your spouse; or
    - A certified Court Order declaring that your spouse is an absentee or has abandoned you.

Garnishment of Pension (La. R.S. 11:292 and 11:405)

Retirement benefits or refunds of accumulated contributions paid to a LASERS member, former member, or retiree are generally exempt from garnishment or court-ordered assignment except in the case of a felony conviction or to pay child support or to satisfy a court-ordered community property division ordering child support.

Cost-of-Living Increases

(La. R.S. 11:542)

A System-generated cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) is possible when the LASERS Employee Experience Account, funded by excess revenues generated by the LASERS investments program, contains sufficient monies to fund an increase. The fund accumulates investment gains, above the assumed 7.75 percent actuarial return, after the excess returns exceed an amount based on the size of the System's assets, starting at $100 million. When there are sufficient funds in the Experience Account, the LASERS Board of Trustees may recommend to the Legislature that a COLA be approved.

To be eligible for a System-generated COLA, you must have reached the age of 60 as of June 30 of the year that a COLA is authorized by the legislature. In addition, you must have been retired effective June 30 of the previous year. Your beneficiary may be eligible for COLA after your death if you would have turned 60 as of June 30 of the year the COLA is authorized, and if you or your beneficiary, or both combined, have received benefits since June 30 of the previous year.

COLAs will be limited to every other year (until the System is 85 percent funded) and will be limited to the first $60,000 of benefit (indexed to the CPI-U as of July 1, 2015) based on the following chart:

System Funding	System earns at least 8.25%	System earns ARR[1], but not 8.25%	System does not earn ARR
Less than **55%**	None	None	None
At least **55%** but less than **65%**	Lesser of **1.5%** or CPI-U[2]	Lesser of **1.5%** or CPI-U	None
At least **65%** but less than **75%**	Lesser of **2%** or CPI-U	Lesser of **2%** or CPI-U	None
At least **75%** but less than **80%**	Lesser of **2.5%** or CPI-U	Lesser of **2%** or CPI-U	None
At least **80%**	Lesser of **3%** or CPI-U	Lesser of **2%** or CPI-U	Lesser of **2%** or CPI-U

[1]*ARR is the Assumed Rate of Return for the System, currently 7¾% for the 12 month period ending on June 30 of the previous year.*
[2]*CPI-U is the Consumer Price Index – Urban.*

It is also possible for you to self-fund an annual COLA in addition to System-generated COLAs. For more information on this type of COLA, see the chapter on Retirement Options and the Self-Funded COLA.

Medicare, Social Security Offsets, and Insurance

You may be entitled to Medicare coverage if you are a state retiree who has paid Medicare tax, the spouse or former spouse of a state employee who has paid Medicare tax, a state retiree receiving a Disability retirement from LASERS, or the spouse of a state Disability retiree.

Counselors with the Louisiana Department of Insurance Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) are available to answer questions concerning Medicare eligibility, preventative services, and Medicare cost-savings programs. Visit www.ldi.la.gov/SHIIP or call 1.800.259.5300 for more information.

If you have earned a LASERS benefit, and are entitled to receive a Social Security benefit, based on your earnings or the earnings of a spouse, your Social Security benefit may be reduced. The reduction is because of federal laws known as the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset, which are designed to offset the amount of Social Security benefits paid to those eligible to receive some other type of public pension.

While LASERS cannot provide you with an estimate of your Social Security benefits, you may obtain this information from their website. Visit www.socialsecurity.gov prior to your appointment with them, create an account, and print a verification letter. As of February 2014, Social Security field offices cannot provide these letters, so it is important to visit their website.

Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP)

The Windfall Elimination Provision affects the amount of your Social Security retirement or disability benefit if you also receive a pension from a government agency, such as LASERS. This provision does not apply to survivors' benefits. A modified benefit formula is used to calculate your benefit amount, resulting in a lower Social Security benefit.

You may be able to avoid this offset if you meet one of the following criteria:

- You were age 62 or disabled before 1986
- You qualified for a LASERS retirement benefit (including a reduced benefit with 10 years of service credit) before September 1, 1985
- You have at least 30 years of "substantial" earnings in a job where you paid Social Security taxes. If you have between 21 and 29 years of "substantial" earnings, you will not be subject to the full reduction.
- You repaid a refund of contributions for service credit earned on or before September 1, 1985 prior to application for retirement and this repayment would have qualified you for a LASERS retirement benefit before September 1, 1985.

LASERS can provide you with a letter indicating the date of your first eligibility for retirement that you can submit to the Social Security Administration. Please submit a written request to LASERS for this information.

Government Pension Offset (GPO)

The Government Pension Offset affects the amount of your Social Security spouse's or widower's benefit if you also receive a pension from a government agency, such as LASERS. Your Social Security benefit may be reduced by two-thirds of your government pension.

You may be able to avoid this offset if you meet one of the following criteria:

- You were eligible to retire before December 1982, and you meet all of the requirements for Social Security spouse's benefits in effect in January 1977
- You were eligible to retire before July 1, 1983, and were receiving one-half of your support from your spouse

LASERS can provide you with a letter indicating the date of your first eligibility for retirement that you can submit to the Social Security Administration. Please submit a written request to LASERS for this information.

The benefit formulas are complex, so we recommend that you contact the Social Security Administration for a calculation of any possible reductions.

You can also visit www.socialsecurity.gov/gpo-wep/ for additional information.

Insurance

If you have questions regarding your health and/or life insurance coverage, please contact your employing agency. In the event that you cannot obtain the necessary information from your agency, please contact:

Office of Group Benefits:
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 66678, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70896
Website: www.groupbenefits.org
Telephone: Toll-free 800.272.8451 or 225.925.6625
Street Address: 1201 N. 3rd Street, Ste G-159, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70802

LASERS will make the deduction of your insurance premium in accordance with information received from the Office of Group Benefits. It may be a few months after you retire before your insurance premium is deducted from your LASERS retirement check. Please contact the Office of Group Benefits to determine if you must pay your initial insurance premiums directly to them. Your premium will be subject to possible increases or decreases each fiscal year. LASERS does not have access to your insurance records.

Health Insurance Premiums

The premiums for health insurance coverage paid by any retiree participating in the Office of Group Benefits program, who has transferred service credit to the HAZ PLAN and retires with 12 years of service at age 55 or 25 years of service at any age, will be increased by an amount sufficient to pay for any increase in the employer's premiums resulting from his retirement pursuant to such sections. There is no increase for those who retire with 20 years of service at any age. NOTE: The health insurance increase is unique to the HAZ PLAN and is not impacted by the Office of Group Benefits Retiree Participation Schedule.

Hazardous Duty Services Plan (HAZ PLAN)

(La. R.S. 11:611-621)

This chapter pertains to Hazardous Duty personnel employed on or after January 1, 2011, and those employees in Hazardous Duty Positions employed prior to January 1, 2011, who made the affirmative choice to join the HAZ PLAN (HAZ PLAN Members).

Please refer to the chapters on Regular Members if a topic is not covered in this chapter.

Persons Eligible for HAZ PLAN (La. R.S. 11:612(2) & (2.1))

The following positions qualify for the HAZ PLAN:

- Wildlife Agents of the enforcement division of the Department of Wildlife & Fisheries;
- Wardens, correctional officers, security personnel, and probation and parole officers employed by the Department of Public Safety and Corrections;
- Employees of the bridge police section of the Crescent City Connection Division of the Department of Transportation and Development;
- Full-time law enforcement personnel, supervisors, and administrators who are employed with the Department of Revenue, office of alcohol and tobacco control, who are P.O.S.T.-certified, who have the power to arrest, and who hold a commission from such office;
- Peace officers, as defined by R.S. 40:2402(3)(a), employed by the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, office of state police, other than state troopers;
- Arson investigators employed by the Office of the State Fire Marshall who are P.O.S.T.-certified, who have the power to arrest, and who hold a commission from such office;
- Park rangers employed by the Department of Culture, Recreation & Tourism, Office of State Parks, who are P.O.S.T.-certified, who have the power to arrest, and who hold a commission from such office;
- Campus police officers employed by any institution of postsecondary education, who are P.O.S.T.-certified, who have the power to arrest, and who hold a commission as required for employment as such officers;
- Hospital security officers employed by Louisiana State University, Health Sciences Center, who are P.O.S.T.-certified, who have the power to arrest, and who hold a commission as required for employment as such officers;
- Investigators of the Department of Justice who are employed in positions required to be P.O.S.T.-certified;
- Investigators of the office of state inspector general who are employed in positions required to be P.O.S.T.-certified;
- Commissioned employees of the Harbor Police Department of the Port of New Orleans, first hired on or after July 1, 2014; and
- All personnel employed in a position required to be P.O.S.T.-certified, who have the power to arrest, and who hold a commission as required for employment in such positions, who are otherwise members of LASERS and are not members of any other retirement system.

Persons whose first employment making them eligible for membership in a state system occurred on or after January 1, 2011, will automatically be enrolled in the HAZ PLAN. Persons employed in these positions prior to January 1, 2011, are eligible to join the HAZ PLAN. See the chapter on Transition to Hazardous Duty Services Plan (HAZ PLAN) for more information on how to join.

