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# *The* VOICE

THE OFFICIAL NEWS BULLETIN OF THE TEXAS RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

## TRTA IN ACTION 84TH SESSION UNDERWAY



**By Tim Lee**  
**Executive Director**

TRTA members are the most active, informed and passionate advocates in the Texas Capitol! The tenacity of TRTA membership protects the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) from endless attacks levied by individuals, business groups, not-for-profit think tanks and elected officials. TRTA members have shown resolve in the face of these attacks, and stymied the efforts of lobby groups, whose goal is to deprive retirees of the TRS pension program.

The earned benefits program has been in place for more than 77 years, but the anti-pension crowd has grown restless and seeks to dismantle the TRS pension fund and health care benefits. This is a fight we cannot afford to lose! These are the benefits you have paid for and earned!

The 84th Legislative Session is now well underway, and by the time you receive this bulletin your participation will be critical. Consider this your guide to the TRTA Legislative Agenda for the 84th Texas Legislature.

**CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE**

**Priority 1: Defend the TRS defined benefit program and oppose all attempts to undermine pension fund solvency.**

**Position: Oppose any attempt to undermine the defined benefit plan or the legislation passed during the 83rd Texas Legislative Session that made TRS actuarially sound.**

TRTA and the Texas Legislature faced an extremely aggressive attack two years ago against the TRS defined benefit pension plan. The TRS pension plan requires active employees and employers to make contributions during the employee's career. These contributions are invested by professional money managers at a very low cost to the member. The management and low-fee structure creates an extremely cost-efficient retirement system. Upon retirement, the trust pays a lifetime pension benefit to its participants.

In Texas, the pension system is especially important. Ninety-five percent of all Texas school employees do not pay into Social Security. Without the TRS defined benefit plan, hundreds of thousands of active school employees would have no safety net in retirement.

Texas has done a far better job with its large public pension plans than some other state legislatures. Texas has a 77-plus year track record of never missing payments into the TRS fund. Political officials have not used the fund for advancing self-interests. The TRS Board of Trustees has a strong record of honest professional investment leadership. While not always perfect and sometimes slow to respond, the Texas Legislature historically has done the right thing to keep the TRS plan funded and protected.

The influence of outside public pension plan debacles, though, is still felt in the Texas Legislature. Numerous groups, many of which are funded by private ideologue mega-donors or would financially benefit from the collapse of the TRS fund, are pushing Texas legislators to dismantle

the defined benefit for education employees and retirees.

TRTA members not only defended the TRS fund last session, we worked to make it as financially solvent as possible. The real poke-in-the-eye to defined benefit naysayers is that we helped provide a raise to 200,000 retirees!

While the TRS defined benefit pension fund may not garner the spotlight as it did last session, our job now is to protect the work we put into making the fund more financially secure and enabling TRS to live up to its motto: to be in the forever business!

**Priority 2: Ensure emergency action is taken to fill the immediate funding shortfall in the TRS-Care retiree health insurance program.**

**Position: Support an immediate funding proposal of approximately \$768 million to keep TRS-Care solvent in the coming biennium without increasing retiree premiums. Develop a long-term solution for TRS-Care that pre-funds the program for current and future participants.**

A \$768 million shortfall is facing TRS-Care. Texas budget revenue is expected to increase by \$11 billion. Without question, there is money to help our TRS-Care health insurance program. If the TRS-Care shortfall is left unfunded, retiree premiums will double.

TRTA will not support any proposal that relies exclusively on doubling retiree premiums. That is not a solution, it's a failure by the Legislature to address this crisis adequately.

Many legislators want to solve this problem. Thanks to our members contacting their legislators before the session even started, we are hearing positive feedback from elected officials. Multiple plans are surfacing to cover the biennial shortfall. The Legislative Budget Board has proposed a plan to increase retiree premiums 25% and force active school employees and employers to pay more into TRS-Care.

