

VOLUME 29 • NUMBER 4

Spring • 2020

Legislative Report, March 2020

By John Taylor, WVARSE Legislative Chair

WVARSE had 3 Legislative Goals for the year. Two were accomplished, one was not.

PEIA was our first goal. It was and continues to be in good shape. We will have to watch this closely in the future as the Retiree Health Benefit Trust is heavily invested in Stocks. Hopefully the market will eventually bounce back up to the extent this will not be a problem. Only time will tell on this front. Luckily, we have Bill Milam on the PEIA Board to keep us informed.

Our third goal was to support AARP in efforts on prescription drug transparency, etc. This was a success. AARP did get the Transparency Bill passed. They also supported the insulin cap bill which also passed. We took steps to support these efforts. Chalk that up as a success.

I warned everyone that I was hearing that 2020 was going to be a bad year to be asking for anything financial. As it turned out, that is exactly what happened. We got caught looking for scarce resources. It didn't work.

We were promised that we could start over next year on day one. That doesn't look possible now. Again, only time will tell. Quite honestly, it looks like this next year will be a financial disaster. We need to seriously look at what we can practically ask for in these trying times. So be thinking about what we might successfully ask for next year. I doubt that any pension increase is possible. My gut feeling is that if we can protect PEIA next year, we will be doing the best we can.

LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE CANCELED

With the uncertainty of the "return to normalcy" timeline, the May 6th Leadership Conference has been canceled this year. The WVARSE Board will still meet by teleconference on May 5th at 10 a.m. At this time, the Regional meetings are expected to be conducted as scheduled.

- Region I – June 9 First Baptist Church Life Center, St. Marys
- Region II – June 10 First United Methodist Church, Clarksburg
- Region III – June 3 Cedar Lakes, Ripley
- Region IV – June 2 New Baptist Church, Huntington
- Region V – June 1 Mining Academy, Beckley
- Region VI – June 8 Church of the Nazarene 339 Elk place, Romney

Do not despair, Spring is here. Do not fear, God is near... And so are we.

If you need help of any kind (insurance, pension, food) please call anyone on the Executive Board or your Unit President and we will try to connect you to the right people. We care about you. You are not in this alone!!!

Apologies for the lateness of this publication. COVID-19 caused a backup in publication at Delta. With everyone working from home, it is a stressful time. Kara is doing a great job even working from home with a young child.

From Your President

As you read this message, the Ides of March have passed and Spring is upon us. March Madness and many meetings and events have been canceled, and schools are closed due to the Coronavirus outbreak. I hope that everyone who has contracted this horrible disease recovers quickly and without harm. Please take all possible precautions to avoid succumbing to this dreadful disease. These precautions will help you avoid contracting the flu and other infectious diseases. Executive Director Milam and I can personally attest to the fact that having the flu is miserable and debilitating. I've still not completely regained my strength. I hope all of you have managed to stay well during this flu season and that you continue to be well.



MARY ANN FERRIS
WVARSE President

Since our last NEWSLETTER, the Legislative session has ended. We were successful in achieving our third legislative goal of working with AARP in their efforts to require transparency for pharmaceutical companies concerning drug costs. This is a major success for us because exorbitant drug prices affect all of us. Even though we didn't achieve our second WVARSE goal of securing a pension increase of \$2 per month times number of years' experience for all retirees who have been retired 20 or more years, we did manage to present this goal to appropriate legislators and garner much needed support. Our lobbyists also gained assurances that the legislators would work on this issue and try to have something ready for next year. Many thanks to WVARSE Legislative Chair John Taylor and the other WVARSE members who joined him in Charleston to work so hard on our behalf. Also, many thanks to those of you back home who made phone calls, sent letters or emails, or made personal contacts. WE got our message out, and we will live to fight this battle again.