Contribution Rate (La. R.S. 11:62(5)(g))

HAZ PLAN Members pay a contribution rate of 9.5 percent.

Retirement Eligibility (La. R.S. 11:614)

If you are a HAZ PLAN Member, you become eligible for retirement upon reaching one of the following criteria:

- 12 years of service credit at age 55
- 25 years of service credit any age
- 20 years of service at any age, with an actuarially reduced benefit (Deferred Retirement Option Plan [DROP] participation and retirement with an Initial Benefit Option [IBO] are not available to members who choose this option). The actuarial reduction is based on the number of months you are away from HAZ PLAN eligibility for an unreduced retirement. This reduction can be affected depending on whether you are in state service or out of state service at the time of your retirement.

All years must be worked as a member of the HAZ PLAN, unless you transferred your prior service into the HAZ PLAN.

Under HAZ PLAN retirement, you will not select a retirement option as your benefits are directed by statute.

If you are a member of the HAZ PLAN, and do not meet the eligibility requirements described above, you may retire with five years of service credit at age 60. If you retire under this option, your benefit will be calculated at 2.5 percent of your average compensation and will be paid in accordance with the provisions described in the chapter titled "Retirement Options and the Self-Funded COLA." The retirement benefit and survivor benefit provisions of the HAZ PLAN will not apply if you retire under this option.

Benefit Accrual

If your last 10 years of service were worked in a hazardous duty position, you will receive 3.33 percent of your average compensation per year for all years worked in or transferred and upgraded to the HAZ PLAN.

If your last 10 years of service were worked in a hazardous duty position and you transferred but did not upgrade your prior service into the HAZ PLAN, you will receive credit for your prior service at the accrual rate at which it was earned.

If your last 10 years of service were not worked in a hazardous duty position, you will receive 2.5 percent of your average compensation per year for all years worked in the HAZ PLAN and upgraded service will be paid at the accrual rate at which it was earned (if you had accrued prior service credit in another hazardous duty services plan at the 3.33 percent accrual rate, you maintain this accrual rate for those years of service).

Your average compensation will be based on your highest successive 60 months of earnings.

If you have unused accumulated leave, it will be calculated at 3.33 percent of your average compensation, assuming you have the requisite last 10 years of hazardous duty service. If you have service that was not accrued at 3.33 percent, your unused leave percentage will be pro-rated depending on the years of service.

Robert had prior service as a member of the Bridge Police Plan and elected to join the HAZ PLAN. He transferred 27.2 years into the HAZ PLAN and has now worked 2.8 years in the HAZ PLAN. He is retiring at age 51 with 30 years of service credit. Since his last 10 years of service were worked in a hazardous duty position, he will receive 3.33 percent of his average compensation per year for all years worked in the HAZ PLAN. He has an annual final average compensation of $62,000.00, so his base retirement benefit would be calculated in the following manner:

$62,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.025 *accrual rate*	x	27.20 *years of service as Bridge Police*	=	$42,160.00 per year ($3,513.33 per month)
$62,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.0333 *accrual rate*	x	2.80 *years of service in the HAZ PLAN*	=	$5,780.88 per year ($481.74 per month)

Total benefit = $47,940.88 per year ($3,995.07 per month)

He has decided to convert 1.8 years of unused accumulated leave so his leave benefit would be calculated in the following manner:

27.20 *years of service as Bridge Police*	/	30.0 *total years of service*	=	.906 (rounded to 91%)
2.80 *years of service in the HAZ PLAN*	/	30.0 *total years of service*	=	.093 (rounded to 9%)

91% of his total leave credit of 1.8 years = 1.638 (rounded to 1.60)
9% of his total leave credit of 1.8 years = .162 (rounded to .20)
He will receive an accrual rate of 2.5% for 1.60 years and 3.33% for .20 years.

$62,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.025 *accrual rate*	x	1.60 *years of unused leave*	=	$2,480.00 per year ($206.66 per month)
$62,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.0333 *accrual rate*	x	.20 *years of unused leave*	=	$412.92 per year ($34.41 per month)

Total benefit for unused leave = $2,892.92 per year ($241.07 per month)

Total retirement benefit =	**$3,995.07** ***retirement benefit***	**+**	**$241.07** ***converted leave benefit***	**=**	**$4,236.14 per month**

Susan had prior service as a member of the Bridge Police Plan and elected to join the HAZ PLAN. She transferred and upgraded 24.4 years into the HAZ PLAN and has now worked 2.8 years in the HAZ PLAN. She is retiring at age 51 with 27.2 years of service credit. Since her last 10 years of service were worked in a hazardous duty position, she will receive 3.33 percent of her average compensation per year for all years worked in or transferred and upgraded to the HAZ PLAN. She has an annual final average compensation of $62,000.00, so her base retirement benefit would be calculated in the following manner:

$62,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.0333 *accrual rate*	x	27.20 *total years of service*	=	$56,157.12 per year ($4,679.76 per month)
$62,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.0333 *accrual rate*	x	1.80 *years of unused leave*	=	$3,716.28 per year ($309.69 per month)

Total retirement benefit =	**$4,679.76** ***retirement benefit***	**+**	**$309.69** ***converted leave benefit***	**=**	**$4,989.45 per month**

Limits on Final Average Compensation (La. R.S. 11:612(1))

When calculating your retirement benefit, the earnings used for your average compensation may be capped in order to avoid excessive spikes in compensation.

The earnings to be considered for the 13th through the 24th month shall not exceed 115 percent of the earnings of the 1st through the 12th month. The earnings to be considered for the 25th through the 36th month shall not exceed 115 percent of the earnings of the 13th through the 24th month. The earnings to be considered for the 37th through the 48th month shall not exceed 115 percent of the earnings of the 25th through the 36th month. The earnings for the final 12 months shall not exceed 115 percent of the earnings of the 37th through the 48th month.

Disability Benefits (disability not incurred in the line of duty)

If you become totally disabled and incapable of performing your normal job duties, you may be eligible to start receiving a Disability retirement benefit. If your last 10 years of service credit were in a hazardous duty position, your accrual rate will be 3.33 percent for all years of service earned in or transferred and upgraded to the HAZ PLAN. See the chapter on Disability Retirement for Regular Members.

Disability Benefits (disability incurred in the line of duty)

If you become totally and permanently disabled resulting solely from injuries sustained in the performance of your official duties, you may retire with 75 percent of your final average compensation, regardless of your years of service.

For the details on Disability Retirement application, certification, and continuing benefits, see the chapter on Disability Retirement for Regular Members.

Survivor Benefits (not killed in the line of duty)

Your surviving spouse and minor or handicapped or mentally incapacitated child or children are entitled to the same survivor benefits as Regular Members hired on or after January 1, 2011.

Survivor Benefits (killed in the line of duty)

If you die in the line of duty or as a direct result of an injury sustained while in the line of duty on active duty status, your surviving spouse and minor or handicapped or mentally incapacitated child or children are entitled to survivor benefits of 80 percent of your final average compensation. The benefit is shared equally. If a survivor is no longer eligible for benefits, the remaining beneficiaries will have their shares adjusted accordingly.

Benefits are payable regardless of the amount of time that the deceased was a member of the HAZ PLAN. A surviving spouse is eligible for a benefit regardless of the length of the marriage and the benefit will not cease upon remarriage.

Survivor Benefits for Former or Retired HAZ PLAN Members

Former Members

If you terminated employment prior to becoming eligible for retirement and had at least 12 years of service credit in the HAZ PLAN, your surviving spouse will receive a benefit of 50 percent of the monthly benefit that would have been payable to you.

If you do not have a surviving spouse, your surviving minor child/children will receive the same benefit that applies to survivors of Regular Members hired on or after January 1, 2011.

Retired Members

If you die after your retirement, your surviving spouse will receive 75 percent of your monthly retirement benefit. If you do not have a surviving spouse, your surviving minor child/children will receive the same benefit that applies to survivors of Regular Members hired on or after January 1, 2011.

A surviving spouse is eligible for a benefit regardless of the length of the marriage and the benefit will not cease upon remarriage.

Because your benefits are directed to survivors by statute, you will not select a retirement option as a Regular Member would.

Transition to Hazardous Duty Services Plan (HAZ PLAN) (La. R.S. 11:620 & 620.1)

This Chapter describes how a Regular Member in a hazardous duty position or Member of specialty hazardous duty services plan hired prior to January 1, 2011, or a member of the Harbor Police Department for the Port of New Orleans hired prior to July 1, 2014, can make an irrevocable decision to join the HAZ PLAN. Members who have already participated in DROP as a member of any other LASERS retirement plan or the Harbor Police Retirement System or who retired under the provisions of any other LASERS retirement plan and are rehired retirees under Option 1 or Option 3 are not eligible to join the HAZ PLAN. For the plan benefits, see the chapter in the Hazardous Duty Services Plan.

