

ALABAMA RETIRED STATE EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION
ALABAMA PUBLIC EMPLOYEES' ADVOCACY LEAGUE

Advantage

MAY 2024 | VOLUME XX, ISSUE II



DISTRICT MEETINGS // LEGISLATIVE DAY
RETIREE BENEFIT INCREASE // BOARD ELECTIONS

From the Director



First, I want to thank all of you for your support of ARSEA/APEAL and for your tireless work advocating for yourselves and each other, especially throughout this legislative session!

Thank you for entrusting me with the honor of serving

ARSEA/APEAL as your Executive Director. ARSEA/APEAL has been a strong voice for retirees for decades and will continue to be well into the future. I truly look forward to working with all of you to strengthen the impact of the retirees throughout the state.

As you receive this magazine, we are working tirelessly with the Alabama Legislature to protect and hopefully improve your benefits. Thank you for contacting your legislators to voice your support for our retiree benefit increase legislation, and please continue to do so! While we are working in the statehouse, nothing compares to legislators hearing directly from you, their constituents. Your vote elected them to their positions, and their duty is to serve you. Continue to share how important a benefit increase is to you!

On that note, our association does not exist without members. The stronger our membership is, the stronger our voice is at the statehouse and beyond. Please recruit your friends and coworkers to join us! If every member recruited just one friend to join, our membership would quickly double, increasing our effectiveness as an organization. As a reminder, retired state employees and retired AND active local employees are eligible to join!

I want to close by sharing how grateful we are to Liane and her decades of work for ARSEA/APEAL. She has served this organization so well, and she is the best mentor I could hope for while entering this endeavor. Her institutional knowledge and personal relationships are incomparable. We are so fortunate to know her and have her in our corner! I encourage all of you to attend our annual convention in September to honor her and her service (see page 9).

Thanks again for being the best membership around!

Advantage

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Advantage Magazine is the official publication of ARSEA/APEAL and is published bi-monthly by the association. The Association office is located at 450 S. Union Street, Montgomery, AL 36104. Telephone (334) 834.9116 or (800) 844.7732. Locate us on the web at www.arsea.org. Any questions concerning this publication or the association can be directed to our office by calling the numbers above or emailing us at retire@arsea.org. Advertisements in the magazine are not endorsements of products and/or services by ARSEA/APEAL unless officially stated in the ad. We shall accept advertising on the same basis as other reputable publications: that is, we shall not knowingly permit a dishonest advertisement to appear in Advantage, but, at the same time, we will not undertake to guarantee the reliability of our advertisers.

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SHARE THIS ISSUE WITH A FRIEND AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO BECOME A MEMBER. FOLLOW THE QR CODE HERE TO JOIN.

Cover photos, clockwise from top left: Executive Director Lindsey Ward addressed the Republican Caucus regarding the retiree increase legislation.

Representative Rex Reynolds (left) stopped to visit with Executive Director Emeritus Liane Kelly (center), and President Thomas Moore (right) who watched the House members vote on HB201 from the gallery.

Increase Bill HB201 Vote

Executive Director Emeritus Liane Kelly received an award from PFFA. Pictured left to right: Marc T. Berry, William Lipscomb, Liane Kelly, David Harer, Derek Toxey



“The stronger our membership is, the stronger our voice is at the statehouse and beyond.”

- Lindsey Ward

Continuing Push for Retiree Benefit Increase During 2024 Regular Legislative Session

ARSEA/APEAL placed much of its focus during the 2024 regular session on passing legislation that allows the Legislature to award regular benefit increases to state government retirees and provides local governments the option of providing identical enhancements to their retirees.

After a three-year effort of drafting the legislation and educating lawmakers on its need, House Bill 201, sponsored by State Rep. Steve Clouse (R - Ozark) and carried by Sen. Clyde Chambliss (R - Prattville), received unanimous passage in the Alabama House and, as this issue of the Advantage goes to press, awaits consideration in the Finance and Taxation General Fund Committee.