Now to welcome the new members to the WVARSE Executive Board. We are fortunate to have Garrett Mowrey assigned to be our new AMBA representative. Some of you have already met Garrett at Annual Council when he was here with Richard Rowland. Garrett is young and enthusiastic, and I'm sure he will be a valuable asset to WVARSE. In fact, he has already helped Bill Milam secure AMBA's technical help in updating our website. Our next addition to the board is the new AARP president Jane Marks. Jane is a very capable, dynamic individual who has worked with AARP for many years and in several different capacities. She will do an excellent job as AARP president, I'm sure, and be very helpful to WVARSE as well. Past-president Rich Stonestreet remains on the AARP board and heads their legislative volunteer group in lobbying. Our newest Board member is WVARSE Membership Clerk Karen Nicholson. Karen agreed to accept this position in early December; the Board unanimously approved her appointment by email vote since we had no scheduled meeting until March. Karen has met with President-elect Scarberry, Executive Director Milam and me to begin her duties. We extend our thanks to our previous Membership Clerks Chuck and Rita Hammond for Rita's many years

See President, Page 2

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

From the Executive Director



William G. 'Bill' Milam
Executive Director

Legislature is over, WVARSE was not success-

ful in getting it's bill passed asking for an increase of \$2 per month for each year experience for retirees who have been retired 20 or more years. Some changes were offered (reducing the \$2 to 75 cents) but it didn't make it out of the Pensions Committee.

Four bills were passed during the 2020 Legislative session which affect PEIA: SB 291 – Requires PEIA and health insurance providers provide mental health parity; HB 4003 – Relating to telehealth insurance requirements; HB 4198 – Permitting a person

to obtain a 12-month supply of contraceptive drugs; and HB 4543 – Relating to insurance coverage for diabetics. The task force established by Governor Justice during the 2018 session has not yet completed its assignment and then reported to the Governor. Therefore, no legislation was introduced to arrange permanent funding for PEIA. Presently, funding looks good for PEIA. I spoke with Ted Cheatham, PEIA Director, and he related the following to me, "Finances are in great shape. Although we all have concerns about the recent stock market performance, PEIA is well protected. In the Retiree Trust, we do not rely on any investment returns for current operations. Invest-

ment returns in the Retiree Trust are used primarily to help fund the OPEB liability. So, stock market declines will affect our OPEB liability. They will not affect ongoing current operations. Remember, we are 30% funded in the Retiree Trust and over time I am sure this current downturn will recover. For the PEIA active pool, we are invested in much more conservative products with our balances. And, again, we only rely very little on investment income to fund current operations. To be conservative, we currently have two months of cash on hand to cover claim payments." I was unable to talk with anyone at TRS – they are closed and working from home. However, I am sure the

same statement that Ted made concerning current operations apply to TRS. As long as the state is operational, our retirement is safe.

In view of the COVID-19, adjustments may need to be made concerning our Leadership Conference and the regional meetings. Regional meetings are posted on the website. I invite all of you to visit our website. For the most part, I am responsible for making changes on the site. I still need to learn things and practice.

We must continue to increase our membership. It is the responsibility of each member to do his/her best to enroll new members and retain old members. Dues deductible as a method of

paying dues works well and each unit should encourage members to use it. We currently have 90 members actively enrolled, and after July 1, 2020 we will have 167 actively enrolled. We still accept the old enrollment forms and members can enroll on the website. Your sharing of email addresses with us would be most helpful. We prefer that you share your email address with your unit, and it will, in turn, share it with me. That way all concerned will have access. Many of my email addresses are not valid. If you have changed your email address, please send me an email at bmilam@suddenlink.net so that I can update my files.

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EXECUTIVE BOARD

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President

From Page 1

of service to WVARSE and Chuck's efforts to carry on with this difficult job. Due to the Hammonds' health problems this task became too daunting and our membership records became somewhat lacking. We are currently working to update everything and make sure that we have accurate, up-to-date records. We thank all of you for your patient assistance in this

matter. Please be a little more patient and give Karen the time and help that she needs to do this job. I have every confidence in her ability to serve in this capacity. I know that she will prove to be an asset to our WVARSE board.