Persons Eligible to Join the HAZ PLAN (La. R.S. 11:612(2) & (2.1))

Members who were employed in one of the following positions prior to January 1, 2011 (unless otherwise noted), are eligible to join the HAZ PLAN:

- Wildlife Agents of the enforcement division of the Department of Wildlife & Fisheries;
- Wardens, correctional officers, security personnel, and probation and parole officers employed by the Department of Public Safety and Corrections;
- Employees of the bridge police section of the Crescent City Connection Division of the Department of Transportation and Development;
- Full-time law enforcement personnel, supervisors, and administrators who are employed with the Department of Revenue, office of alcohol and tobacco control, who are P.O.S.T.-certified, who have the power to arrest, and who hold a commission from such office;
- Peace officers, as defined by R.S. 40:2402(3)(a), employed by the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, office of state police, other than state troopers;
- Arson investigators employed by the Office of the State Fire Marshall who are P.O.S.T.-certified, who have the power to arrest, and who hold a commission from such office;
- Park rangers employed by the Department of Culture, Recreation & Tourism, Office of State Parks, who are P.O.S.T.-certified, who have the power to arrest, and who hold a commission from such office;
- Campus police officers employed by any institution of postsecondary education, who are P.O.S.T.-certified, who have the power to arrest, and who hold a commission as required for employment as such officers;
- Hospital security officers employed by Louisiana State University, Health Sciences Center, who are P.O.S.T.-certified, who have the power to arrest, and who hold a commission as required for employment as such officers;
- Investigators of the Department of Justice who are employed in positions required to be P.O.S.T.-certified;
- Investigators of the office of state inspector general who are employed in positions required to be P.O.S.T.-certified;

- Commissioned employees of the Harbor Police Department of the Port of New Orleans hired prior to July 1, 2014; and
- All personnel employed in a position required to be P.O.S.T.-certified, who have the power to arrest, and who hold a commission as required for employment in such positions, who are otherwise members of LASERS and are not members of any other retirement system.

The decision to join the HAZ PLAN may be made at any time after January 1, 2011. This decision is irrevocable and may never be changed. All members eligible to join the HAZ PLAN must complete *Form 02-18: Hazardous Duty Services Plan Election*. If you choose to stay in your existing plan, you may change that decision at any time prior to retirement or participation in DROP.

Any member who elects to join this plan shall, for all purposes, be treated as an employee whose first eligibility for membership occurred on or after January 1, 2011.

NOTE: Employees of the Harbor Police Department of the Port of New Orleans have different options and procedures and should contact LASERS directly before joining the HAZ PLAN.

Options Upon Joining the HAZ PLAN

If you are eligible to join the HAZ PLAN, your choices are:

1. Maintain your existing service credit in your current plan under the provisions of that plan and join the HAZ PLAN day forward, accruing service credit and benefits prospectively. If your joining results in an actuarial cost to LASERS, you must pay that cost prior to your retirement. It is impossible to know if there is a cost and the amount of that cost until you actually prepare to retire. You may avoid this uncertainty by choosing one of the alternatives below.
2. Join the HAZ PLAN and transfer all of your service credit into the new plan. If the transfer results in no cost to the system, you will receive the same number of years in the HAZ PLAN that you earned in your prior service. If there is a cost, you may accept the years on a pro rata basis. The time transferred will count toward HAZ PLAN retirement eligibility, but will be calculated at the accrual rate at which it was earned.
3. Join the HAZ PLAN and transfer all of your service credit into the new plan, paying the actuarial cost so that you receive credit for the actual number of years transferred or a portion of those years. The time transferred will count toward HAZ PLAN retirement eligibility, but will be calculated at the accrual rate at which it was earned.
4. Join the HAZ PLAN according to option 2 or 3 and pay to upgrade the prior service credit to the 3.33 percent accrual rate. The transferred and upgraded time will then count toward HAZ PLAN eligibility and benefits. *However, the 3.33 percent accrual rate will not apply unless you spend your last 10 years of service in a hazardous duty position.*
5. Keep the status quo in your existing plan, maintaining your same contribution rate, retirement eligibility, benefit provisions, and accrual rate.

HAZ PLAN Election Process

You must submit to LASERS:

- *Form 02-18: Hazardous Duty Services Plan Election,* indicating whether or not you are joining the HAZ PLAN
  If you previously held a position that qualified as hazardous duty, you must submit to LASERS:

(continued on next page)

- *Form 01-11: Certification of Prior Employment in a Hazardous Duty Position*

To request an invoice to determine the cost to join, transfer and/or upgrade service credit, you must submit to LASERS:

- *Form 02-19: Application to Transfer/Upgrade Service into the Hazardous Duty Services Plan*
- A $150.00 nonrefundable actuarial calculation fee made payable to LASERS.

If you decide to pay the invoice, and upgrade your service credit, you will accrue benefits at 3.33 percent of your average compensation for each year of upgraded service. However, if your last 10 years of service were not worked exclusively in a hazardous duty position, you will only receive 2.5 percent of your average compensation per year for HAZ PLAN service and upgraded service will be paid at the accrual rate at which it was earned. If you have paid to upgrade your service and do not meet eligibility for the 3.33 percent accrual rate, you will not receive a refund for your upgraded time. Any such upgrade must be completed prior to retirement or participation in DROP. This election is irrevocable.

Retirement Eligibility (La. R.S. 11:614)

If you join the HAZ PLAN, you must meet the following retirement eligibility based on years of service earned in the plan or prior service that is transferred to the plan:

- 12 years of service credit at age 55
- 25 years of service credit any age
- 20 years of service at any age, with an actuarially reduced benefit (Deferred Retirement Option Plan [DROP] participation and retirement with an Initial Benefit Option [IBO] are not available to members who choose this option). The actuarial reduction is based on the number of months you are away from HAZ PLAN Regular retirement eligibility. This reduction can be affected depending on whether you are in state service or out of state service at the time of your retirement.

Health Insurance Premiums

The premiums for health insurance coverage paid by any retiree participating in the Office of Group Benefits program who has transferred service credit to the HAZ PLAN who retires with 12 years of service at age 55 or 25 years of service at any age shall be increased by an amount sufficient to pay for any increase in the employer's premiums resulting from his retirement pursuant to such sections. There is no increase for those who retire with 20 years of service at any age. NOTE: The health insurance increase is unique to the HAZ PLAN and is not impacted by the Office of Group Benefits Retiree Participation Schedule.

Opting out of the HAZ PLAN

An employee who is a contributing member of any other plan in LASERS or another state or statewide system who would otherwise be required to become a member of the HAZ PLAN as a condition of employment may elect at the time of his employment to remain a member of such other system for which he remains eligible for membership.

Bridge Police

Hired Prior to January 1, 2011 (La. R.S. 11:441(F))

This chapter pertains to employees of the Bridge Police section of the Crescent City Connection Division of the Department of Transportation and Development and transferred to the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, hired prior to January 1, 2011 (Bridge Police). Please refer to the chapters on Regular Members if a topic is not covered in this chapter.

Contribution Rate (La. R.S. 11:62(5)(f))

Bridge Police pay a contribution rate of 8.5 percent.

Retirement Eligibility

If you are a member of the Bridge Police plan, your retirement eligibility depends on your date of hire.

If you were hired ***on or before June 30, 2006***, you become eligible for retirement upon reaching one of the following criteria:

- 10 years of service at age 60
- 25 years of service credit at any age. You must have at least 10 years of service credit earned in a position with the Bridge Police immediately prior to application for retirement.
- 20 years of service at any age, with an actuarially reduced benefit (Deferred Retirement Option Plan [DROP] participation and retirement with an Initial Benefit Option [IBO] are not available to members who choose this option). The actuarial reduction is based on the number of months you are away **from eligibility for an unreduced retirement based on Regular plan retirement eligibility, not Bridge Police retirement eligibility**. This reduction can be affected depending on whether you are in state service or out of state service at the time of your retirement.

If you were hired ***on or after July 1, 2006***, you become eligible for retirement upon reaching one of the following criteria:

- 10 years of service at age 60
- 25 years of service credit at any age. You must have at least 10 years of service credit earned in a position with the Bridge Police immediately prior to application for retirement.
- 20 years of service at any age, with an actuarially reduced benefit (Deferred Retirement Option Plan [DROP] participation and retirement with an Initial Benefit Option [IBO] are not available to members who choose this option). The actuarial reduction is based on the number of months you are away **from retirement based on Regular Plan retirement eligibility, not Bridge Police retirement eligibility**. This reduction can be affected depending on whether you are in state service or out of state service at the time of your retirement.

Regardless of your hire date, you also have the option to retire as a Regular Member (see the chapters on Regular Members for additional information).

If you were employed on or before June 30, 2006, but terminated state service and refunded all of your contributions, you will be considered a newly hired employee if you return to state service.

Benefit Accrual

As a member of the Bridge Police plan, you accrue benefits at 2.5 percent of your average compensation per year.

- If you were hired **on or before June 30, 2006**, your average compensation will be based on your highest successive **36** months of earnings.
  - If you were hired before July 1, 1986, and did not terminate employment and receive a refund of your contributions, you will receive an additional $300.00 per year added to your retirement benefit.
- If you were hired **on or after July 1, 2006,** your average compensation will be based on your highest successive **60** months of earnings.

Limits on Final Average Compensation (La. R.S. 11:403(5))

When calculating your retirement benefit, the earnings used for your average compensation may be capped in order to avoid excessive spikes in compensation.

If hired on or before June 30, 2006: The earnings to be considered for the 13th through the 24th month shall not exceed 125 percent of the earnings of the 1st through the 12th month. The earnings to be considered for the final 12 months shall not exceed 125 percent of the earnings of the 13th through the 24th month.