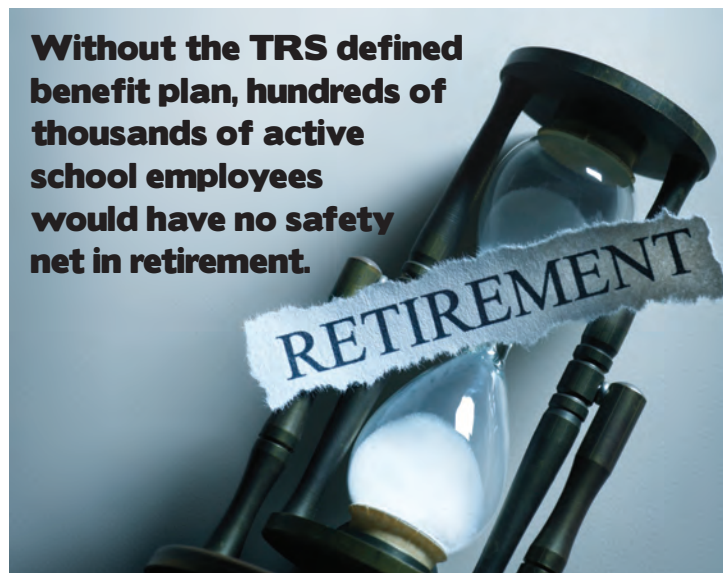
Retirees already pay almost 40% of the entire cost of TRS-Care. Active school employees are also paying an exorbitant amount for TRS-Active Care in addition to the amount coming out of their pay for TRS-Care. School employers around the state face their own fiscal challenges running our public schools.

TRTA contends that the Legislature must do more to fund this health care program. For every \$1 in appropriation supporting TRS-Care, the State Employees Retirement System (ERS) is receiving \$5 for their health care program.

The Legislature simply is not contributing enough to keep our health care program solvent. TRS-Care has twice as many retirees in its health program than the ERS health care

**Without the TRS defined benefit plan, hundreds of thousands of active school employees would have no safety net in retirement.**

**RETIREMENT**





program, but ERS receives twice as much funding.

TRTA believes ERS employees and retirees deserve access to quality health care at a reasonable cost. The same should be true for our public education retirees. The chronic underfunding of TRS-Care must stop. Retirees, actives and schools all pay a significant portion of the cost. It is time for the Legislature to develop a long-term solution!

TRTA calls on the Texas Legislature to develop a method to pre-fund TRS-Care. If we begin truly to fund these benefits for future TRS retirees, we will not have to rely on emergency appropriations.

**Priority 3: Pass a pension increase for TRS retirees who did not receive the increase in 2013.**

**Position: Adopt legislation authorizing an increase for TRS retirees who retired September 1, 2004 and after.**

TRTA members rallied behind a single unifying goal last session: Protect the TRS defined benefit plan and ensure the long-term solvency of the TRS pension trust fund.

As we worked tirelessly to defend our retirement plan last session, we also pursued an aggressive agenda to help retirees with a much needed pension increase.

Those efforts paid off. In our early discussions with legislators, the target was to help as many of our senior retirees as possible. Many members are in desperate need of additional income as they may have lost a spouse, taught at a time when wages were lower, or are facing higher medical costs.

After going more than 10 years without an increase, TRTA members let legislators know that medical and living expenses were untenable. TRTA members kept pushing for more and more coverage with the proposed increase.

By the end of the session, we had taken the increase as far as it could go without making the system fiscally unsustainable. What started as a raise for retirees who retired prior to August 31, 1994 expanded to those who retired before September 1, 2004.

While this was welcome news for 200,000 TRS retirees, more than 100,000 retirees did not receive the cost-of-living increase. TRTA vowed to bring this to the next legislative session and fight to get an increase for those who did not receive one last session.

TRTA is delivering on this promise by working with elected leaders to file legislation expanding the increase for all retirees who retired after September 1, 2004. Please check the TRTA website and sign up for our *Inside Line* email service for updates on filed legislation affecting TRTA members.

**Priority 4: Continue to help TRS retirees with other types of benefit increases.**

**Position: Pass legislation authorizing TRS to pay a one-time supplemental payment for all TRS retirees.**

In 2007, the Legislature authorized the first-ever TRS supplemental payment for retirees. While the one-time additional annuity check was not a permanent raise, it was the first benefit increase retirees had seen in nearly 7 years. The raise was capped at \$2,400, which was similar to getting three years of increases all in one check for the majority of retirees.

The Legislature and TRTA have since made the fund actuarially sound enough to pay out a real cost-of-living increase. We were able to give two thirds of our retirees a raise last session and will continue to work to give the remainder of our retirees a true increase.