The measure conceived of by ARSEA/APEAL President-Elect Norris Green, retired director of the Legislative Fiscal Office, provides benefit increases on a pay-as-you-go basis funded through state agencies rather than placing an unfunded mandate on the Retirement Systems of Alabama, as previous cost-of-living adjustments demanded.

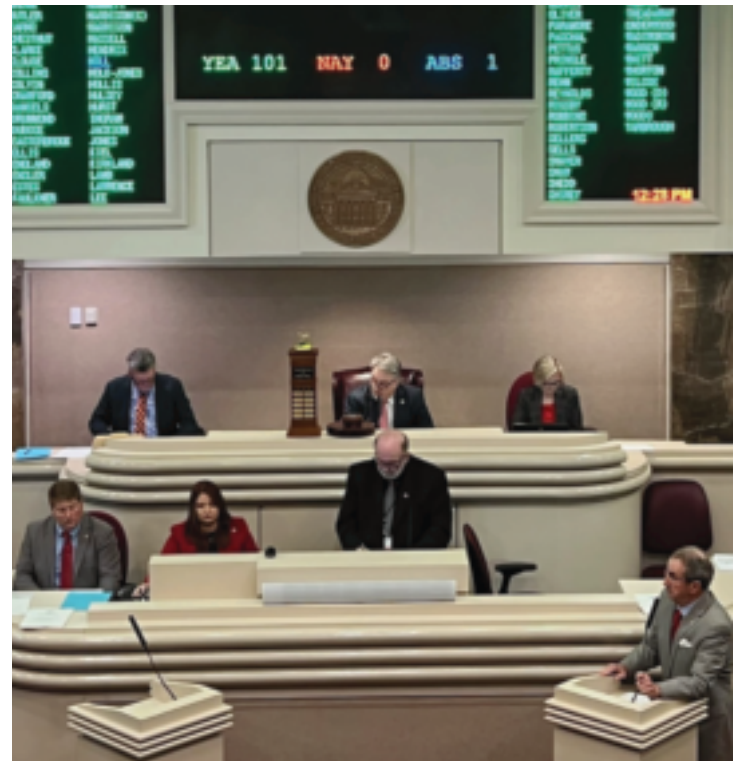
Grassroots legislative contacts made by our members repeatedly noted to lawmakers that retirees have not received a benefit increase since 2006 while inflation has skyrocketed.

While HB201 remains under consideration, companion bills that would have authorized a 3% benefit increase under the new system were unable to pass after being caught behind a backlog of state budgets and other priority legislation. We appreciate Sen. Kirk Hatcher (D-Montgomery) and Rep. Randall Shedd (R - Fairview) for their sponsorship of the bills.

Though our benefit increase bill does not require new funding, members of the legislative leadership have indicated they would like to tie its passage to potential revenues from gaming legislation being negotiated by a conference committee after the House and Senate passed differing versions of the bill.

We have traditionally supported lottery and gaming bills that benefit the General Fund and can provide additional money for retirement and health insurance benefits for retirees.

We remain fully committed to our legislation, and if the 2024 regular session adjourns prior to its passage, we will introduce it again and again for as long as it takes to provide our members with the benefit increases they need and deserve.



ATTENTION STATE RETIREES!

Vote for Norris Green ERS Board of Control

Citing his stellar service, experience, and strong commitment to fiscal responsibility, ARSEA/APEAL has nominated Norris Green for a new term as the state retiree representative on the Employees' Retirement System Board of Control.



Green spearheaded the effort to secure regular benefit increases for state and local retirees, and he has developed COLA legislation that would allow the lawmakers to resume the practice without adversely affecting the finances of the Retirement Systems of Alabama. His bill received unanimous passage in the Alabama House during the 2024 regular session.

Joining ARSEA/APEAL within a month after retiring with 39 years of service, Green served as the director of the Legislative Fiscal Office, where he handled all legislation related to RSA. His vast knowledge and experience in dealing with the multi-billion-dollar Education Trust Fund and General Fund budgets has served him well as a member of the ERS board that oversees almost \$15 billion in assets.

