



OREA *News Bulletin*

Spring 2011

A Publication of the Oklahoma Retired Educators Association

Something for Everyone at the 2011 OREA Convention

Humorist (and Educator) to Keynote



Tulsa native Dr. Chuck Jackson, well-known throughout the United States and Canada for his use of humor to entertain, enlighten, and uplift his audience, will be the keynote speaker at the 2011 OREA Annual State Convention and House of Delegates. Don't be surprised to see Dr. Jackson take the stage in bib overalls,

and use colorful props, audience participation, music and demonstrations to engage participants in the delivery of his message.

OREA's main event of the year will be held at the Doubletree Hotel in Tulsa on Friday, May 20th. The hotel is directly west across the street from St. Francis Hospital.

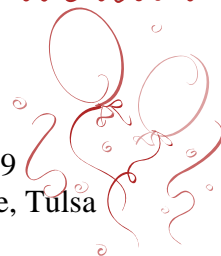


Doubletree Hotel at Warren Place
61st Street and Yale Avenue

Planning an overnight stay for the OREA convention? Call the Doubletree Hotel at Warren Place to reserve your room. Ask for the OREA rate of \$80.00 per night (up to four occupancy) plus applicable taxes. Call 1-918-495-1000 for reservations. Deadline is April 15th. Let the hotel folks know you will be attending the OREA Annual State Convention and House of Delegates.

"Friends and Fun and It's Free!" Pre-Convention Social

- ❖ 6:00-8:00 p.m., Thursday, May 19
Doubletree Hotel at Warren Place, Tulsa
- ❖ Heavy hors d' oeuvres
- ❖ Non-alcoholic beverages
- ❖ All OREA members are invited
- ❖ Dress will be casual



Got Your Convention Ticket?



- ❖ \$12.50 per ticket if purchased by April 30
\$15.00 per ticket after April 30
Ticket order form on Page 3 of this newsletter
- ❖ Price of ticket includes: parking in the hotel garage, all convention and workshop materials, morning continental breakfast, and noon luncheon

AGENDA

- 8:30 a.m. Registration/
Complimentary Continental Breakfast
- 8:55 a.m. Workshops - Session 1
- 9:45 a.m. Workshops - Session 2
- 10:35 a.m. First General Session
- 12:00 noon Lunch
- 1:00 p.m. VIM Ceremony
- 1:45 p.m. House of Delegates



I've Had a Belly Full! How About You?..... Page 2
 More Convention Information..... Page 3
 OREA Puts Best Foot Forward on Lobby Day..... Page 4
 Investment "Good Times" Return to TRS..... Page 7



*Weldon Davis,
President*

I've Had a Belly Full! How About You?

I've had a belly full, and I won't take it anymore.

I'm tired of retired educators being taken for granted by legislators and others in various positions of authority, who think they have the right to judge our societal value. That's another way of saying these people take it upon themselves to decide what it is we're worth, and what we have a right to expect out of life – financially, that is.

I've heard remarks recently by legislators and other "important" people advancing the notion that the Teachers' Retirement System is in the poor financial condition that it is today because retired educators in the past have been given "overly generous" cost-of-living benefits adjustments (COLAs) that weren't paid for through funding to TRS.

I've got news for legislators and these other important people. Oklahoma public educators have always been paid poorly in comparison with their colleagues in virtually every other state in this Union. Since retired educators' TRS benefits are based in part on what they were paid during their active careers, if they were paid poorly then, that's the way they're paid in retirement.

Have our COLAs been "overly generous?" No way. Since 1988, the legislature has granted a cumulative 33.55% increase in retirement benefits, but the cost of living has more than doubled in the same period. Since 1988, the cost of monthly health insurance premiums has multiplied six-fold, from \$75 per month to \$450 for active employees and pre-Medicare retired educators. Have our COLAs been "overly generous?" No way.

The question is not whether our COLAs have been overly generous, but whether the increases in benefits some of us received were paid for by the legislature with adequate funding of the Teachers' Retirement System. The record is clear on that question. The legislature has failed to provide adequate funding to TRS. The system wouldn't be 47.9% funded and have over \$10 billion in unfunded liabilities if legislators had done their part. Instead, current legislators want to blame us for TRS funding problems. I won't accept their blame. Will they accept their responsibilities?

How about you, have you had a belly full? If so, tell your legislator you won't take it anymore.