Nonetheless, a supplemental payment for all TRS retirees holds merit. Providing a supplemental payment is much more feasible to the Legislature, as the cost is essentially equal to one month of TRS annuity payroll. A supplemental payment would be paid out immediately and have no long-term actuarial effect on the system.

TRS earned more than 16% on its investments this past year. The cost of a supplemental check is equal to about three days of interest on the TRS fund. It is not the preferred method to provide help to retirees, but this one-time check approach would help hundreds of thousands of people.

The Attorney General gave an opinion in 2009 when the Legislature approved a supplemental check for all TRS retirees. The \$500 check was conditional on a conclusive decision that the payment was constitutional.

The Attorney General denied the payment. The opinion was not based on the constitutionality of the payment. The Attorney General said the Legislature made the payment impossible by asking for a “conclusive” decision. The Attorney General stated that the Legislature knew the methods of benefit enhancements available for retirees and that the state’s Attorney General does not render “conclusive” judgments.

A supplemental payment, if actuarially possible, could be passed this session helping thousands of TRS retirees.

**Priority 5: Support our active educator friends as they seek additional school funding dollars, especially to help reduce the rising costs of TRS-Active Care.**

**Position: Work with active school organizations to help ensure adequate funding for our Texas public schools and our dedicated school employees.**

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

The Texas Legislature created a health care program for school districts in 2001 called TRS-Active Care. TRS-Active Care was designed to reduce health care costs for school district employers and employees by offering a self-funded group pooled together.

The Legislature authorized an appropriation of \$75 per month per employee for health care costs. This amount is funded through the school funding formula. It has not changed since 2002.

Now, our active school friends are facing a near collapse of their health care plan. Costs have increased every year, and school employees have suffered double-digit premium increases multiple years in a row. In total, there have been 9 increases in premiums for Active Care participants over the last 12 years. Some of those increases were as high as 25%!

While some school districts still operate their own self-funded group plans, many are participating in TRS-Active Care and can no longer cover the costs per employee.

TRTA will work this session with our friends in the active education community to ensure our schools are adequately funded and that our school employees have quality health care at an affordable cost.

### Concluding Comments

Numerous groups continue to attack TRS defined benefit plan. TRTA was founded on the idea that TRS retirees must come together and serve as adamant defenders of their retirement system.

State law prohibits TRS from lobbying on behalf of any school retiree or employee. TRTA is the advocacy powerhouse protecting the retirement system for all retirees and future retirees.

We must defend this great retirement system. We must also fight to help our retirees who are living on a fixed incomes. A TRS retiree's pension benefit is 37% less than retired school employees in other states. Texas does not have annual cost-of-living increases built into our TRS retirement benefits. Our retirees must be ready to fight every session to help those who dutifully served the state in our public schools!

TRTA is your champion and your voice. Without you, though, we are silent and unable to represent these important issues. Without you, the powers that want to eliminate TRS as we know it may very well succeed.

Now is the time to help yourself by partnering with TRTA. Thousands of other TRTA members are standing with you in this fight. We have proven over and over again that TRTA is a problem-solving organization determined to get the best

results possible. Please be ready to send emails, make phone calls, read the *Inside Line* email alerts, and talk to your fellow retirees and ask them to join us!

By the time our next bulletin is published, the legislative session will be over and the outcome of our efforts will be known. Let's work together and leave nothing on the table as we meet all challenges head on this legislative session! ★

### TRTA Federal Agenda

**Position: Pass HR 711, the Equal Treatment of Public Servants Act this Congressional cycle.**

TRTA has long championed many issues in Congress in addition to our active state legislative agenda. Two very important Social Security laws prevent many public educators from receiving benefits, the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP).

After years of Congressional neglect on the important WEP and GPO issues, Congressman Kevin Brady (R-TX 8th District) has introduced HR 711, the Social Security Equal Treatment of Public Servants Act.

HR 711 will permanently eliminate the current WEP formula and implement a more fair calculation of Social Security benefits for public employees whose public pension fund is not coordinated with Social Security (such as the 95% of Texas school districts).

The new formula will give full credit to a future retiree for the years they paid into Social Security, and addresses the issues that originally led to the creation of the WEP. Additionally, the formula will be fair to employees working in dual-covered systems (like a non-covered public pension fund and other private sector work).

Future retirees under the new formula will see WEP's impact cut in half.