“Norris Green has stood tall as the state retiree representative on the ERS Board, and he has always voted in the best interests of the retirement system and the members it serves,” ARSEA/APEAL President Thomas Moore said. “Dr. Bronner and the other member representatives on the ERS board have a strong and committed ally in Norris, and we are proud to nominate him for a new term.”

Look for your official ballot from the Retirement Systems of Alabama in the coming weeks.

Annual Legislative Day and Reception

ARSEA/APEAL held its annual Legislative Day at the State House in March as members and leaders from across Alabama gathered in Montgomery to personally lobby lawmakers on behalf of our retiree benefit increase legislation.

Members informed their lawmakers about the need for ARSEA/APEAL's bill to create a new process to provide retiree benefit increases. President-Elect Norris Green, who retired as the director of the Legislative Fiscal Office, was on hand to provide legislators with details on the "pay-as-you-go" proposal that requires the Legislature to fund the annual cost of benefit increases upfront, which avoids additional stress on RSA.

In addition to the retiree benefit increase bill, ARSEA/APEAL members lobbied for the full funding request of the State Employees Health Insurance Program, which provides retiree healthcare coverage.

The event concluded with a legislative reception sponsored by our Friends of Retirees and Employees Political Action Committee at the RSA Plaza and attracted Speaker of the House Nathaniel Ledbetter (R - Rainsville), prominent legislative committee chairs, and several lawmakers from both sides of the aisle.

The annual State House visits are important to allow legislators to put a human face on the fiscal issues they must tackle and to remind them that the budgets are more than just figures on a spreadsheet – each decision they make dramatically affects the lives and finances of thousands of our members across Alabama.

We appreciate everyone who took the time to join our lobbying effort in Montgomery as nothing is more effective in passing legislation than the personal, one-on-one request of voters from a lawmaker's home district.



Pictured left to right back: Representative Bryan Brinyark, Steve Griffin, Past President Jane Griffin, and left to right seated: Representative Ron Bolton, Senator Gerald Allen, and Representative Bill Lamb.



Pictured left to right: President-Elect Norris Green, Executive Director Emeritus Liane Kelly, Legislative Counsel for RSA Neah Scott, and Executive Director Lindsey Ward



Pictured left to right: Executive Director Emeritus Liane Kelly, and Past President Ronald Griffith

Opposite page, top row: Pictured left to right: Representative David Standridge, SEIB Representative Bob Childree, and Executive Director Emeritus Liane Kelly; Pictured left to right: Harold Hammond, Barbara Wheeler, Representative Frances Holk-Jones; Pictured left to right: President Thomas Moore, Vice President Thera Herring, Senator Bobby Singleton **second row:** Pictured left to right: Representative James Lomax, Executive Director Emeritus Liane Kelly, and Representative Andy Whitt; Pictured left to right: Executive Director Emeritus Liane Kelly, Representative Kerry Underwood, and District 16 Board Representative Stanley Skipworth **third row:** Pictured left to right standing: Barbara Wheeler, and Representative Donna Givens, and seated Representative Jennifer Fidler; Pictured left to right: Director of Pardons and Paroles Cam Ward, Board Representative District 19 Cynthia Dillard, and Representative Jerry Starnes Pictured left to right: Senator Nathaniel Ledbetter, and President Thomas Moore **bottom row:** Pictured left to right: Executive Director Lindsey Ward, Senator Clyde Chambliss, and Vice President Thera Herring; Pictured left to right: Representative Paul Lee, Executive Director Emeritus Liane Kelly, and Representative Terri Collins; Pictured left to right: Executive Director Lindsey Ward, and Representative Rex Reynolds



Member Communication and Meeting Survey

Please contact the ARSEA/APEAL Office to participate in a brief survey on communications. To use your membership dues wisely, we would like to find out how you prefer to hear from us.