Keeping Up With the Legislature

By the time this newsletter hits your mailbox, the 2011 Oklahoma legislative session will be more than half complete. The House and Senate will be winding up consideration of bills from the opposite body, and a clearer picture of the direction of important legislation for the year should have emerged.

Does that mean you don't have to be concerned about the legislature for the rest of the session? Not at all, says Terry Ingmire, OREA's legislative coordinator and professional lobbyist. He points out that major issues will have stewed in the legislative pot since early February, and the time for making important decisions will be near.

One of those issues might be the long term future of the Teachers' Retirement System. If so, OREA will need your support more than ever to make sure lawmakers understand and appreciate the needs of current and future retired educators. Please keep abreast of legislative developments through regular OREA updates, and be ready to act if asked to do so.

OREA legislative updates and legislator contact information can be obtained by visiting www.orea.org, or the official House and Senate websites at www.okhouse.gov or www.oksenate.gov. The switchboard telephone numbers for the House of Representatives are (405) 521-2711 or (800) 522-8502 toll free. The Senate numbers are (405) 524-0126 or (800) 865-6490 toll free.

Answers to quiz on page 6:
1 (a); 2(c); 3(d); 4(b); 5(d)

Popular Workshops Part of Convention Activities

They proved popular when started in 2009 and remain so today. As a result, the 2011 OREA convention will feature a line-up of eight interesting, entertaining, inspiring and educational workshops for members. Pick out the two you will attend from the list below, and enjoy!

Session I (8:55 – 9:35 a.m.)

“Candles, Chocolate and Calgon – Take Me Away” – Bonnie Hammock, Teaching and Learning Specialist, Oklahoma Education Association

“Adding Value and Protecting Assets with OREA Membership” – Art Dunham and Philip Bromagen, Association Member Benefits Advisors

“Training for OREA Local Unit Membership Chairs and Treasurers” – Marilyn Davis, Chair of OREA Membership Committee, and Tonia Caruthers, OREA Membership Specialist

“Numbers You Need (About Oklahoma State Government)” – David Blatt, Oklahoma Policy Institute

Silent Auction - Ongoing Silent Auction with the proceeds benefiting the OREA Fund will take place between 8:00 a.m. and approximately 1:30 pm.

Session II (9:45 – 10:25 a.m.)

“Laughter Heals What Ails You” – Floyd Cox, Organizational Development Specialist, National Education Association

“The Retirement Planning Puzzle”
Sheryl Prichard, North American Life Plans, LLC

“Legislative Update” – Terry Ingmire, OREA Legislative Coordinator and Lobbyist

“Training for OREA Local Unit Presidents”
Joy Dennis, OREA Past President

Door Prizes - Enter the drawing for door prizes by signing your name and county on the back of your ticket. Place your ticket in the basket on your table and listen for your name to be drawn!

Free Goodies - Check out the various vendors and the OREA table and pick up your freebies.



Soon, we'll post driving directions on www.orea.org to the Tulsa location of the Annual State Convention and House of Delegates on Friday, May 20. For those who have driven in the Tulsa area lately, you know of the extensive construction along I-44, which currently has some exits closed, including the Yale Avenue exit to the Doubletree Hotel at Warren Place at 61st Street and Yale Avenue. We'll try to provide clear directions for you, regardless of the ongoing construction.

Continental Breakfast
8:30 a.m.

2011 OREA CONVENTION

Luncheon
12:00 noon

Name _____

Address _____

City, State & Zip _____

Tickets: \$12.50 each if purchased by April 30
\$15.00 each if purchased after April 30

Tulsa Doubletree Hotel
At Warren Place
Tulsa, Oklahoma
Friday, May 20, 2011

Number of tickets ordered _____

Amount Enclosed _____
(Price includes breakfast, lunch & parking)

Mail this order form to: OREA, P.O. Box 18485, Oklahoma City, OK 73154
Your tickets will be mailed to you - Pre-registration is required!

OREA Puts Best Foot Forward on Lobby Day

OREA is always proud of its members, but on some occasions that pride swells up even more. That was the case on Tuesday, March 15, when approximately 300 members and friends came to the state Capitol to lobby legislators on behalf of the OREA legislative agenda. Everyone knows the economy remains sluggish and the state's budget is in poor shape, but that didn't keep members from telling the retired educator story to lawmakers in a clear, direct and professional manner.

Members put a face on OREA requests for a fair and equal COLA, improved funding for the Teachers' Retirement System, increased state assistance for health insurance premiums, protection of the TRS defined benefit retirement plan, a special one-time benefits payment for retired educators living in poverty, increased death benefit to beneficiaries of retired educators, and more.