For those already retired, Social Security benefits will be recalculated and many retirees will realize Social Security increases as high as 36%!

If we can work with Congress to enact this legislation, benefits will be recalculated in January 2017. TRTA has worked on the WEP and the GPO for almost two decades, and this legislation can make a real impact on more than a million retired public workers in Texas and around the nation. Getting anything passed in Congress will take a major effort on behalf of TRTA, and we are ready to fight to get you more of your earned Social Security benefits!

*The Texas Retired Teachers Association (TRTA) will host its biennial Day at the Capitol event on April 8, 2015 in conjunction with the 62nd Annual Convention in Austin.*

In years past, thousands of Texas public education retirees have filled the halls of the Texas Capitol wearing red shirts and promoting the preservation of the TRS defined benefit plan and TRS-Care retiree health insurance program!

This year, TRTA is expecting many Convention attendees to arrive on the east lawn on the Capitol grounds for a day filled with legislator visits, House and Senate honors, and an old-fashioned ice cream social. Here are several key facts to know about the Day at the Capitol!

First and foremost, this will be a fun and exciting day! We are asking all attendees to wear a red shirt to show solidarity and impress legislators with the “Sea of Red” when members fill the hallways! It is also important to wear comfortable shoes. Traversing the granite floors of the Capitol can be hard on the feet. Be sure to prepare enough time between any appointments you have scheduled to maneuver the building, as it is rather large and waiting for elevators can be time-consuming.

For those members attending the TRTA Convention, your Day at the Capitol schedule of activities, Capitol map, and Capitol parking details will be included in your Convention program. Be sure to bring your Convention goodie bag and name badge.

If you are attending the Day at the Capitol but not the Convention, a bag and materials will be provided for you as you enter the Capitol grounds on the East lawn. All attendees will receive a bottle of water and a snack upon arrival.

While many Convention attendees may choose to park at the JW Marriott and ride a shuttle to the Capitol grounds, those that are travelling to Austin on April 8 or those who prefer to park near the Capitol may do so in one of the many state parking garages located

along San Jacinto street (between 12th, 13th and 14th streets). From the state parking garages, the East lawn is a short walk of one block to the west. If you are staying at the JW Marriott hotel and would like to ride the shuttle to the Capitol, please note that shuttles will begin running in 20 minute intervals at approximately 7:00 a.m.

If your district or local unit plans to bring a large group to the Day at the Capitol but is not attending the Convention, please let us know! Send an email to [info@trta.org](mailto:info@trta.org) (Subject Line: Capitol RSVP). This will help the TRTA staff ensure that plenty of materials, snacks and water are available for everyone.

Due to the long lines that may form at the Capitol’s east door, members that are willing and able should utilize alternate entrances (north, south, and west). Please be aware that the only wheelchair accessible ramp is located at the Capitol’s north entrance. Quicker entry into the Capitol is available for persons who have a concealed handgun license (CHL). Please use the CHL line if you have your license with you.

The day begins with optional legislative visits for members who have scheduled appointments with their Senators and Representatives. At 9:30 a.m., members should begin gathering in the House gallery on the third floor to hear a resolution honoring Texas public education retirees. If the gallery is full, a short walk across the hallway to the Senate gallery will give members the opportunity to hear a similar resolution by the Texas Senate.

# DAY AT THE CAPITOL

## DAY AT THE CAPITOL SCHEDULE

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Legislative Visits

9:30 a.m.

House Gallery

10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Photo opportunities with Legislators

10:30 a.m.

Senate Gallery

11:30 a.m.

Rally on East Lawn

12:00 p.m.

Additional Legislative Visits

12:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Ice Cream Social

TRTA staff members will be available to take photos during the day. In order to have a TRTA staff member take your photo, please send an email to [info@trta.org](mailto:info@trta.org) (Subject Line: Capitol Photo). Please include the date, time and location of your appointment as well as the number of TRTA members expected to attend the appointment. Photos will be scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis. You will be notified if your group has been scheduled with a TRTA staff photographer.

Please note that many legislative staffers at the Capitol will also take your photo with your Senator or Representative and email it to you. Bring a business card so that they will have your contact information.

By 11:30 a.m., members may begin gathering on the East Lawn for a rally and ice cream social. TRTA will not provide lunch during the Day at the Capitol event, however, the Capitol Grill (located on floor E1) offers a variety of delicious and quick food options.

