

Retired State Employees Association

NEWS

Serving Texas ERS Retirees Since 1977

January 2017

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President's Message

This year we will celebrate RSEA's 40th year of advocacy for state retirees! We will share more about our history during 2017.

RSEA's priorities for the 85th Legislature will continue to be:

1. Get and keep the state pension fund to a status of actuarially-sound;
2. Have an insurance benefits program whose trademarks are cost-containment, wellness, and customer-friendly; and,
3. Get a retiree on the Board of Trustees.

Your 11-member, all-volunteer RSEA Board of Directors continues to work diligently to get out these messages before the decision-makers both at ERS and in the Texas Legislature. We work closely with our friends in other employee and retiree groups to promote a unified position on concerns regarding the pension fund. While other groups include active and retired state employees, RSEA exclusively represents retirees.

And, we are always interested in and working to build and keep a vibrant and sustainable membership force in RSEA throughout the state. If you have ideas on how we can do better or want to volunteer your services toward our priority agenda, please let us know.

Thank you for being a member of RSEA. We appreciate the opportunity to be of service.

Happy New Year to all! ■

--William C. (Bill) Hamilton, RSEA President

Right: Bill Hamilton with Senator (retired) Gonzalo Barrientos and Representative Elliott Naishtat at RSEA's Annual Meeting.

November 2016 General Elections and the 85th Texas Legislature

As the Legislature convenes on January 10, Governor Greg Abbott and Lieutenant Dan Patrick commence their second session each, as incumbents with 4-year terms. Joe Straus is expected to be re-elected to another two-year term as House Speaker.

In the House of Representatives, elections resulted in the total number of Democrats at 55 and Republicans at 95 in the 150-member chamber.

In the Senate, elections resulted in totals of 20 Republicans and 11 Democrats in the 31-seat chamber. With this margin, it is expected the suspension rule to bring up bills before the full Senate will continue to be 3/5ths, 60 percent or 19 of the Senators, a key component of Lieutenant Governor Patrick's agenda.

When committees are appointed by the two presiding officers – probably in late January or early February -- RSEA will report this to our members. ■

--Bill Dally, RSEA Board Member





Representative Donna Howard and Representative Celia Israel toasted Representative Naishtat. Representative Gary VanDeaver greeted attendees.

Biennial Budget Scenario

As we write this newsletter, the official revenue estimate for the 2017-18 biennium has not been released, but all indications are this session, primarily with oil prices down, will have an even tighter budget scenario than last session. The Legislative Budget Board recently adopted eight percent (8%) as the budget growth factor for the Constitutional limitation associated with the growth in personal incomes in Texas. However, we will most certainly not get to this level since the other Constitutional spending limit, the “pay-as-you-go” limit, will be considerably below the 8% limit – because the estimated revenue levels are not likely to reach that limit. There will be strong competition for any new spending, and it is expected the crisis in staffing for child protective services and perhaps public education will garner priority attention for any budget increases.

Meanwhile, RSEA, as previously noted, will continue to advocate for priority funding to get and keep the state pension to an actuarially-sound basis. ■

--Bill Hamilton, RSEA President

Membership Call

You may have received this newsletter even if your membership is not currently up-to-date.

We want to communicate with as many state retirees as possible. During the legislative session, we will use email to provide timely information to our members.

We cannot over emphasize the importance of being a member of RSEA. Our voices have to be heard by the Legislature to safeguard our pensions and health insurance and to promote, defend and advance our rights.

As an organization, we recruit by attending ERS fairs, staffing booths at organizations, one-on-one contacts and mailings. We also rely on our members to spread the word among friends and past co-workers.

If you have misplaced your dues statement and are able to pay dues of \$24 per year, please call us at 512-451-0087, or email us at office@rseaofTX.org and we'll mail a replacement statement to you. Or, you may visit our website at www.rseaofTX.org to print a membership application form, mark it as “renewal” and mail it in with your payment.

Please help us out by doing your part and referring your retired or soon-to-be-retired friends and neighbors to RSEA. (Contact us and we will be happy to mail brochures to you or directly to them.) Thank you!