If hired on or after July 1, 2006: The earnings to be considered for the 13th through the 24th month shall not exceed 115 percent of the earnings of the 1st through the 12th month. The earnings to be considered for the 25th through the 36th month shall not exceed 115 percent of the earnings of the 13th through the 24th month. The earnings to be considered for the 37th through the 48th month shall not exceed 115 percent of the earnings of the 25th through the 36th month. The earnings for the final 12 months shall not exceed 115 percent of the earnings of the 37th through the 48th month.

Hazardous Duty Services Plan

Bridge Police hired prior to January 1, 2011, are eligible to join the Hazardous Duty Services Plan. Please refer to the chapter describing that plan's benefits and the options available for past service.

Correctional Officers

Hired Prior to January 1, 2011 (La. R.S. 11:441 (D-E) and 11:601-606)

This chapter pertains to Correctional Officers, Security Personnel, and Probation and Parole Officers employed by the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections hired prior to January 1, 2011 (Correctional Officers). There are two different plans for Correctional Officers: the Primary Component and the Secondary Component.

Correctional Officers hired on or before December 31, 2001, were members of the Primary Component. On January 1, 2002, the Secondary Component was created. Those hired on or after January 1, 2002, are members of the Secondary Component. Those in the Primary Component have the choice to remain in the Primary Component or transfer to the Secondary Component. The choice to transfer to the Secondary Component is irrevocable. Correctional Officers who remained in the Primary Component may elect to transfer to the Secondary Component at any time.

Please refer to the chapters on Regular Members if a topic is not addressed in this chapter.

Contribution Rate (La. R.S. 11:62(5)(b))

Members employed in both the Primary and Secondary Components currently pay a contribution rate of 9 percent.

> HISTORICAL NOTE: Correctional Officers in the Primary Component paid a contribution rate of 8.5 percent until June 30, 1989. Beginning July 1, 1989, Correctional Officers pay a contribution rate of 9 percent. This change accompanied changes in retirement eligibility, survivor benefits, and disability benefits.

Retirement Eligibility

If you are a member of the **Primary Component**, your retirement eligibility depends on your date of hire as a Correctional Officer.

If you were hired as a Correctional Officer ***on or before August 15, 1986***, you become eligible for retirement upon reaching one of the following criteria:

- 10 years of service at age 60
- 20 years of service at any age. You must have at least 10 years of service credit as a Correctional Officer immediately prior to application for retirement.

If you were hired as a Correctional Officer ***after August 15, 1986***, you become eligible for retirement upon reaching one of the following criteria:

- 10 years of service at age 60
- 20 years of service at age 50. You must have at least 10 years of service credit as a Correctional Officer immediately prior to application for retirement. If you have service credit other than as a Correctional Officer, only two-thirds of this service shall be counted to meet this criteria.
- 25 years of service at any age. You must have at least 10 years of service credit as a Correctional Officer immediately prior to application for retirement.
- 20 years of service at any age, with an actuarially reduced benefit. (Deferred Retirement Option Plan [DROP] participation and retirement with an Initial Benefit Option [IBO] are not available to members who choose this option.). The actuarial reduction is based on the number of months you are away from **eligibility for an unreduced retirement based on Regular Plan retirement eligibility, not Correctional Officer retirement eligibility**. This reduction can be affected depending on whether you are in state service or out of state service at the time of your retirement.

Regardless of your hire date, you also have the option to retire as a Regular Member (see the chapters on Regular Members for additional information).

If you are a member of the **Secondary Component** you will become eligible for retirement upon reaching one of the following criteria:

- 10 years of service at age 60
- 25 years of service at any age. Your last day worked must be as a Correctional Officer.

Benefit Accrual

If you are a member of the **Primary Component**, you will accrue benefits at 2.5 percent of your average compensation per year. Your average compensation will be based on your highest successive 36 months of earnings. If you were employed before July 1, 1986, and did not terminate employment and receive a refund of their contributions, you will receive an additional $300.00 per year added to your retirement benefit.

If you are a member of the **Secondary Component**, you will accrue benefits at 3.33 percent of your average compensation per year for each year in that plan. Your average compensation will be based on your highest successive 36 months of earnings.

If you have service in both the Primary and Secondary Component, your unused leave percentage will be pro-rated depending on the years of service.

Sue had prior employment under the Primary Component. She was hired in a position covered by the Secondary Component on October 1, 2006. She is retiring at age 51 with 30 years of service credit. She has an annual final average compensation of $62,000.00, so her base retirement benefit would be calculated in the following manner:

$62,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.025 *accrual rate*	x	27.20 *years of service in Primary Component*	=	$42,160.00 per year ($3,513.33 per month)
$62,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.0333 *accrual rate*	x	2.80 *years of service in Secondary Component*	=	$5,780.88 per year ($481.74 per month)

Total benefit = $47,940.88 per year ($3,995.07 per month)

She has decided to convert 1.8 years of unused accumulated leave so her leave benefit would be calculated in the following manner:

27.20 *years of service in Primary Component*	/	30.0 *total years of service*	=	.906 (rounded to 91%)
2.80 *years of service in Secondary Component*	/	30.0 *total years of service*	=	.093 (rounded to 9%)

91% of her total leave credit of 1.8 years = 1.638 (rounded to 1.60)
9% of her total leave credit of 1.8 years = .162 (rounded to .20)
She will receive an accrual rate of 2.5% for 1.60 years and 3.33% for .20 years.

$62,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.025 *accrual rate*	x	1.60 *years of unused leave*	=	$2,480.00 per year ($206.66 per month)
$62,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.0333 *accrual rate*	x	.20 *years of unused leave*	=	$412.92 per year ($34.41 per month)

Total benefit for unused leave = $2,892.92 per year ($241.07 per month)

Total retirement benefit =	**$3,995.07** ***retirement benefit***	**+**	**$241.07** ***converted leave benefit***	**=**	**$4,236.14 per month**

Limits on Final Average Compensation (La. R.S. 11:403(5))

When calculating your retirement benefit, the earnings used for your average compensation may be capped in order to avoid excessive spikes in compensation.

The earnings to be considered for the 13th through the 24th month shall not exceed 125 percent of the earnings of the 1st through the 12th month. The earnings to be considered for the final 12 months shall not exceed 125 percent of the earnings of the 13th through the 24th month.

Hazardous Duty Services Plan

Correctional Officers hired prior to January 1, 2011, are eligible to join the Hazardous Duty Services Plan. Please refer to the chapter describing that plan's benefits and the options available for past service.

Retirement Options

Members of the Primary and Secondary Components have the same retirement options as Regular Members.

Disability Benefits

Primary Component: If the disability was sustained in the performance of official duties of a hazardous nature, the disability benefit will be 60 percent of your average compensation, regardless of your years of service. If the disability was not sustained in the performance of official duties of a hazardous nature, please see the chapter on Disability Retirement which describes the disability benefits for Regular Members.

Secondary Component: If the disability was sustained in the performance of official duties of a hazardous nature the disability benefit will be 40 percent of your average compensation, regardless of your years of service. If you have met the eligibility for Disability Retirement, the disability benefit will be the greater of 40 percent of average compensation or as provided under the Regular retirement formula. If the disability was not sustained in the performance of official duties of a hazardous nature, please see the chapter on Disability Retirement which describes the disability benefits for Regular Members.

Survivor Benefits

Survivor benefits may be payable at your death to your beneficiary*(ies)*. If you have at least five years of service credit, a survivor benefit will be payable to your qualified minor, physcially handicapped, and/or mentally disabled child or children. If you have at least 10 years of service credit, with two years worked immediately prior to death, a survivor benefit will be payable to your spouse. If you are out of state service at the time of your death, you must have at least 20 years of service credit for your survivors to apply for benefits. If your death did not occur in the line of duty, you and your spouse must have been married for at least one year for your spouse to be eligible for survivor benefits.

Primary Component (killed in the line of duty):

If you have a minor or totally physically handicapped or mentally disabled child or children and less than five years of service, LASERS will pay your minor child or children a benefit equal to 60 percent of your average compensation.

If you have a minor or handicapped/disabled child or children and five or more years of service, LASERS will pay your minor child or children a benefit equal to 75 percent of your average compensation.

If you have a spouse but do not have a minor or handicapped/disabled child, and had less than 25 years of service, LASERS will pay your spouse a benefit equal to 60 percent of your average compensation.

If you have a spouse but do not have a minor or handicapped/disabled child, and had 25 years or more of service, LASERS will pay your spouse a benefit equal to 75 percent of your average compensation.

If you have a spouse and minor or handicapped/disabled child or children, and had less than five years of service, LASERS will pay your spouse and child or children a benefit equal to 60 percent of average compensation (one-third to spouse and two-thirds to child or children).

If you have a spouse and minor or handicapped/disabled child or children, and had five years or more of service, LASERS will pay your spouse and child or children a benefit equal to 75 percent of average compensation (one-third to spouse and two-thirds to child or children).

Secondary Component (killed in the line of duty):

If you have a minor or totally physically handicapped or mentally disabled child or children, and less than 25 years of service, LASERS will pay your minor child or children a benefit equal to 60 percent of your average compensation.