Ice cream will be provided by local Austin favorite Amy’s Ice Cream, and will include vanilla, chocolate and strawberry flavors. We hope you will enjoy a few moments under the tent and cool off with a delicious treat. Be sure to extend an invitation to your legislators and their staffers to join you! ★

**Shuttles will run from the JW Marriott to the Capitol from 7:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m., and begin returning guests to the hotel at 1:30 p.m. with final pickup from the Capitol at 4:00 p.m. Shuttles will run in 20 minute intervals.**



## ★ PRESIDENT'S LINE

I am thrilled to be serving as your TRTA President as we embark on a journey to grow our organization and enhance communication through technology. Although we will continue to be mindful of the needs of our members who choose not to use computers, we need to attract new retirees who conduct the business of their daily lives with computers, cell phones and iPads.

TRTA officers, District 13 and staff are working diligently to prepare for our TRTA 62nd Annual Convention "Jazz it up with TRTA." District 6 has a great jazz band that will set the mood, energizing our membership to jazz up their meetings, members, officers and committee chairmen. We are reducing printing costs dramatically by not printing the resource guides, and hope that you will find the energy and ideas shared in the training sessions an inspiration you can take back to your districts and local units.

This convention will be combined with our TRTA Day at the Capitol! Let's let our legislators know we appreciate what they have done and will do to continue helping retirees. **WEAR YOUR RED SHIRTS** and comfortable shoes!

When I retired, I wanted to give back to a profession that provided me with retirement benefits and health care. My mother and many others did this for me. I feel like it is my responsibility to make sure that my granddaughter, who is majoring in elementary education, and my former students teaching in the classroom today have a secure retirement system.

We have a lot of smart, energetic members. Let's work together to make 2015 our best membership year ever! Let's **GIT 'R DONE!**

*Fran Plemmons*

Fran Plemmons  
2014-2016 TRTA President








The Texas Retired Teachers Association has endorsed Medical Air Services Association (MASA). MASA is dedicated to providing life-saving emergency assistance from home or while traveling anywhere in the world. MASA provides coverage 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to protect members against catastrophic financial loss from emergency transportation.

The Platinum Membership Includes:

✓ Emergency Air Ambulance / Medical	✓ Evacuation
✓ Non-Injury Transportation	✓ Commercial Air Transportation
✓ Repatriation/Recuperation	✓ Return Transportation
✓ Escort Transportation	✓ Vehicle Return
✓ Mortal Remains Transportation	✓ Organ Retrieval
✓ Organ Recipient Transportation	✓ Ground Ambulance - Unlimited
✓ Helicopter Transportation	✓ World Wide Coverage

**Many people are surprised to learn that coverage starts as low as \$24.50 a month!**

Monthly, annual, 5-year, and lifetime memberships are available for TRTA members.

Learn more by calling 800.258.7041. Enroll online at:  
[www.myAMBAbenefits.info/trta](http://www.myAMBAbenefits.info/trta)

Proud benefits provider for the Texas Retired Teachers Association



**ASSOCIATION MEMBER**  
**BENEFITS ADVISORS**

## CONVENTION NEWS

Registration is now open for the 62nd TRTA Annual Convention to be held in Austin, Texas April 6–8, 2015! This year's theme is Jazz it up with TRTA, a perfect sentiment that matches the city's musical reputation and sparks excitement for this unique and enlightening event!

The convention will be held at the JW Marriott on 110 E. 2nd Street. Please call 1.888.236.2427 and ask for the "Texas Retired Teachers Association 62nd Annual Convention" group rate.

Members can also utilize their member discount at area Drury Inn and La Quinta Inn hotels. See page 7 to learn more about the member benefits.

There is no better time to be in Austin! The Texas Legislature will be in regular session, discussing such vital issues as the TRS-Care health insurance program and ways to protect the longevity of benefits for our public education retirees and pre-retirees.

TRTA has released a tentative schedule of events to help you plan your travel. Due to the Easter holiday on April 5, convention activities will begin later in the day on Monday, April 6, allowing members to travel in the morning and still arrive in time for registration.

If you will be flying into Austin Bergstrom International Airport (ABIA) for Convention, the JW Marriott has secured a 10% discount from Super Shuttle for TRTA members who need transportation to the hotel. Please visit the TRTA website or the following link to learn more: [groups.supershuttle.com/texasretiredteachersassociation.html](http://groups.supershuttle.com/texasretiredteachersassociation.html).