Note: A one-year membership in RSEA makes a unique and meaningful gift for you to present to a new retiree! ■
--Justine Martone, RSEA 2nd Vice President

Sunset Review of Employees Retirement System of Texas (ERS)

Beginning in March 2016, RSEA has provided information about the ongoing Sunset Review process through our Capitol News, emails and web site updates.

The Texas Sunset Commission has adopted its recommendations to the 85th Legislature regarding ERS. The Commission's staff recommendations emphasized better contract management and investments by ERS and a more customer-friendly health insurance program.

RSEA will monitor the ERS sunset legislation during the legislative session and keep our members informed. ■

--Tom Griebel, RSEA Treasurer

Annual Meeting Highlights

The September 15, 2016 Annual Meeting was a great success!

Porter Wilson, Executive Director of the Employees Retirement System (ERS) discussed legislative budget priorities for the upcoming 85th Legislative Session. He provided timely information regarding the status of the pension fund as well as insurance benefits. RSEA members are always appreciative of hands-on information from ERS.

Senator Gonzalo Barrientos (retired) introduced Representative Elliott Naishtat, who served 26 years in the Texas House. Representatives Donna Howard and Celia Israel highlighted their time served with Mr. Naishtat. Bill Hamilton presented Senator Barrientos and Representative Naishtat with Honorary Lifetime Memberships in RSEA in appreciation of their years of being committed to the interests of state employees and retirees.

Mary Gordon Spence, retiree and well-known Humorosopher, provided entertaining stories of her time as a public servant.

Glenn Hegar, Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, expressed his appreciation to state retirees, as he highlighted the value of public service and stressed the importance of an actuarially sound pension fund in Texas.

During the business session, five directors were elected to serve two-year terms beginning January 1, 2017. Marie Moore, William Piña, Don Raschke, and Diane Thomas were re-elected. Marie Moore was also re-elected to serve as First Vice President.

Dona Medlock was elected as a new director. Dona began her career at the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts (CPA) in 1978. Following retirement in 2012, she returned to work at the CPA where she is Director of the Enforcement Division. Her duties include overseeing the collection and administration of state taxes and fees, and the management of 423 staff members in 21 field offices located in 19 cities. Welcome to Dona!

Attendees were treated to a barbeque lunch catered by "It's All Good Bar-B-Q."

Lead sponsors for the Annual Meeting were Association Member Benefits Advisors (AMBA), Humana, and United Healthcare. We thank these sponsors and all vendors and others who generously donated door prizes, as listed. ■

--Marie Moore, 1st Vice President



President Bill Hamilton presented Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts Glenn Hegar with an Honorary Associate Membership in RSEA.

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\$55 Chili's cards in frame
2 - Tumblers with \$50 gift card
Wooden desk set
2 - Prize Packs
Haircut and Style
\$50 VISA Card
Golf umbrella
Bottle of wine
Bottle of wine
4 - \$25 cash prizes
\$20 cash
4 - \$25 Cash prizes
Pamper Basket
Mini- Soft Cooler & golf balls
Mini- Soft Cooler & golf balls
Canvas Mini Cooler Bag
5 - Canvas Conference Bags
Gym bag and water bottle
\$20 Starbucks Gift card
Dinner for Two
4 - \$25 cash prizes
2 - \$25 Randalls cards
Colorful Step Stool
Blue Reversible Throw
2 - \$25 VISA cards
2 - \$20 cash prizes



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Officers and Directors - 2017

(L to R) Ed Dolzel - Texas Dept of Criminal Justice, William M. Piña - Dept of Human Services, President - William C. (Bill) Hamilton - Office of Court Administration, Dona Medlock - Comptroller of Public Accounts, Treasurer - Tom Griebel - Texas Dept of Transportation, Lillie Gilligan - Governor's Office and Texas Dept of Health, Bill Dally - Texas Dept of Housing and Community Affairs, 2nd Vice President - Justine Martone - Comptroller of Public Accounts, 1st Vice President - Marie Moore - Texas Bond Review Board, Diane Thomas - Comptroller of Public Accounts, Don Raschke - Texas State Securities Board

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