If you have a minor or handicapped/disabled child or children, and had 25 years or more of service, LASERS will pay your child or children a benefit equal to 75 percent of your average compensation.

If you have a spouse but do not have a minor or handicapped/disabled child, and had less than 25 years of service, LASERS will pay your spouse a benefit equal to 60 percent of your average compensation.

If you have a spouse but do not have a minor or handicapped/disabled child, and had 25 years or more of service, LASERS will pay your spouse a benefit equal to 75 percent of your average compensation.

If you have a spouse and minor or handicapped/disabled child or children, and had less than 25 years of service, LASERS will pay your spouse and child or children a benefit equal to 60 percent of average compensation (one-third to spouse and two-thirds to child or children).

If you have a spouse and minor or handicapped/disabled child or children, and had 25 years or more of service, LASERS will pay your spouse and child or children a benefit equal to 75 percent of average compensation (one-third to spouse and two-thirds to child or children).

Department of Public Safety and Corrections Upgrade (La. R.S. 11:605)

The employees of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections listed below are eligible to upgrade all service credit earned as a member of the Primary Component, upon their election to join the Secondary Component:

- Warden
- Correctional officer
- Probation and parole officer
- Security personnel

An upgrade of service credit requires you to pay the system an amount which, on an actuarial basis, totally offsets the increased liability to the system resulting from the service credit being purchased.

Application Process

To request an invoice to upgrade this service credit, you must submit to LASERS:

- *Form 16-03: Department of Safety & Corrections Upgrade Invoice Request*
- A $150.00 nonrefundable actuarial calculation fee made payable to LASERS

If you decide to pay the invoice, and upgrade your service credit, you will accrue benefits at 3.33 percent of your average compensation for each year of upgraded service. Any such upgrade must be completed prior to retirement or participation in DROP. If you have participated in DROP, you may only upgrade credit earned after DROP participation provided that you have not retired. This election is irrevocable.

It is highly recommended that an invoice be requested several months prior to the date needed.

Peace Officers

Hired Prior to January 1, 2011 (La. R.S. 11:444(A)(2))

This chapter pertains to Peace Officers employed by the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, Office of State Police, other than state troopers, hired prior to January 1, 2011. As defined by R.S. 40:2402(3)(a), a "Peace Officer" is any full-time employee of the state whose permanent duties actually include the making of arrests, the performing of searches and seizures, or the execution of criminal warrants, and is responsible for the prevention or detection of crime or for the enforcement of the penal, traffic, or highway laws of this state, but not including any elected or appointed head of a law enforcement department.

Please refer to the chapters on Regular Members if a topic is not covered in this chapter.

Contribution Rate (La. R.S. 11:62(5)(b))

Peace Officers pay a contribution rate of 9 percent.

Retirement Eligibility

As a Peace Officer, you will become eligible for retirement upon reaching one of the following criteria:

- 10 years of service at age 60
- 25 years of service at age 55
- 30 years of service at any age
- 20 years of service at any age, with an actuarially reduced benefit (Deferred Retirement Option Plan [DROP] participation and retirement with an Initial Benefit Option [IBO] are not available to members who choose this option). The actuarial reduction is based on the number of months you are away from eligibility for an unreduced retirement. This reduction can be affected depending on whether you are in state service or out of state service at the time of your retirement.

Benefit Accrual

Your average compensation will be based on your highest successive 36 months of compensation. Your benefit accrual rate depends on your date of hire.

If you were hired as a Peace Officer ***on or before June 30, 2006***, you will receive 3.33 percent of your average compensation per year, even for years not worked as a Peace Officer.

If you were hired as a Peace Officer ***on or after July 1, 2006***, you will receive 3.33 percent of your average compensation per year for all years worked as a Peace Officer.

If you have service that was not accrued at 3.33 percent, your unused leave percentage will be pro-rated depending on the years of service.

Frank had prior employment but was not hired as a Peace Officer until October 1, 2006. He is retiring at age 51 with 30 years of service credit. He has an annual final average compensation of $62,000.00, so his base retirement benefit would be calculated in the following manner:

$62,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.025 *accrual rate*	x	27.20 *years of service as a Regular Member*	=	$42,160.00 per year ($3,513.33 per month)
$62,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.0333 *accrual rate*	x	2.80 *years of service as a Peace Officer*	=	$5,780.88 per year ($481.74 per month)

Total benefit = $47,940.88 per year ($3,995.07 per month)

He has decided to convert 1.8 years of unused accumulated leave so his leave benefit would be calculated in the following manner:

27.20 *years of service as a Regular Member*	/	30.0 *total years of service*	=	.906 (rounded to 91%)
2.80 *years of service as a Peace Officer*	/	30.0 *total years of service*	=	.093 (rounded to 9%)

91% of his total leave credit of 1.8 years = 1.638 (rounded to 1.60)
9% of his total leave credit of 1.8 years = .162 (rounded to .20)
He will receive an accrual rate of 2.5% for 1.60 years and 3.33% for .20 years.

$62,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.025 *accrual rate*	x	1.60 *years of unused leave*	=	$2,480.00 per year ($206.66 per month)
$62,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.0333 *accrual rate*	x	.20 *years of unused leave*	=	$412.92 per year ($34.41 per month)

Total benefit for unused leave = $2,892.92 per year ($241.07 per month)

Total retirement benefit =	**$3,995.07** ***retirement benefit***	**+**	**$241.07** ***converted leave benefit***	**=**	**$4,236.14 per month**

Jonathan was hired as a Peace Officer prior to July 1, 2006, and accrues benefits at 3.33 percent per year. He is retiring at age 55 with 27.20 years of service credit. He has an annual final average compensation of $62,000.00, so his base retirement benefit would be calculated in the following manner:

$62,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.0333 *accrual rate*	x	27.20 *years of service as a Peace Officer*	=	$56,157.12 per year ($4,679.76 per month)
$62,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.0333 *accrual rate*	x	1.80 *years of unused leave*	=	$3,716.28 per year ($309.69 per month)

Total retirement benefit =	**$4,679.76** ***retirement benefit***	**+**	**$309.69** ***converted leave benefit***	**=**	**$4,989.45 per month**

Limits on Final Average Compensation (La. R.S. 11:403(5))

When calculating your retirement benefit, the earnings used for your average compensation may be capped in order to avoid excessive spikes in compensation.

The earnings to be considered for the 13th through the 24th month shall not exceed 125 percent of the earnings of the 1st through the 12th month. The earnings to be considered for the final 12 months shall not exceed 125 percent of the earnings of the 13th through the 24th month.

Hazardous Duty Services Plan

Peace Officers hired prior to January 1, 2011, are eligible to join the Hazardous Duty Services Plan. Please refer to the chapter describing that plan's benefits and the options available for past service.

Alcohol and Tobacco Agents

Hired Prior to January 1, 2011 (La. R.S. 11:444(A)(2)

This chapter pertains to full-time law enforcement personnel, supervisors, and administrators who are employed with the Department of Revenue, Office of Alcohol and Tobacco Control, hired prior to January 1, 2011 (ATC Agents). A statement from your agency stating that you have been P.O.S.T.-certified in your position will be required.

Please refer to the chapters on Regular Members if a topic is not covered in this chapter.

Contribution Rates (La. R.S. 11:62(5)(b))

ATC Agents pay a contribution rate of 9 percent per year.

Retirement Eligibility

As an ATC Agent, you will become eligible for retirement upon reaching one of the following criteria:

- 10 years of service at age 60
- 25 years of service at any age
- 20 years of service at any age, with an actuarially reduced benefit (Deferred Retirement Option Plan [DROP] participation and retirement with an Initial Benefit Option [IBO] are not available to members who choose this option). The actuarial reduction is based on the number of months you are away from ATC Agent retirement eligibility. This reduction can be affected depending on whether you are in state service or out of state service at the time of your retirement.

Benefit Accrual

Your average compensation will be based on your highest successive 36 months of compensation. Your benefit accrual rate depends on your date of hire.

If you were hired as an ATC Agent ***on or before June 30, 2007***, you will receive 3.33 percent of your average compensation per year, even for years not worked as an ATC Agent.

If you were hired as an ATC Agent ***on or after July 1, 2007***, you will receive 2.5 percent of your average compensation per year for all years prior to July 1, 2007. You will receive 3.33 percent of your average compensation per year for all years worked as an ATC Agent after July 1, 2007.

If you have service that was not accrued at 3.33 percent, your unused leave percentage will be pro-rated depending on the years of service.

Bill had prior employment but was not hired as an ATC Agent until October 1, 2007. He is now retiring at age 51 with 30 years of service credit. He has an annual final average compensation of $62,000.00, so his base retirement benefit would be calculated in the following manner:

$62,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.025 *accrual rate*	x	27.20 *years of service as a Regular Member*	=	$42,160.00 per year ($3,513.33 per month)
$62,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.0333 *accrual rate*	x	2.80 *years of service as an ATC Agent*	=	$5,780.88 per year ($481.74 per month)

Total benefit = $47,940.88 per year ($3,995.07 per month)

He has decided to convert 1.8 years of unused accumulated leave so his leave benefit would be calculated in the following manner:

27.20 *years of service as a Regular Member*	/	30.0 *total years of service*	=	.906 (rounded to 91%)
2.80 *years of service as an ATC Agent*	/	30.0 *total years of service*	=	.093 (rounded to 9%)

91% of his total leave credit of 1.8 years = 1.638 (rounded to 1.60)
9% of his total leave credit of 1.8 years = .162 (rounded to .20)
He will receive an accrual rate of 2.5% for 1.60 years and 3.33% for .20 years.