President Weldon Davis made a rousing speech to more than 1,000 active and retired educators on the south steps of the Capitol. He said he's had a "belly full" of disrespect for active and retired educators, and he urged everyone to remind legislators of their many promises to look out for the welfare of public education and its active and retired employees.

Will lobby day lead to immediate positive results for retired educators? Maybe not, but it will pay dividends some day, some way. If you were able to attend, thank you. If you couldn't, but communicated with your lawmakers in some other fashion, we appreciate that, too. The best members in the world are OREA members.



L-R: Gene & Ada Hill, Senator Jerry Ellis, Sharon McKeever

Thanks for Your Opinions on Health Insurance

In the January issue of this newsletter, Executive Director Norman Cooper requested opinions from members regarding their satisfaction with the benefits and services of HealthChoice and other state-sponsored health insurance programs. If proof was needed that members read the newsletter, the volume of the response to his request certainly provided that.

As might have been expected, Cooper received a mixture of positive and negative opinions on many aspects of the health insurance programs – too many to discuss here. Several of the comments, however, will help Cooper perform his role as an advocate for retired educators and as a member of the Oklahoma State and Education Employees Group Insurance Board Advisory Council. He encourages members to contact him at anytime regarding their opinions on health insurance and retirement matters.



Membership Has Benefits!


Your membership with OREA gives you access to many member only benefits. Association Member Benefits Advisors (AMBA) helps to make the following benefits available to OREA members:

- First Diagnosis Cancer Policy
- Medical Air Services Association (MASA)
- Dental Insurance
- Vision Plan
- Astrum Hearing Solutions
- Government Employee Travel Opportunities
- Vacations-to-Go Cruises
- La Quinta Inn & Suites Discount
- Dell Computer Discounts
- Apple Computer Discounts
- Identity Theft Solutions
- 1-800-FLOWERS Discounts
- AMBA TravelPERX Travel Deals
- Rental Car Discounts (Budget, Avis, & Hertz)

For additional information, contact our benefits provider, AMBA, at 800.258.7041.

Benefit speakers are also available to speak at your local meetings! To request a speaker, please contact Jeanie Coffey, AMBA National Director of Association Relations, at 800.258.7041, ext. 332.

~ Advertisement ~



Delegates to Consider Proposed Amendments to Constitution

On the business agenda of the House of Delegates, several proposed amendments to the OREA Constitution will be offered by the Constitution Committee. They are presented below. Lined through language is proposed to be ~~stricken~~ from the Constitution, and underlined language is proposed to be added.

ARTICLE III – MEMBERSHIP

3.3 Any person interested in working to achieve the goals of OREA, but who is ineligible for regular membership, is eligible for associate membership at a dues amount set by the House of Delegates. An associate member will be ineligible to vote in the House of Delegates or serve as an OREA elected officer.

~~3.3~~ 3.4 Local Unit associate membership will be at the discretion of the local unit, but is only for those persons ~~not qualified~~ ineligible for any other type of membership.

ARTICLE VII – EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

7.1 The Executive Committee shall be composed of the President, Vice President, immediate Past President, and an additional member elected annually from the Board of Directors by the Board of Directors. In the event the immediate Past President cannot serve on the Executive Committee, the Board of Directors shall elect a previous past president to serve on the Executive Committee.

ARTICLE VIII – BOARD OF DIRECTORS

8.1 The Board of Directors shall be composed of the ~~elected officers, the immediate~~ President, Vice President, Past President, and District Directors. The chairs of the Finance, Government Relations, Membership, and Communications committees will be ad hoc non-voting members of the Board of Directors.

ARTICLE XI – TERMS OF OFFICE

11.1 The terms of office for the President and Vice President, ~~and immediate Past President~~ shall be for two years, beginning July 1 following their election.

11.3 The President shall become Past President when a new President takes office.

ARTICLE XII – VACANCIES

12.2 The Board of Directors may declare a vacancy in an elective office when an elected official is unable to fulfill or fails to fulfill the duties of office. The Board of Directors may, during a regularly scheduled meeting, place a vacancy consideration on the agenda for the following board meeting, at which time a vacancy can be declared.