Now that technology is readily available, we have more communication options available to us. We would like your feedback on what kinds of meetings you would prefer to participate in or if you would like to have the flexibility of viewing presentations digitally on your own schedule. Also, we want to know if you want your communications strictly through print or e-mail.

To Participate:

Please call our office at 334-834-9116 or 800-844-7732 or e-mail retire@arsea.org to participate or you may also choose to complete the form here and return your answer(s) to our office by photographing the completed form and e-mailing it or by mailing it to: ARSEA/APEAL Survey, 450 S Union Street, Montgomery, AL 36104

ARSEA/APEAL Member Communication Survey:

Please check which you prefer:

I prefer to hear about benefits information at in-person meetings.

I prefer to attend meetings through a live digital format like Zoom.

I prefer to view a pre-recorded video on my own schedule.

I prefer getting my information from social media like X, Facebook or Instagram.

I prefer receiving the Advantage Magazine in print.

I prefer receiving the Advantage Magazine digitally.

Name: _____ Cell/E-mail: _____

Save the Date!

Make plans now to join us in Birmingham for our 44th Annual Convention

September 24 and 25

Doubletree Hotel | 8 Perimeter Park South | Birmingham, AL

Enjoy our exciting and informative program which will start on the afternoon of **September 24th** and will conclude on **September 25th**. Call us at 334-834-9116 for a registration packet with all the details.



The room rate at the Doubletree by Hilton Perimeter Park will be \$159 per night +tax. To make your reservations for the night of Tuesday, September 24th, call 844-202-9673 and ask to book a reservation using the code ARS. Use this QR code to book online using your smart phone.

Reserve your room before
 September 9th



Issues and Benefits

District Meetings

Our staff has been traveling across the state sharing information about current issues affecting your retirement benefits. Thank you to the members who participated, hearing about the benefits of being a member and meeting legislators and local elected officials who took advantage of this opportunity to hear firsthand as we discussed our plan to return to retiree benefit increases.

Attendees enjoyed hearing from representatives from RSA, The Area Agencies on Aging, The State Health Insurance Program, the Alabama Securities Commission, SEIB, United Healthcare, AMBA and other groups that provided important information about the programs and services they offer.





Board Elections

This election is your opportunity to select the leaders who will govern your association for the next several years and achieve our mission of protecting and improving your retirement benefits.

The candidates listed below have been recommended by the ARSEA/APEAL Nominations and Elections Committee and approved by our Board of Directors. After reviewing the biographical information for the candidates, you may

vote by completing and returning the ballot on the last page of the magazine by mail or e-mail a photo of your completed and signed ballot to retire@arsea.org. Completed ballots must be postmarked or returned electronically on or before June 1st.

Ballots will be counted and ratified by the ARSEA Board of Directors in June, and newly elected board members will take office on July 1, 2024.

Board Officer Candidates

All members vote in this category.

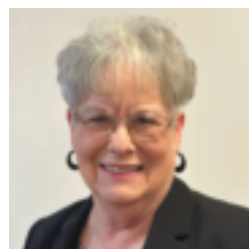


PRESIDENT-ELECT Thera Herring

Before retiring in 1995 with 25 years of service, Thera Herring was employed as the Director of Facility Based Services for the Alabama Medicaid Agency and previously held roles at the Department of Pensions and Security. She later started a consulting firm, Healthcare Compensation Solutions, which contracted with the Departments of Public Health and Human Resources. In recent years, Herring has worked with the nursing home industry to conduct educational seminars to assist Alabama's elder population navigate complex Medicaid eligibility guidelines.

A Prattville resident, Herring has been an active member for several years and is also involved in the Auburn University Club and Daughters of American Revolution.