$62,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.025 *accrual rate*	x	1.60 *years of unused leave*	=	$2,480.00 per year ($206.66 per month)
$62,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.0333 *accrual rate*	x	.20 *years of unused leave*	=	$412.92 per year ($34.41 per month)

Total benefit for unused leave = $2,892.92 per year ($241.07 per month)

Total retirement benefit =	**$3,995.07** ***retirement benefit***	**+**	**$241.07** ***converted leave benefit***	**=**	**$4,236.14 per month**

John was hired as an ATC Agent before July 1, 2007, and accrues benefits at 3.33 percent per year. He is retiring at age 55 with 27.20 years of service credit. He has an annual final average compensation of $62,000.00, so his base retirement benefit would be calculated in the following manner:

$62,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.0333 *accrual rate*	x	27.20 *years of service as a an ATC Agent*	=	$56,157.12 per year ($4,679.76 per month)
$62,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.0333 *accrual rate*	x	1.80 *years of unused leave*	=	$3,716.28 per year ($309.69 per month)

Total retirement benefit =	**$4,679.76** ***retirement benefit***	**+**	**$309.69** ***converted leave benefit***	**=**	**$4,989.45 per month**

Limits on Final Average Compensation (La. R.S. 11:403(5))

When calculating your retirement benefit, the earnings used for your average compensation may be capped in order to avoid excessive spikes in compensation.

The earnings to be considered for the 13th through the 24th month shall not exceed 125 percent of the earnings of the 1st through the 12th month. The earnings to be considered for the final 12 months shall not exceed 125 percent of the earnings of the 13th through the 24th month.

Hazardous Duty Services Plan

ATC Agents hired prior to January 1, 2011, are eligible to join the Hazardous Duty Services Plan. Please refer to the chapter describing that plan's benefits and the options available for past service.

Wildlife Agents

Hired Prior to January 1, 2011 (La. R.S. 11:581 – 592)

This chapter pertains to Wildlife Agents employed by the Enforcement Division of the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission hired prior January 1, 2011 (Wildlife Agents).

Contribution Rate (La. R.S. 11:62(5)(d))

Wildlife Agents pay a contribution rate of 9.5 percent.

> *HISTORICAL NOTE:* Prior to ***July 1, 2003***, Wildlife Agents paid a contribution rate of 8.5 percent. The contribution rate change accompanied a change in retirement eligibility and an increase in the benefit accrual rate from 3.0 percent to 3.33 percent.

Retirement Eligibility (Regular Retirement and IBO)

If you are a Wildlife Agent, your eligibility for Regular retirement depends on your date of hire. You must have at least 10 years of service as a Wildlife Agent immediately prior to your application for retirement.

If you were hired as a Wildlife Agent ***on or before June 30, 2003***, you become eligible for retirement upon reaching one of the following criteria:

- 10 years of service credit at age 55
- 20 years of service credit at any age

If you were hired as a Wildlife Agent ***on or after July 1, 2003***, you become eligible for retirement upon reaching one of the following criteria:

- 10 years of service credit at age 60
- 25 years of service credit at any age

With less than 10 years service as a Wildlife Agent, combined with the other service credit that you obtained, you are eligible to retire when you meet the above requirements, but your benefit will be calculated at a lower rate.

DROP Eligibility

If you are a Wildlife Agent, you become eligible for DROP upon reaching one of the following criteria, providing that you had at least 10 years as a Wildlife Agent immediately before your application:

- 10 years of service credit at age 60
- 25 years of service credit at any age

Benefit Accrual

Your average compensation will be based on your highest successive 36 months of earnings.

If you have at least 10 years of service credit earned as a Wildlife Agent immediately prior to application for retirement, you will accrue benefits as follows:

- 3 percent of your average compensation per year for all years prior to July 1, 2003
- 3.33 percent of your average compensation per year for all years after July 1, 2003

If you have unused accumulated leave, it will be calculated at 3.33 percent of your average compensation.

If you do not have at least 10 years of service credit earned as a Wildlife Agent immediately prior to your application for retirement, you accrue benefits at 2.5 percent of your average compensation per year. Your unused accumulated leave will also be calculated at 2.5 percent.

James is retiring at age 52 with 20 years of service credit as a Wildlife Agent. He has an annual final average compensation of $54,000.00, so his base retirement benefit would be calculated in the following manner:

$54,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.03 *accrual rate*	x	14.0 *years of service prior to July 1, 2003*	=	$22,680.00 per year ($1,890.00 per month)
$54,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.0333 *accrual rate*	x	6.0 *years of service after July 1, 2003*	=	$10,789.20 per year ($899.10 per month)

Total benefit = $33,469.20 per year ($2,789.10 per month)

If James had not worked his last 10 years as a Wildlife Agent he would still be eligible to retire with 20 years of service credit, but he would accrue benefits at only 2.5 percent. His retirement benefit would be calculated in the following manner:

$54,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.025 *accrual rate*	x	20.0 *years of service*	=	$27,000.00 per year ($2,250.00 per month)

Limits on Final Average Compensation (La. R.S. 11:403(5))

When calculating your retirement benefit, the earnings used for your average compensation may be capped in order to avoid excessive spikes in compensation.

The earnings to be considered for the 13th through the 24th month shall not exceed 125 percent of the earnings of the 1st through the 12th month. The earnings to be considered for the final 12 months shall not exceed 125 percent of the earnings of the 13th through the 24th month.

Hazardous Duty Services Plan

Wildlife Agents hired prior to January 1, 2011, are eligible to join the Hazardous Duty Services Plan. Please refer to the chapter describing that plan's benefits and the options available for past service.

Disability Benefits

If you become partially disabled or incapacitated because of illness or injury, even though not incurred in the line of duty, and you have at least 10 years of service credit, you may retire with 75 percent of the retirement benefit you would receive if you had reached eligibility for Wildlife retirement.

If you become totally disabled as result of an injury received in the line of duty, you will receive a monthly benefit of 60 percent of your final average compensation.

For the details on Disability Retirement application, certification, and continuing benefits, see the chapter on Disability retirement for Regular Members.

Forced Retirement

If the Secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries believes that a Wildlife Agent is unable to satisfactorily perform his duties because of illness or injury, the Secretary can request that the Agent voluntarily retire. If the Agent refuses, the Secretary may request that the employee be retired, and receive the benefit to which he would be entitled.

Survivor Benefits (not killed in the line of duty)

If you die prior to retiring for reasons unrelated to the performance of your duties, your surviving spouse or heirs will receive the same pension benefits you would have received if you had retired on the date of your death. If you die prior to age 55, and had at least 15 years of service credit, benefits for your survivors will be computed solely on the number of years of service without regard to your age at the time of death.

Those entitled to receive a survivor benefit include your surviving spouse (until remarried) and your minor children. If you have no surviving spouse and no minor children, a monthly pension will be paid to your parent or parents, if one or both of them derived their main support from you.

Survivor Benefits (killed in the line of duty)

If you die as the result of an injury received in the line of duty, the following survivor benefits are payable:

Surviving Spouse (until remarriage)

- If you had 25 years of service, your spouse will receive a benefit of 75 percent of your average compensation.
- If you had less than 25 years of service, your spouse will receive a benefit of 60 percent of your average compensation.

Minor Children (if no eligible surviving spouse)

- Four or more children — a benefit of 60 percent of your average compensation divided equally among them.
- Three children — a benefit of 50 percent of your average compensation divided equally among them.
- Two children — a benefit of 40 percent of your average compensation divided equally among them.
- One child — a benefit of 30 percent of your average compensation.

A minor child is an unmarried child under the age of 18 or an unmarried student under the age of 23. When a child is no longer a minor, he shall receive no further benefit. The monthly pension for the ineligible survivor will not be redistributed to remaining survivors.

Dependent Parents

- If you have no surviving spouse and no minor children, a monthly pension of 25 percent of your average compensation will be paid to your parent or parents, if one or both of them derived their main support from you.

Survivor Benefits for Retired Wildlife Agents

If you die after your retirement, 75 percent of your monthly retirement benefit will be paid to your survivors in the following order of priority:

1. Surviving spouse (until remarriage)
2. Minor children
3. Parent(s) who derived their main support from you

Because your benefits are directed to survivors by statute, it is not necessary for you to choose a retirement option as a Regular Member would.