Sad news now. WVARSE has recently lost two valuable past Board members and longtime WVARSE advocates. They are past president Garry Lynn Shearer and former Legislative chair Bill Hammond. Both had

been in failing health in recent months and have now gone to their heavenly rewards. We extend our sympathies to both their families. While I personally will miss both of them, I am comforted to know that they are both now at peace. Rather than send flowers, the WVARSE board decided to order a book in each person's memory from our organization. Each book will be presented to the appropriate library for the individual.

As I conclude, I wish all of my very best. Stay happy and healthy; take care of yourself and each other; work on securing at least one more member for WVARSE. Remember we work tirelessly for our retirees, and we need many members to support our efforts. I don't know who said it, but it's true: "Enjoy each day because it's a gift; that's why they call it a gift." And SMILE, Mary Ann

WEBSTER COUNTY

State Legislators Attend WCARSE Christmas Dinner



Pictured at the meeting are Senator Bill Hamilton, WCARSE Co-President and Region II Chair Martha Dean, Delegate Caleb Hanna, and newly appointed Senator John Pitsenbarger.

The Webster County Association of Retired School Employees held their annual Christmas Dinner at noon on Wednesday, Dec. 4 at the Webster Springs United Methodist Church. As is the tradition, all three Webster County state legislators were invited to attend and present a brief update of lawmaking activity related to state retirees and education in general. Senator Bill Hamilton, newly appointed Senator John Pitsenbarger,

and Delegate Caleb Hanna addressed PEIA funding concerns, the pros and cons of charter schools, and the omnibus education bill passed in the 2019 session; they also fielded questions from the members in attendance. It was an informative and engaging program; members are encouraged to attend the 2020 Legislative Session on WVCORPE (Coalition of Retired Public Employees) Day on Thursday, Jan. 30.

ROANE COUNTY



Pictured on Left: Senator Boling – November speaker



Pictured on right: Charlie White, Roane County's County Clerk

Charlie White, Roane County's County Clerk, was the guest speaker for the March meeting. Mr. White discussed the importance of having a will and the laws of West Virginia pertaining to wills.

~ In Memoriam ~

BRAXTON
Janice Lengle
Marion 'Carol' Merzouk

CABELL
Mary Curnutte
William "Corky" Drinkard

GILMER
Linda Bailey

HARRISON
Emma Cleavenger
William C. "Bill" Hammond*
Pauline Windon

KANAWHA
Velda Butta
Claryce Cantley
Melissa D Cisco
Shirley B. Daniels

LEWIS
Garry Lynn Shearer

MARION
Richard F Boyles
Marsha Lee Lloyd
Patti A Perdue
Ronald L Vincent

MARSHALL
Helen Hupp
Gail Niemeier
Nancy Ritz

NICHOLAS
Mary Callahan
David Coffman
Deborah Elliott
Norma Keith
Charlotte Moneypenny
Mary Parsons
Mary Ruth Winebrenner