Exhibits will be available in the registration area beginning April 6. Like last year, TRTA Diamond Plus participants will receive a special gift by stopping by the Diamond Plus table. Members who wish to renew their membership through Diamond Plus can do so at Convention.

# JAZZ it up with TRTA



Diamond Plus participants who attended convention last year should bring their red name badge holders.

Unlike years past, there will be no banquet, and instead members may attend a welcome dinner on the first night. Enjoy a social gathering prior to the dinner beginning at about 5:30 p.m. You will be entertained by the TRTA District 6 Coffee House Quartet, featuring several talented TRTA members!

The menu for the evening features baby romaine and bibb lettuce with hearts of palm and orange segments with a citrus honey dressing, grilled flat iron steak with royal trumpet mushrooms, leek demi ragout and yukon gold mascarpone. For dessert, members will enjoy a mocha mousse dome with pistachio sauce and chocolate quenelles.

Day two (April 7) begins with a Foundation Breakfast. Previously, TRTF held a luncheon. Though the format will be somewhat different, members will still be able to present gifts to the Foundation in honor or in memory of a loved one, friend or colleague. Your early morning meal includes scrambled eggs with chives and cheese, crisp bacon strips, breakfast potatoes, and an assortment of beverages, pastries and breads. To learn more about the Foundation's Convention plans, please

see the back page of *The VOICE*.

Training and informational sessions fill the morning, including "125 Years of the Texas Capitol," "Understanding Grief," "Cheap and Easy Houseplants and How to Keep them Alive," a new Before the Bell session, officer and committee training sessions and more!

A legislative luncheon will be held at 12:15 p.m. and feature a program you will not want to miss! For lunch, members will have a cobb salad with breast of chicken, bacon, tomatoes, avocado, bleu cheese, and a lemon vinaigrette dressing. Dessert is included, featuring a tiramisu parfait with chocolate and caramel sauce, whipped cream, crumbled biscotti and chocolate tuille.

After lunch, attendees will go to their district caucus meetings and then proceed to the House of Delegates to participate in and vote upon association business. At the conclusion of the House of Delegates, attendees will be able to choose from a wide variety of restaurants within walking distance of the hotel in wonderfully diverse downtown Austin for dinner.

The length of the convention will be truncated, allowing for a full day

**CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE**



# RETAIN, REGAIN, RECRUIT!

By Nancy Byler

2014–2016 TRTA First Vice–President/Membership Committee Chairman

“RETAIN, REGAIN, RECRUIT!” is the motto for our TRTA Membership Committee. Membership records tell us that 5000+ TRTA members from the 2013–2014 membership year have not renewed their dues for 2014–2015!

Of course, we want to say “what are those people thinking?”

Did your local unit lose members from last year? Most of us reading this agree with the importance of being active in our great organization, but do we convey that to those who join, attend a local meeting, and never return? Do we sing our own praises? Do the members we are trying to RETAIN, REGAIN, and RECRUIT understand our member benefits? Do they know the steps our actives take to help retain their current benefits? Do they understand the benefits the Foundation offers?



Maybe we need to look at how our new, or visiting, members see us. Does your local unit always make these people feel welcomed? Do we introduce ourselves and ask them to sit with us? Many of us go to our local meetings to see our friends, have a cookie and say we were there. Then go on with our daily activities. Some of our local units do a wonderful job of making everyone feel welcomed and a part of the group! Consider visiting another unit to observe ways to become successful.

If your attendance is less than you want or expect, discuss ways to “spice up” your meetings! A welcome committee at each meeting will ensure that ALL members are made to feel comfortable and have a friend to visit with during the meeting. Some of our local units have quilting groups, fun group day trips, and similar interest group lunches.

**REMEMBER! Our LOCAL UNITS are the FOUNDATION of our TRTA ORGANIZATION!**

of legislative grassroots advocacy on Wednesday, April 8! Our “Day at the Capitol” event is open to all Convention attendees as well as any member who wishes to travel to Austin for this purpose only. Read more on page 5!

The Day at the Capitol allows public education retirees to visit with their legislators, be honored by both the Texas Senate and House and enjoy a rousing speech by TRTA officers

and elected officials on the Capitol grounds. All attendees at this event are encouraged to wear red! Please read more about the Day at the Capitol event, including transportation and parking, on page 5.