Herring currently serves on the ARSEA/APEAL board as Vice-President South Central



VICE PRESIDENT NORTH Peggy Harris

Peggy Harris retired from the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service as a County Extension Agent in 1995 with 31 years of service. Following her retirement, Harris served for three terms as president and executive board member of the Pilot Club of Cullman and played a role in establishing the local United Way, Hospice of Cullman County, and Cullman City Tree Commission. She is a member of the Commission on Aging Advisory Board, where she helped organize a county-wide transportation system.

Harris served for 29 years as a member and officer of the Cullman chapters of the National Association of Federal Employees (NARFE) and ARSEA/APEAL. She served several years on the ARSEA Foundation Board and the ARSEA/APEAL Board of Directors. She was inducted into the Alabama Senior Citizens' Hall of Fame in 2023.

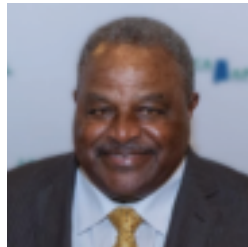


VICE PRESIDENT SOUTH CENTRAL Carolyn Middleton

Carolyn Middleton retired as Alabama’s state budget officer in the Department of Finance in 2013 with 40 years of service and has served as a retiree representative on the State Employees’ Insurance Board since 2015. Among her Executive Budget Office duties were analyzing the General Fund and Education Trust Fund budgets, making revenue estimates, preparing legislation, and as chair of the First Readings Committee.

In retirement, Middleton volunteers for Medical Outreach Ministries, is a member of the American Society of Certified Public Managers, the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, Auburn University Montgomery Alumni Association.

The National Association of State Budget Officers honored Middleton as the 2006 “State Budget Officer of the Year.” She was inducted into the Alabama Senior Citizens’ Hall of Fame in 2023. Middleton currently serves on the ARSEA/APEAL Board as an Ex-Officio member as one of two SEIB representatives.



SECRETARY-TREASURER Thomas Moore

Thomas Moore retired from the Alabama Department of Revenue as an income tax examiner with 25 years of service in 2006. Since retirement, he has been involved with the Alabama Tombigbee Regional Commission and the Rural Health Medical Program.

A past member and chairman of the Demopolis City School Board, Moore served as a councilman for the City of Demopolis and was president of the Alabama League of Municipalities in 2011.

He represented District 9 on the ARSEA/APEAL board of directors for two terms and served as vice president of the association’s South-Central Region before his election as state president. His term as ARSEA/APEAL President will end on July 1, 2024.

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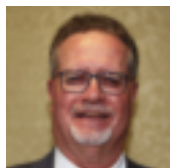
Sign up TODAY to receive your copy of our magazine digitally. Receive our quarterly publication sooner and help us maintain your low-cost dues. Scan the QR code below to get started.

Complete the ballot
on the next page
and submit by

JUNE 1, 2024

District Board Representative Candidates

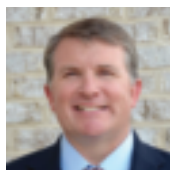
*Please vote for only one candidate in your district.
The counties are listed for each district.*



DISTRICT 5
(Baldwin)
Ralph Hellmich

Ralph Hellmich was elected mayor of the City of Foley in 2020 after serving 16 years as a member of the city council. He retired from the State Oil and Gas Board, where he served as the Regional Operations Supervisor responsible for overseeing operations in the southern half of Alabama, in 2019 with 39 years of service. Hellmich currently serves as chairman of the board for Riviera Utilities and is a past member of the Foley Planning Commission. He is a lifetime member of the Wolf Bay Watershed Watch and the president-elect for the University of Alabama Geological Sciences Advisory Board.

Hellmich currently serves on the ARSEA/APEAL Board of Directors representing District 5.



DISTRICT 11
(Chambers, Lee, Macon,
Russell, Tallapoosa)
Joe Lovvorn

Joe Lovvorn retired as a firefighter with the City of Auburn in 2021 after rising through the ranks during his career to serve as team leader, lieutenant, and, eventually, battalion chief. He has been a member since 2021.

In 2016, he was elected to represent House District 79 and currently serves as chairman of the powerful, agenda-setting Rules Committee, which determines what bills and measures are up for consideration each legislative day.