POCAHONTAS
McArthur (Jerry) Buzzard

RALEIGH
Lee Nixon Hart
Kenneth Lee Lily
Clarice Y Statzer

ROANE
Sara Jane DeMarino
Mearl Halcomb
Roger Miller

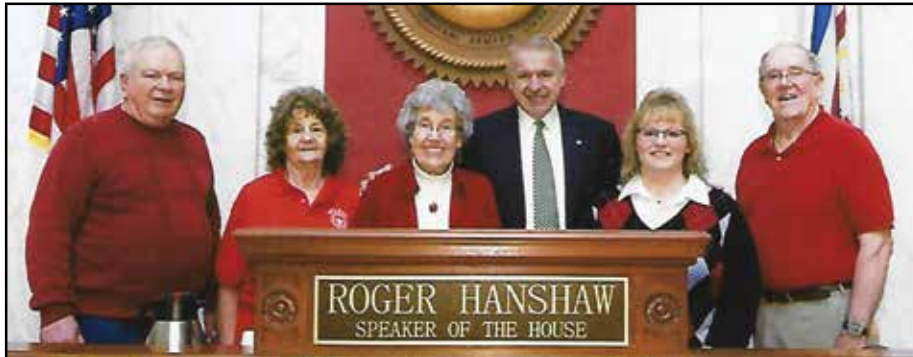
SUMMERS
Patria Reed Ellison

TAYLOR
Stephen G. Swank

TUCKER
Carolsue L. Carr

WIRT
John Matthew Ashley

JACKSON GOES TO CHARLESTON



Jackson County Association of Retired School Employees attended the CORPE breakfast in Charleston on January 30. Those attending were (pictured) Don Stephens,

Wanda Mobley, Mary Pat Glover, Representative Steve Westfall, Jo Hendricks and Frank Hughes. It was a most enjoyable event and members were kept visiting and traveling

through the capital. They met with Senate president Mitch Carmichael and his secretary Veronica Lewis, (who was most helpful prior to the meeting), Bob Ashley, Steve Westfall, Speaker of

the House Roger Hanshaw, Natalie Tennant and Rick Atkinson. They met many others briefly but did their best to seek support for the needs of WV retirees. Representative Steve Westfall was a great host. He invited members to visit the house floor, introduced them to Mr. Hanshaw, and recognized them from the gallery. He further recommended that instead of meeting in the breakfast area (more limited in space and sound, due to construction), that they meet in building 7, next door. Next year, plan on going! You will be glad you did.

Membership

By John Riddle, Membership Chair

We will soon begin WVARSE membership drive by individual county. We have a new Membership Clerk, Karen Nicholson. I have known Karen for many years and worked with her at the WVDE. She will be a great asset to WVARSE MEMBERSHIP. We need to show Karen how our

membership can grow by contacting as many retirees as you can reach.

Membership is the "life blood" of our organization. We have several inactive counties as I post this report to our membership. Please remember to remind our members and this you approach for membership of

our success in past legislation. This is due to hard work of our Legislation Committee, chaired by John Taylor. More is to come, but we need your help by growing our numbers this next year.

Our potential membership statewide is well over 33,000 retired school employees! There are many

benefits to joining your county unit. Please go to the WVARSE web page, wvarse.org.

If you need assistance, please contact me to speak at your meetings. I am available but remember "reach out" at the local level by contacting your friends that are retired and not members

SUMMERS COUNTY



community, her church, the local senior citizens center and of course, the local association of retired school employees. She is always willing to serve on committees and attend state and regional WVARSE meetings whenever possible. She brings an inspirational story or poem to share at each local meeting and still plays the piano well.

Another Summers County retiree, Patria Reed Ellison, was 100 on March 10, 2020. In addition to running a grocery store in Hinton with her husband, she retired from Summers County Schools as an aide.

Unfortunately, before this edition was published, Mrs. Ellison passed away on April 7, 2020. Our condolences to her family and to SCARSE.

Summers County Association of Retired School Employees acknowledges member Margaret Bird Woodrum who celebrated 100 years on March 3, 2020. Mrs. Woodrum, a 1941 graduate of Concord College, taught English in Summers County. After retirement, she has stayed busy helping in her com-

Contact us:

WVARSE, 200 Elizabeth St.,
Charleston, WV 25311
304-610-0192 www.wvarse.org

Life membership — \$100 ...
Life members — Remember to
update your address and pay
county membership dues

If you are an active, annual state member,
you can convert to a state life membership for
only \$85. Your membership must be received
by the WVARSE Membership Clerk by June 15.
PLUS, your local unit will get a \$5 rebate.