Please note, an RSVP is required for the Day at the Capitol event even if you do not plan to attend the Convention. Your RSVP ensures that enough advocacy materials and refreshments are available for all

attendees. Please check the appropriate box on the registration form if you are attending on April 8.

Look for the registration form for all events, including meal prices, on page 10 or register online at [www.trta.org/convention](http://www.trta.org/convention). Registration for the Convention and Day at the Capitol closes March 16, 2015. We hope you will join us in Austin in April for convention, Day at the Capitol or both and Jazz it up with TRTA! ★

RETAINING our membership is not just about having members sit and listen to reports. Be creative! Make it fun by including everyone and watch your local unit attendance improve. Active participation will make all members and visitors feel like a part of your unit.

REGAINING those lost members will become much easier when word spreads that there is something exciting going on at your local meetings.

RECRUITING others to join TRTA is easy! If you don’t have one, appoint a Membership Committee and adopt a recruiting strategy. Develop a prospect list and conduct a recruiting campaign.

Your State Membership Committee is encouraging each of you to get one member to join, whether you RETAIN, REGAIN or RECRUIT!

## 62ND TRTA ANNUAL CONVENTION SCHEDULE

### MONDAY, APRIL 6, 2015

11:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. Delegate Certification, Registration, Exhibits  
2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. TRTA Board of Directors Meeting  
3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. DP Meeting, Foundation Trustees, Facilitators Meeting  
6:30 p.m. Welcome/Awards Dinner

### TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 2015

7:00 a.m. – 8:15 a.m. Foundation Breakfast  
7:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Delegate Certification, Registration, Exhibits  
8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Breakout Sessions I, II & III  
12:15 p.m. Legislative Luncheon  
1:30 p.m. – 2:15 p.m. Caucus Meetings  
2:30 p.m. House of Delegates  
Dinner on your own



# CONVENTION REGISTRATION FORM

Last and First Name			TRTA ID
Address			
City		State	Zip
Phone	Email for Confirmation		

Every convention attendee must register online or by mail. One registrant per form. Please check all boxes that apply. Attendees must pay the \$30 registration fee or \$35 on-site registration (late) fee. Refund requests must be received by March 31, 2015. Refunds will be processed after Convention by April 30, 2015. A \$10 service charge will apply. Register online at [www.trta.org](http://www.trta.org) or mail completed form and payment to TRTA, Attention: Convention, 313 E. 12th Street, Suite 200, Austin, TX 78701.

<input type="checkbox"/> Registration (Deadline March 16, 2015) \$30 per person	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Welcome and Awards Dinner (Monday, April 6, 2015 • 6:30 p.m.) \$55 per person	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Foundation Breakfast (Tuesday, April 7, 2015 • 7 a.m.) \$30 per person	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Legislative Luncheon (Tuesday, April 7, 2015 • 12:15 p.m.) \$40 per person	\$ _____
<hr/>	
Day at the Capitol (Wednesday, April 8, 2015 • 8 a.m.–2:30 p.m.) Complimentary	
<input type="checkbox"/> I will be attending the Day at the Capitol	
<b>PAYMENT INFORMATION</b>	

<input type="checkbox"/> Check or money order enclosed payable to TRTA	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Please charge my credit card	

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# OUTLOOK



## LEADING POSITIVE CHANGE FOR TEXAS EDUCATION

### 2014 DONATIONS

TRTF Raises Nearly \$70,000 So Far!

11

### TRTF AT THE TRTA CONVENTION

TRTF to Host Luncheon and Session!

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### DONATE TODAY!

Donation card on the back of *The VOICE*

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## YOUR DONATIONS HELP US CONNECT GENERATIONS OF EDUCATORS!

The Texas Retired Teachers Foundation (TRTF) continues to raise funds for its "Connecting Generations of Educators" campaign, supporting our four charitable programs: "A Helping Hand," Classroom Assistance Grants, Student Scholarships and the Legacy program. Thanks to our generous TRTA members and friends, we have raised \$70,000 since November! Your heartfelt response to our campaign is very much appreciated. These funds help educators of the past, present and future. Everyday in the TRTF state office, we hear from retirees, teachers and students who need our help!

