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# MID-JEFFERSON COUNTY RETIRED SCHOOL PERSONNEL JANUARY 2018 NEWSLETTER



## December Program: Jefferson County Commissioner Brent Weaver *County Issues*

- ◆ **Next Meeting:** Tuesday, January 9, 2018, @1:30 PM, Ritter Senior Center, 914 Boston Avenue, Nederland, TX
- ◆ **Program:** Angela Bellard— Jefferson County Appraisal District
- ◆ **Hostesses:** Rosalie Reese (chairman), Linda Briggs, Linda Fong, Becky Dungan, & Dana Wasser
- ◆ **Agenda items:** Election of officers and state convention delegates

### *New year, new focus . . .*

. . . a message from MJCRSP President Lynne James



The latest issue of *The Voice* (Fourth Quarter 2017) is a must read! Beginning on the first page and continuing throughout the issue, Tim Lee outlines the challenges ahead and gives us a blueprint of what we need to do to protect our defined benefit plan when the legislature meets in 2019. As we have been hearing for the last several years, there are some in powerful positions who would like to change our defined benefit plan (guaranteed for life) to a defined contribution plan (fluctuates with the market). In addition, there are several legislative positions up for grabs this spring as several are choosing not to seek re-election.

Many current officeholders were unaware of how the TRS retirement fund is maintained, serviced, and distributed until TRTA retirees informed them of how important a defined benefit is to the well-being of retirees. Tim Lee suggests that we as “educators . . . [revert to] the role we filled professionally . . . [and] continue educating candidates and elected officials, as well as the general public, about the issues that impact retired Texas educators’ financial security.”

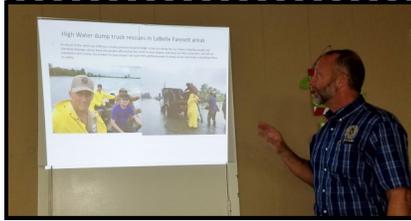
Page three of this newsletter includes a list of tips to use when you contact candidates for office prior to the spring primaries. You may decide to work in groups in face-to-face meetings with each member of the group responsible for being conversant in three or four points on the list. However you decide to address the issue, know that TRTA is also working to promote the best result for its members.

*Happy New Year to All of You!*

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: [www.mjcrsp.org](http://www.mjcrsp.org) AND OUR  
FACEBOOK PAGE: [www.facebook.com/MJCRSP/](http://www.facebook.com/MJCRSP/)

SPECIAL THANKS to MCT Credit Union and Hebert Library for the use of their facilities in preparing our monthly newsletters.

## December meeting highlights



**Row 1:** Program Chair Linda Briggs introduces program speaker; Commissioner Brent Weaver shows one of many photos depicting Hurricane Harvey damage; Joyce Russell, Loretta Morman, Gail Krohn, Donna Lumpkin, Wanda Borne, and Dixie Tucker listen to Commissioner Weaver; Richard Briggs, Dana Wasser, Linda and Curtis Harrison, Brad Burnett, and Candye Martin are informed about the damage. **Row 2:** Loretta Morman, Linda Pinner, and Beverly Minaldi lead the refreshment line while Joyce Russell waits her turn; sisters Donna Lumpkin and Wanda Borne look ready for Christmas; Loretta Morman and Beverly Minaldi; Jessie Howard and Dana Wasser; Commissioner Weaver and Judge Burnett. **Row 3:** Clara Graham, Becky Dungan, and Dixie Tucker; Sue Croom and Joyce Russell; Ginger Cooper and Linda Pinner; Beulah Thompson, Linda and Curtis Harrison. **Row 4:** Candye Martin, Rosalie Reese, and Linda Fong.

### IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

- Calculate your **VOLUNTEER HOURS** for 2017 and report them to Beulah Thompson by January 9! Call 409-722-2648, call or text to 409-718-6032, or email [beulaht@gt.rr.com](mailto:beulaht@gt.rr.com).
- Remember to make your **SCHOLARSHIP AD** contacts before the January meeting. We must know how many ads will not renew so we can plan for future sales.
- Have you received your **2017-2018 TRTA MEMBERSHIP CARD**? Many have not. If you use your card for discounts, contact TRTA to send you another card as some have obviously been lost in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey mail disruptions.

**HELEN'S HEALTH TIP:** Laughter, which is a powerful antidote to pain, stress, and conflict, triggers healthy emotional and physical changes in the body. Laughter really is the best medicine, so keep laughing.

## Important Facts about the TRS Defined Benefit Plan

With the spring primaries March 6, 2018, on the horizon, there are several important things we as TRTA members can do to ensure that those who are elected to state and national offices are aware of our needs and are willing to support us in fulfilling those needs. Three things we can do between now and March 6 are as follows:

- ✓ Register to vote!
- ✓ Vote! Plan to vote early if possible.
- ✓ Get to know the candidates and make sure they get to know us.

It is recommended that we communicate directly to candidates the needs of retirees so that, when called upon to support legislation that meets our needs, they understand the consequences their support (or non-support) will have on the lives of retired educators across the state. In other words, **EDUCATE** them. Here are a few facts to share with candidates:

- ✓ 1 out of every 20 Texans is a member of the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS)!
- ✓ 95% of public school employees do not pay into Social Security and the vast majority of retirees do not receive ANY Social Security benefits due to the GPO and WEP. TRS is their sole form of retirement security!
- ✓ TRS has more than 370,000 retirees with an average annuity of \$2035 per month, while 105,000 retirees (30%) receive \$1000 or LESS per month.
- ✓ The TRS fund is valued at approximately \$134 billion today.
- ✓ As of August 2016, the funded ratio of the pension fund is 79.7% and its funding period is 34 years. Investments account for 64% of the value of the TRS pension fund, while member contributions from active teachers account for 18%, and state and employer contributions account for 18%.
- ✓ TRS's rate of return for 2016 was 7.3%. That figure is 7.48% over the last 20 years, and 8.78% since 1989. 2016 is the first year that changes from the 2013 session made through SB 1458 were fully implemented, which has an impact on the fund's liabilities, funded ratio and funding period. TRS is on a long-term path to actuarial soundness thanks to SB 1458, which passed the Legislature in 2013.
- ✓ In 2016, TRS paid over \$9.3 billion in retirement benefit to more than 360,000 retirees. Nearly 95% of these benefit payments, approximately \$8.8 billion, went directly to members who live and spend these dollars in Texas.
- ✓ Over \$892 million in state revenues and \$342 million in local government revenues were generated by TRS benefit payments in 2014.
- ✓ Retirees spending their benefit provide a notable economic stimulus to communities throughout the state. Every \$1 in benefit paid by TRS generates \$2.34 in economic activity!
- ✓ TRS benefit payments generate 112,939 permanent Texas jobs annually.

Begin now educating candidates with the facts listed above so that they are at least aware of vast number of retirees affected by decisions they will be asked to make, especially regarding the defined benefit plan we now enjoy.