Lovvorn owns Two Men and a Truck, a moving company servicing Auburn and Montgomery, and is a board member of the Auburn Chamber of Commerce.



DISTRICT 7
(Butler, Coffee, Pike,
Covington, Crenshaw)
Crys Fuller

Mary Crystal "Crys" Fuller of Kinston retired from the district attorney's office in Enterprise, where she continues to work part-time, in 2020 and immediately joined ARSEA/APEAL. She began her career as a clerk with the Alabama Department of Industrial Relations in 1991 and held positions in the Department of Transportation and the Coffee County Sheriff's Office and went on to work at the District Attorney's Office.

Fuller also has private-sector experience in banking and lending and, as a retiree, event venue management.

She currently serves on the ARSEA/APEAL Board representing District 7.

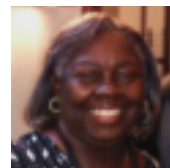


DISTRICT 17
(Cullman, Lawrence,
Morgan)
Proncey Robertson

Proncey Robertson retired in 2018 after 26 years of service as a police officer in the City of Decatur, where he served as a liaison to the Department of Homeland Security, pioneered school protection plans against active shooter attacks, and operated as a member of the SWAT team. In 2003 he was selected as the American Legion's "Law Enforcement Officer of the Year" in Alabama.

A long-time supporter and advocate of the Special Olympics, Robertson was inducted into the Alabama Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics Hall of Fame in 2015.

Robertson was elected in 2018 and served one term to represent House District 7 during which time was a strong advocate for state and local government retirement benefits.



DISTRICT 9
(Choctaw, Greene,
Hale, Marengo, Sumter)
LeTonya Williams

LeTonya Williams retired from the Alabama Tombigbee Regional Commission in 2022 with 27 years of service and previously worked for seven years in the Demopolis Police Department. She has been a member since 2022.

She is the founder of a clothes closet program that provides new and gently used clothing to needy children in the school system and is a member of the Morning Star Baptist Church in Demopolis, where she serves on the hospitality committee. Williams is recently widowed and has two daughters.



DISTRICT 18
(Madison)
Mark Clouser

Mark Clouser has been a member since 2021. He retired from the City of Huntsville Fire and Rescue in 2022 with 32 years of service. Holding the title of district fire chief at the time of his retirement, he previously served as captain for 18 years in the North Parkway location.

Clouser is a graduate of Calhoun Community College, the University of Alabama in Huntsville, and the Alabama Fire College.

He and his wife, Margaret, have been married 40 years and have two children and two grandchildren.

Clouser currently serves as the District 18 FOREPAC DAC.

MUST BE SUBMITTED BEFORE JUNE 1, 2024

ARSEA/APEAL Ballot

Board Officers

A space is provided for write-in candidates.

PRESIDENT-ELECT

- Thera Herring
- _____

VICE PRESIDENT - NORTH

- Peggy Harris
- _____

VICE PRESIDENT - SOUTH CENTRAL

- Carolyn Middleton
- _____

SECRETARY-TREASURER

- Thomas Moore
- _____

District Representatives

Please only vote for one candidate in your district (see bios for list of counties in each district). A space is provided for write-in candidates.

DISTRICT 5

- Ralph Hellmich
- _____

DISTRICT 7

- Crys Fuller
- _____

DISTRICT 9

- LeTonya Williams
- _____

DISTRICT 11

- Joe Lovvorn
- _____

DISTRICT 17

- Proncey Robertson
- _____

DISTRICT 18

- Mark Clouser
- _____

Member Name: _____

You may submit your completed ballot electronically by signing above and e-mailing a photograph of your ballot to retire@arsea.org or text 334-590-5186. You may also mail your ballot to ARSEA, 450 S Union Street, Montgomery, AL 36104.



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- Annuity
- American Hearing Benefits (AHB)
- Hospital Stay Coverage
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