Legislative Plan

Hired Prior to January 1, 2011 (La. R.S. 24:36)

This chapter pertains to certain legislative officers and elected officials of the Legislative Plan hired prior to January 1, 2011. The positions covered by the Legislative Plan are:

- Members of the Louisiana Legislature serving prior to January 1, 1997*
- Clerk or Sergeant-at-Arms of the House of Representatives
- Secretary or Sergeant-at-Arms of the Senate
- President of the Senate
- Governor
- Lieutenant Governor
- State Treasurer

* Legislators elected after January 1, 1997, but who served in one of the following positions on January 1, 1997, and were members of a Louisiana Retirement System are eligible to retain membership in LASERS:

- Legislator
- School board member
- Levee board member
- Police jury or parish council member
- Member of a city council, city-parish council, town council or any alderman or constable
- Other positions as described in Louisiana Constitution Article X, Section 29

Please refer to the chapters on Regular Members if a topic is not covered in this chapter

Contribution Rates (La. R.S. 11:62(5))

The State Treasurer pays a contribution rate of 7.5 percent.

Clerks or Sergeant-at-Arms of the House of Representatives, and Secretary or Sergeant-at-Arms of the Senate pay a contribution rate of 9.5 percent.

Members of the Legislature, President of the Senate, Governor, and the Lieutenant Governor pay a contribution rate of 11.5 percent.

All Legislative Officers and Elected Officials pay contributions on their salary, expense allowances, and overtime.

Retirement Eligibility

If you serve in one of the positions in the Legislative Plan, you will become eligible for retirement upon reaching one of the following criteria:

- 12 years of service credit as a member of the Legislature, Governor, Lieutenant Governor, or State Treasurer at age 55
- 16 years of service credit as a member of the Legislature, Governor, Lieutenant Governor, or State Treasurer at any age
- 20 years of total service credit at age 50, with at least 12 years as a member of the Legislature, Clerk, or Sergeant-at-Arms of the House, President, Secretary or Sergeant-at-Arms of the Senate, Governor, Lieutenant Governor, or State Treasurer

Benefit Accrual

As a Legislative Plan Member, you accrue benefits at 2.5 percent of your average compensation, plus an additional one percent for years of service in the Legislature, Clerk or Sergeant-at-Arms of the House, Secretary or Sergeant-at-Arms of the Senate, Governor, or Lieutenant Governor. ***However, if you were elected to the legislature after July 1, 2011, and are eligible for LASERS membership as previously described, you will accrue benefits at 2 percent of your average compensation for legislative service earned after July 1, 2011. The 2 percent accrual rate does not apply to any person serving in the legislature on June 30, 2011.***

If you became a member before July 1, 1986, and did not terminate membership and receive a refund of your contributions, you will receive an additional $300.00 per year added to your retirement benefit.

Your average compensation will be based on your highest successive 36 months of earnings, including per diem, expense allowances as provided by La. R.S. 24:31.1 and La. R.S. 24:31.2, and any other expense allowances provided for the Clerk of the House and the Secretary of the Senate, and overtime pay for Legislative employees. ***However, if you were elected to the legislature after July 1, 2011, and hold another position of public office or employment within this state making you eligible for membership in a state or statewide retirement system, the compensation upon which your retirement benefit is calculated shall not include any compensation for your service in the legislature occurring on or after July 1, 2011, and no service credit shall accrue for such service as an elected member of the legislature. This restriction does not apply to any person serving in the legislature on June 30, 2011.***

Limits on Final Average Compensation (La. R.S. 11:403(5))

When calculating your retirement benefit, the earnings used for your average compensation may be capped in order to avoid excessive spikes in compensation.

The earnings to be considered for the 13th through the 24th month shall not exceed 125 percent of the earnings of the 1st through the 12th month. The earnings to be considered for the final 12 months shall not exceed 125 percent of the earnings of the 13th through the 24th month.

Service Credit Upgrade

If you are a member of the Legislative Plan, you may upgrade service credit for any prior service during which you were employed by the state, any state agency, political subdivision, or any nonprofit quasi-government entity whose funding is derived in whole or in part from federal, state, or local sources. You may also purchase prior service as an elected official.

Application Process

To receive an invoice to upgrade your service credit, you must submit to LASERS:

- *Form 02-14: Legislative Upgrade Invoice Request*
- A $150.00 nonrefundable actuarial calculation fee made payable to LASERS. If additional upgrade options are requested, additional fees may be required

If you decide to pay the invoice, and upgrade your service credit, you will accrue benefits at 3.5 percent of your average compensation for each year of upgraded service. Any such upgrade must be completed prior to retirement or participation in DROP. If you have participated in DROP, you may only upgrade credit earned after DROP participation provided that you have not retired. This election is irrevocable.

It is highly recommended that an invoice be requested several months prior to the date needed.

Judges and Court Officers

Elected or Hired Prior to January 1, 2011 (La. R.S. 11:551 – 11:571)

This chapter pertains to members of the Judicial Plan prior to January 1, 2011. The following positions, hereinafter referred to as "Judges or Court Officers" are covered by the Judicial Plan:

- Justices of the Louisiana Supreme Court
- Judicial Administrator of the Supreme Court and his deputies
- Judges of the Courts of Appeal
- Judges of the District Courts
- Judges of the Civil District Court for Orleans Parish
- Commissioners of the Civil District Court for Orleans Parish
- Judges of the Criminal District Court for Orleans Parish
- Magistrates of the magistrate section of the Criminal District Court for Orleans Parish
- Commissioners of the magistrate section of the Criminal District Court for Orleans Parish
- Judges of the Juvenile Courts for East Baton Rouge, Orleans, Jefferson, and Caddo Parish
- Judges of the Family Court for East Baton Rouge Parish
- Judges of the First and Second Parish Courts for Jefferson Parish
- Judges of the First and Second City Courts of New Orleans, Municipal Court of New Orleans, and Traffic Courts of New Orleans
- Judges of the various City Courts
- Judges of any Parish Court
- Judicial Administrator of the Criminal District Court of Orleans Parish and his deputies
- Judicial Administrator of the Traffic Courts for Orleans Parish and each Deputy Administrator
- Judicial Administrator of the Fourth Judicial District Court for the parishes of Morehouse and Ouachita and his deputies

Contribution Rate (La. R.S. 11:62(5)(a))

Judges and Court Officers pay a contribution rate of 11.5 percent.

Retirement Eligibility

Judges and Court Officers have the choice to retire under Judicial Eligibility listed below or Regular Rank and File eligibility as defined in the "Regular Retirement" chapter of the *Membership Handbook*.

- 10 years of service credit as a Judge or Court Officer at age 65
- 12 years of service credit as a Judge or Court Officer at age 55
- 18 years of service credit as a Judge or Court Officer at any age
- 20 years of total service credit at age 50, at least 12 years as a Judge or Court Officer

- Any number of years of service credit as a Judge or Court Officer at age 70
- 20 years of service at any age, with an actuarially reduced benefit (Deferred Retirement Option Plan [DROP] participation and retirement with an Initial Benefit Option [IBO] are not available to members who choose this option). The actuarial reduction is based on the number of months you are away **from eligibility for an unreduced retirement based on Regular Plan retirement eligibility, not Judicial retirement eligibility.** This reduction can also be affected depending on whether you are in state service or out of state service at the time of your retirement.

You may choose either the Judicial option that directs your benefits to survivors by statute, or you may choose a retirement benefits option defined in the "Retirement Options and Self-Funded COLA" chapter of the *Membership Handbook* (Maximum, Option 1, Option 2A, Option 2B, Option 3, Option 4A, Option 4B). Choosing one of these options will affect your survivor benefits.

Benefit Accrual

As a Judge or Court Officer, you accrue benefits at 2.5 percent of your average compensation, plus an additional one percent for years of service as a Judge or Court Officer. If you became a member before July 1, 1986, and did not terminate membership, and receive a refund of your contributions, you will receive an additional $300.00 per year added to your retirement benefit. Your average compensation will be based on your highest successive 3 years of earnings.

Judge Smith is retiring at age 52 with 20 years of service credit. Her first four years of service credit were earned as a Regular Member, and her last 16 years were earned as a Judge. She has an annual final average compensation of $80,000.00, so her base retirement benefit would be calculated in the following manner:

$80,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.025 *accrual rate*	x	4.0 *years as a Regular Member*	=	$8,000.00 per year ($666.66 per month)
$80,000.00 *average compensation*	x	.035 *accrual rate*	x	16.0 *years as a Judge*	=	$44,800.00 per year ($3,733.33 per month)

Her total retirement benefit is $52,800.00 per year, or $4,400.00 per month.

Limits on Final Average Compensation (La. R.S. 11:403(5))

When calculating your retirement benefit, the earnings used for your average compensation may be capped in order to avoid excessive spikes in compensation.

The earnings to be considered for the 13th through the 24th month shall not exceed 125 percent of the earnings of the 1st through the 12th month. The earnings to be considered for the final 12 months shall not exceed 125 percent of the earnings of the 13th through the 24th month.

Disability Benefits

If you become physically or mentally incapacitated to perform your duties, you may retire with 50 percent of the salary you were receiving immediately prior to your Disability retirement or the maximum retirement allowance provided in R.S. 11:444 plus an additional one percent for each year of service as a Judge or Court Officer, whichever is greater.

For the details on the Disability Retirement application, certification, and continuing benefits, see the chapter on Disability Retirement for Regular Members.

Survivor Benefits

In the event of your death, survivor benefits will be paid according to the provisions of the law applicable to Regular Members. This benefit cannot exceed 75 percent of your average compensation.