***Our campaign is ongoing, and your contributions are still needed! Learn more about how you can donate on page 12 and help us reach \$100,000!***

Your contributions are well-timed. In January alone, the "A Helping Hand" committee awarded \$3,000 in grants to retirees in crisis. One retiree in the Houston area received a grant to repair significant damage to her home, including the patching of various holes in her ceiling and walls. Nearly \$69,000 has been given to retirees in need through "A Helping Hand" since 2010. TRTF has pending applications ready for review now! Help us help our own by donating today!

Many retirees experience short-term financial hardships due to unexpected illness, or need home and car repairs that they simply cannot afford on their fixed incomes. TRTF is here to help and encourages anyone eligible to receive an annuity from the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS) to apply. Please contact Cindee Sharp or Shala Rodriguez at 1.800.880.1650 or [help@trtf.org](mailto:help@trtf.org) to receive an application. All applications are confidential.

During the TRTA Convention in

April, the Foundation will award over \$15,000 in student scholarships to future educators and classroom assistance grants to public school teachers. Students who are pursuing degrees in education, are enrolled in a Texas college or university for the 2015-2016 school year and are related to a member of TRTA are eligible. 16 \$500 scholarships will be presented. TRTF also continues to support active teachers. 15 \$500 grants will be awarded to teachers who demonstrate commitment to public education through the creation of programs, events or other learning platforms.

TRTA members are truly the most generous folks in Texas, and they support the legacy of public education. The Foundation hopes to propagate the great Texas public education legacy by continuing to support educators in all phases of their careers. Your donation helps retirees in need recover from critical circumstances, gives teachers the

**CONTINUED ON THE BACK**





# The VOICE

Send address changes to:  
Texas Retired Teachers Association  
313 E. 12th Street, Suite 200 | Austin, TX 78701-1957  
800.880.1650 | [www.trta.org](http://www.trta.org)

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

opportunity to expand learning opportunities for their students, and provides future educators with funds to help them succeed in college and beyond.

Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to TRTF for any of our four charitable programs: "A Helping Hand," Classroom Assistance Grants, Student Scholarships and the Legacy Campaign. You may use the donation card found on the right. You may also call the TRTA state office at 1.800.880.1650 to make a donation over the phone using a credit card. All donations are acknowledged by the Foundation office. Thank you for your generosity and support of educators of the past, present and future!

## I WANT TO HELP!

### FOUNDATION TO HOST BREAKFAST, TRAINING SESSION AT CONVENTION

TRTF is looking forward to April 2015 when the 62nd Annual TRTA Convention takes place in Austin. This year, the Foundation will host a breakfast instead of a luncheon. The breakfast will be held on Tuesday, April 7 at 7:00 a.m. Tickets are \$30 per person and may be purchased when you submit your convention registration form (see page 10). The menu can be found in the Convention article on page 8.

Our 15 Classroom Assistance Grant and 16 Student Scholarship recipients will be announced during the breakfast. The Foundation will also provide an update for members about our "A Helping Hand" program and the Legacy Campaign.

It is common for individuals, districts and local units to present gifts to the Foundation in honor or in memory of someone at the end of the breakfast. If you are attending the breakfast and would like to make a donation, you may complete a form to include a personal message. Forms will be available on your table or in *The Ledger*, our monthly e-newsletter and on the TRTF website ([www.trtf.org](http://www.trtf.org)).

Also, TRTF will host a training session. It is recommended that Local Unit Foundation Representatives and District Foundation Liaisons make an effort to join the session. The training will be held on Tuesday, April 7. Understanding the roles of Foundation Liaisons and Representatives, fundraising, and program implementation will be discussed. We hope to see you there!

## TEXAS RETIRED TEACHERS FOUNDATION

# OUTLOOK

### LEADING POSITIVE CHANGE FOR TEXAS EDUCATION

#### TEXAS RETIRED TEACHERS FOUNDATION

 **I WANT TO HELP!**

**DONATION CARD**  
DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

PLEASE ACCEPT MY DONATION OF:

☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

IN MEMORY OF:

\_\_\_\_\_

IN HONOR OF:

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NAME

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP

PHONE

☐ **SAVE TRTF A STAMP AND EMAIL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO:**

Donations are tax deductible. Enclose a check, completed donation card and send to:  
Texas Retired Teachers Foundation • 313 E. 12th St., Ste. 200 • Austin, TX 78701-1957