WEST VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF
RETIRED SCHOOL EMPLOYEES
WWW.WVARSE.org

WVARSE MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

<p>Authorization to deduct WVARSE Membership dues</p> <p>Annual State Dues: \$ 15.04* Annual County Dues: \$ 5.00 Total: \$ 20.04</p> <p>Last 4 digits of Social Security & Signature Required Social Security # xxx-xx-_____ By my signature below, I authorize the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) to deduct WVARSE dues in the amount of \$1.67 monthly.</p> <p>X _____ Signature</p>	<p>Please Print: (name as it appears on your retirement account)</p> <p>Name _____ Date _____ Last First Middle</p> <p>Street Address _____</p> <p>City _____ State _____ Zip _____</p> <p>Old Address if changed _____</p> <p>Phone () _____ Retired From _____ (Name of County, College, University, Other)</p> <p>Email _____</p> <p>Membership is not tax deductible</p>
<p>Please send complete application to:</p>	<p>WVARSE 200 Elizabeth Street Charleston WV 25311</p>
<p>For WVARSE Office Implementation Date _____</p>	<p>* \$ 1.67 X 12 = \$20.04. The 4 cents is a WVARSE Service Fee.</p>

WEST VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED SCHOOL EMPLOYEES ENROLLMENT FORM

DUES FOR FISCAL YEAR JULY 1, 2020 - JUNE 30, 20 21

STATE LIFE MEMBER PAYING	STATE LIFE MEMBERSHIP \$ 100.00	ANNUAL STATE DUES \$ 15.00
COUNTY DUES ONLY \$ 5.00	PLUS ANNUAL COUNTY DUES \$ 5.00	ANNUAL COUNTY DUES \$ 5.00
EXTRA COUNTY DUES \$ _____	EXTRA COUNTY DUES \$ _____	EXTRA COUNTY DUES \$ _____
TOTAL LIFE/COUNTY DUES \$ _____	TOTAL LIFE/COUNTY DUES \$ _____	TOTAL ANNUAL DUES \$ _____
	COUNTY LIFE MEMBERSHIP \$ _____	

PLEASE PRINT: (Name as it appears on your retirement check) Associate () Life ()

NAME _____ DATE _____ Renewal () New ()
Last First Middle

ADDRESS _____ OLD ADDRESS _____ IF CHANGED
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

RETIRED FROM _____ PHONE _____ EMAIL _____
(NAME OF COUNTY, COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY, OTHER)

Send to YOUR COUNTY MEMBERSHIP CHM.
both forms & check payable to your unit.
Members receive Newsletters, Travel Opportunities & representation at the legislature.

For info: contact www.WVARSE.org for County Membership Chairman
Or call: Karen Nicholson, WVARSE Membership Clerk 304-488-2860

"Dues are not tax deductible"

The WVARSE Scholarship Committee is pleased to announce the winners of the 2019-2020 School Year.



Calesha Williamson

Calesha Williamson epitomizes the possibilities that exist when you have the nurturing support of a caring adult. Her life story is rife with roadblocks that she was able to overcome on her way to achieving her dream. Many times she thought about giving up, but her mother and a few “great” teachers served as her role models to keep moving forward. Calesha has tackled many roadblocks to her success and continues to strive for her dreams.

Calesha is a 2016 graduate of Capital High School and will be graduating from West Liberty University with an Elementary certification. She has been completing her student teaching experience in Ohio County at Madison Elementary and intends to teach in either Ohio or Kanawha County once she has graduated.

Calesha has had numerous opportunities to demonstrate her skills with young children, as she has been keenly influential in her younger sister’s upbringing and recently her young cousins as well. Calesha extols the thrill of teaching her cousins how to read sight words and sing the alphabet as well as the basics of proper manners. Reflecting on these experiences helped her to realize that Elementary Education was her true calling.