Survivor benefits will be payable to your spouse regardless of your years of service. Your surviving spouse shall receive the greater of:

- An amount not less than one-third of the salary or compensation which was being paid to you at the time of death,
- An amount equal to one-half of the retirement pay you were entitled to receive or were receiving prior to death, or
- 50 percent of your final average compensation (if provisions of R.S. 11:471 are met).

Service Credit Upgrade

If you are a member of the Judicial Plan, you may upgrade non-judicial service to judicial service credit. You may also purchase prior service as an elected official. Depending on the upgrade option selected, this service credit may be for computation only or both computation and eligibility for retirement.

Application Process

To receive an invoice to upgrade your service credit, you must submit to LASERS:

- *Form 2-15: Judicial Upgrade Invoice Request*
- A $150.00 nonrefundable actuarial calculation fee made payable to LASERS. If additional upgrade options are requested, additional fees may be required

If you decide to pay the invoice and upgrade your service credit, you will accrue benefits at 3.5 percent of your average compensation for each year of upgraded service. Any such upgrade must be completed prior to retirement or participation in DROP. If you have participated in DROP, you may only upgrade credit earned after DROP participation provided that you have not retired. This election is irrevocable.

It is highly recommended that an invoice be requested several months prior to the date needed.

Judges

Taking office on or After January 1, 2011 (La. R.S. 11:441(A)(2)(b) and 11:444 A(1)(a)(ii))

This chapter pertains to Judges whose first employment making them eligible for membership in one of the state systems occurred on or after January 1, 2011. The following positions are covered by the Judicial Plan:

- Justices of the Louisiana Supreme Court
- Judges of the Courts of Appeal
- Judges of the District Courts
- Judges of the Civil District Court for Orleans Parish
- Judges of the Criminal District Court for Orleans Parish
- Judges of the Juvenile Courts for East Baton Rouge, Orleans, Jefferson, and Caddo Parish
- Judges of the Family Court for East Baton Rouge Parish
- Judges of the First and Second Parish Courts for Jefferson Parish
- Judges of the First and Second City Courts of New Orleans, Municipal Court of New Orleans, and Traffic Courts of New Orleans
- Judges of the various City Courts
- Judges of any Parish Court

Please refer to the chapters on Regular Members Hired on or After January 1, 2011, if a topic is not covered in this chapter.

Contribution Rate (La. R.S. 11:62(5)(a))

Judges pay a contribution rate of 13 percent.

Retirement Eligibility

As a Judge first taking office on or after January 1, 2011, but on or before June 30, 2015, you will become eligible for retirement upon reaching one of the criteria below:

- 5 years of service at age 60
- 20 years of service at any age, with an actuarially reduced benefit (Deferred Retirement Option Plan [DROP] participation and retirement with an Initial Benefit Option [IBO] are not available to members who choose this option). The actuarial reduction is based on the number of months you are away **from eligibility for an unreduced retirement**.

As a Judge first taking office on or after July 1, 2015, you will become eligible for retirement upon reaching one of the criteria below:
NOTE: Your LASERS Annual Account Statement will identify you as "Judicial Employee 3," and you will have these retirement eligibilities.

- 5 years of service at age 62
- 20 years of service at any age, with an actuarially reduced benefit (Deferred Retirement Option Plan [DROP] participation and retirement with an Initial Benefit Option [IBO] are not available to members who choose this option). The actuarial reduction is based on the number of months you are away **from Regular retirement eligibility**.

Benefit Accrual

As a Judge, you accrue benefits at 2.5 percent of your average compensation, plus an additional one percent for years of service as a Judge. Your average compensation will be based on your highest successive 60 months of earnings.

Limits on Final Average Compensation

When calculating your retirement benefit, the earnings used for your average compensation may be capped in order to avoid excessive spikes in compensation.

The earnings to be considered for the 13th through the 24th month shall not exceed 115 percent of the earnings of the 1st through the 12th month. The earnings to be considered for the 25th through the 36th month shall not exceed 115 percent of the earnings of the 13th through the 24th month. The earnings to be considered for the 37th through the 48th month shall not exceed 115 percent of the earnings of the 25th through the 36th month. The earnings for the final 12 months shall not exceed 115 percent of the earnings of the 37th through the 48th month.

Appellate Law Clerks

Hired Prior to January 1, 2011 (La. R.S. 11:551 – 11:571)

The following information pertains to law clerks of a Judge or Justice of an Appellate Court hired prior to January 1, 2011 (Law Clerks). Please refer to the chapters on Regular Members if a topic is not covered in this chapter.

Contribution Rates (La. R.S. 11:62(5)(e))

Law Clerks hired ***on or before June 30, 2006***, pay a contribution rate of 7.5 percent.

Law Clerks hired ***on or after July 1, 2006***, pay a contribution rate of 8 percent.

Retirement Eligibility

As a Law Clerk, you will become eligible for retirement upon reaching one of the following criteria:

- 10 years of service credit as a Law Clerk at age 65
- 12 years of service credit as a Law Clerk at age 55
- 18 years of service credit as a Law Clerk at any age
- 20 years of total service credit at age 50, with at least 12 years as a Law Clerk
- Any number of years of service credit as a Law Clerk at age 70
- 20 years of service at any age, with an actuarially reduced benefit (Deferred Retirement Option Plan [DROP] participation and retirement with an Initial Benefit Option [IBO] are not available to members who choose this option). The actuarial reduction is based on the number of months you are away **from eligibility for an unreduced retirement based on Regular Plan retirement eligibility, not Law Clerk retirement eligibility.** This reduction can be affected depending on whether you are in state service or out of state service at the time of your retirement.

You also have the option to retire as a Regular Member (see the chapters on Regular Members for additional information).

Benefit Accrual

As a Law Clerk, you accrue benefits at 2.5 percent of your average compensation per year.

- If you were hired **on or before June 30, 2006,** your average compensation will be based on your highest successive **36** months of earnings.
  - If you were hired before July 1, 1986, and did not terminate employment, and receive a refund of your contributions, you will receive an additional $300.00 per year added to your retirement benefit.
- If you were hired **on or after July 1, 2006,** your average compensation will be based on your highest successive **60** months of earnings.

Limits on Final Average Compensation (La. R.S. 11:403(5))

When calculating your retirement benefit, the earnings used for your average compensation may be capped in order to avoid excessive spikes in compensation.

If hired on or before June 30, 2006: The earnings to be considered for the 13th through the 24th month shall not exceed 125 percent of the earnings of the 1st through the 12th month. The earnings to be considered for the final 12 months shall not exceed 125 percent of the earnings of the 13th through the 24th month.

If hired on or after July 1, 2006: The earnings to be considered for the 13th through the 24th month shall not exceed 115 percent of the earnings of the 1st through the 12th month. The earnings to be considered for the 25th through the 36th month shall not exceed 115 percent of the earnings of the 13th through the 24th month. The earnings to be considered for the 37th through the 48th month shall not exceed 115 percent of the earnings of the 25th through the 36th month. The earnings for the final 12 months shall not exceed 115 percent of the earnings of the 37th through the 48th month.

Your Rights and Duties as a LASERS Member

Your Rights as a LASERS Member

As a member of the Louisiana State Employees' Retirement System, you have certain rights and protections. All members are entitled to:

- Examine applicable retirement plan documents, such as annual reports, without charge in LASERS offices.
- Obtain copies of plan documents and other plan information upon written request to the Executive Director. Reasonable charges will be made for making copies.
- Receive a copy of LASERS annual financial summary called ***Summary Annual Report***.
- Receive the System's quarterly newsletter, ***LASERS BEAM***.
- Obtain a statement of your earliest retirement date, and an estimate of your benefits. Estimates are made no earlier than 18 months prior to retirement. Please submit Form 5-01, Request for Retirement Benefit Estimate.
- Make an appointment to meet with a LASERS Retirement Benefits Analyst.

Garnishment

A member of LASERS who is convicted of a felony offense related to their office that occurred on or after July 1, 2010, may have their pension garnished.

Falsification of Records

State law penalizes anyone who attempts or assists in an attempt to defraud LASERS. Whoever knowingly makes false statements, falsifies, or permits to be falsified any record(s) in an attempt to defraud LASERS shall be fined not more than $500.00, imprisoned not more than six months, or both.

LASERS Contact Information

You may contact LASERS at the following numbers:

Baton Rouge area:	225.922.0600 / Toll free: 800.256.3000
Physical Address:	8401 United Plaza Boulevard, First Floor, Baton Rouge, LA 70809
Mailing Address:	P. O. Box 44213, Baton Rouge, LA 70804-4213

Directions to LASERS

LASERS is located in Baton Rouge at 8401 United Plaza Boulevard, which is just off of Essen Lane between the I-12 and I-10 interstates. United Plaza Boulevard is a U-shaped street intersecting Essen Lane in two places. Both intersections have a traffic light, however, we are most easily accessed by turning onto United Plaza at the intersection nearest I-12. LASERS is located in the Louisiana Retirement System Building, which is the first building on the left from that intersection. Office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

LASERS

Contact Information

Location: 8401 United Plaza Blvd. • Baton Rouge, LA 70809

Mail: P.O. Box 44213 • Baton Rouge, LA 70804-4213

Phone: (toll-free) 800.256.3000 • (local) 225.922.0600

Web: www.lasersonline.org

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