Emilee Heilman

Emilee Heilman is a student at West Virginia University in their 5-year Teacher Education program. Her certification will be K-6 Elementary and K-12 Special Education. Emilee is a 2016 graduate of Wheeling Park High School in Ohio county, but her student teaching will be completed in Monongalia County. Emilee’s supervising teacher states that she demonstrates exceptional potential as a future teacher.

Emilee has always planned to be a teacher. Her mother was a teacher and she remembers “playing school” ever since she was very young. As a young student, Emilee was given the opportunity to assist her fellow

students when she completed her work early and discovered that she really enjoyed “teaching” her fellow students just like her mom.

Emilee has always been a strong student. As a college student, she has worked hard to maintain a 4.0 GPA while balancing her extra-curricular activities such as her participation in the Council for Exceptional Children and her membership in the Resident Assistant Council. In 2017, Emilee was recognized for her academics, being awarded the MACUHO award for Academic Excellence. She believes that her perseverance and academic achievement will ensure the future success of her students.



Jada Adlington

Jada always knew she wanted to be a teacher. Her earliest memories of education are of the times spent as a 4-year-old with her aunt and uncle learning how to spell. She was an excellent student while attending Bridgeport HS in Harrison county. Although many attempted to steer her in a more “academic” field because of her intelligence and grades, Jada was committed to becoming a teacher. She is enrolled in the K-6 Elementary Education certification program at West Virginia University. Jada is also enrolled in the Honors College at WVU.

Jada graduated with a GPA over 4.0 from Bridgeport and has continued to remain on the Dean’s List as a college student. Ultimately, Jada plans to complete a master’s degree in a literacy field. She has discovered several online readings and writing tools which she intends to implement in her student teaching experience. Jada hopes to teach in Monongalia county. She is deeply concerned with the status of education in WV and hopes to be a part of the solution.

Jada was always very active in various musical organizations and church, finding both music and church as both inspirational and comforting. Music has been an integral part of her life. Her supervising teacher believes Jada is very professional and that she possesses a positive attitude and good communication skills. She has demonstrated that she possesses the skills to balance her academics, while working and participating in various extra-curricular activities. Jada has maintained a position at the WVU library while attending school, much like her father who works as a computer programmer

in the library and her mother a middle school librarian. Jada feels a sense of accomplishment when she is able to assist her fellow students with their technology needs.



Christopher Parker

Christopher Parker has already had a successful career as a marine. He graduated from Martinsburg High School in Berkeley County in 2011 and entered the Marine Corps. Being a marine helped Chris understand the meaning of teamwork and the importance of proper leadership. Chris has been coaching young athletes in his beloved sport, wrestling for many years. Although he is interested in continuing his coaching duties, he is more interested in teaching history, for which he has always had a passion.

While traveling as a marine, Chris took the greatest pleasure in learning the history of those locales, specifically military history and civilization building. Christopher realized his affinity for teaching while stationed in Japan teaching English to Kindergarten students. Although he intends to teach middle school and high school social studies, his time with kindergartners despite the language barrier, was pivotal in his decision to become a teacher.

Christopher will be graduating from Shepherd University and intends to teach near his home territory of Berkeley County. Christopher has maintained a 3.92 GPA while attending college and working 30 hours per week. He believes that his ability to balance all the moving parts in his life has been the key to his success. While he has prepared for his impending student teaching, he will be assisted by this scholarship. He will continue to coach his wrestling teams, committed to instilling in them his great love for the sport.



Garrett Mowery

Garrett Mowery is a member of the Association Relations Team at AMBA and Professional Insurance Services, Inc. Garrett works with several association partners like WVARSE helping to drive membership and build relationships that enhance the member experience. Working with associations in different parts of the country gives him a good pulse on what is new, relevant, and changing in the retiree market. Garrett lives in Mechanicsburg, PA

with his wife Tori - he enjoys golfing, skiing, and spending time with his German Shorthaired Pointers Sevé and Birdie. Welcome Garrett.