ARTICLE XV -- AMENDMENTS

15.1 This constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of delegates present and voting at the annual meeting of the House of Delegates, provided the proposed amendment has been submitted in writing to the Board of Directors at least ~~forty-five~~ ninety (90) calendar days prior to the annual meeting. The Board of Directors shall submit the amendment, with its recommendation, to the annual meeting. This recommendation shall be published and sent to the membership a minimum of ~~ten~~ (+0) thirty (30) days prior to the annual meeting.

MEMBERS OF OREA BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTED

New directors for the Northeast and North Central districts were to be elected by OREA members in district meetings on April 1 in Claremore and April 8 in Stillwater. The new directors will begin three-year terms on the OREA Board of Directors on July 1. The Board is the executive body for OREA, carrying out operational responsibilities throughout the year. It works in conjunction with the House of Delegates, which meets once each year at the Annual State Convention.

The names of the new directors were not available at press time, but will be announced at a later date.

Oklahoma Teachers Retirement System QUIZ



Test your knowledge of TRS.

1. How many active employees are members of TRS?
(a) 90,000 (b) 45,000 (c) 120,000 (d) 60,000
2. What is the average annual benefit for a retired member of TRS?
(a) \$60,000 (b) \$6,000 (c) \$18,000 (d) \$25,000
3. What are the primary sources of income for TRS?
(a) active employee contributions
(b) employer payroll tax contributions
(c) dedicated revenue from the state's income, sales and use taxes
(d) all of the above
4. What is the positive value to TRS of a 2% cost-of-living benefits adjustment (COLA) not given to members every two years?
(a) nothing (b) \$325 million
(c) \$1 billion (d) \$170 million
5. In what year do TRS actuaries, based on current assumptions, project the retirement system will run out of money and no longer be able to pay benefits?
(a) 2020 (b) 2035
(c) 2050 (d) an unknown date beyond 2050

(See answers on page 2)

Do You Know a

"Retired Educator of the Year?"

The OREA Board of Directors is in the planning stages of developing criteria for a new award, to be given annually, and for which public recognition will be sought from the state legislature and governor. Your help is needed to develop the "Retired Educator of the Year" award.

The Board would appreciate your suggestions of selection criteria for such an award. What qualities, experience, and accomplishments should guide the Board in choosing someone for the award?

In addition to selection criteria, is there an OREA member you would wish to nominate for the "Retired Educator of the Year" award when it is given, most likely in the spring of 2012? Please send names and a statement on behalf of your nominee(s) to: Board of Directors, Oklahoma Retired Educators Association, Attn: Sharon Cox, P. O. Box 18485, Oklahoma City, OK 73154 or scox@okea.org.

North American Life Plans

North American Life Plans, an OREA-endorsed company, offers the following products and services to OREA members:

- ❖ Investment advisory services
- ❖ Equity index annuities
- ❖ Fixed annuities
- ❖ Reverse mortgages
- ❖ Life insurance
- ❖ Life settlements
- ❖ Final expense insurance
- ❖ Medicare supplement plans
- ❖ Medicare Advantage plans



LifePlans, LLC™

We pride ourselves in personal service with your financial interests in mind. Our goal is to help you achieve and maintain financial security in retirement. If we can be of service, please call (888) 362-1214.

~ Advertisement ~

Investment "Good Times" Return to TRS

As retired educators, we're seasoned enough in life's events to know to expect the good and not so good. That's true with investing at the Teachers' Retirement System. In previous issues of this newsletter, you've read about the downturn in the national economy in the last three years, and how it resulted in the market value of TRS assets dropping from about \$9.4 billion to a low of \$6.2 billion.

If the loss of asset value was cause for concern, it follows there should be at least reason for mild celebration now that TRS assets have climbed back, not just to their former high mark, but to a new mark of more than \$10 billion. As of February 28, TRS asset value stood at \$10.02 billion, reflecting a more than 20% return on investments in the last year.

Do these excellent investment returns mean anything to you? Certainly they do, but they won't drastically alter the poor funding condition of TRS, unless there are several more good years to come. TRS actuaries utilize a five-year smoothing process to average out the good and bad. So when the TRS funding level is announced in the fall of each year, it's a balance of what's happened with investments in the previous five years, along with other factors such as revenues and expenses.

With the recent good investing news in mind, however, it is appropriate to help your legislator – who in most cases has far less life seasoning than you – keep matters in perspective. Educate him (or her) to avoid the temptation to “throw out the baby with the bathwater” by drastically altering the benefits and structure of TRS. It's okay for her (or him) to be concerned about the poor funding level of the retirement system, but not a reason to rob current and future generations of retired educators of their retirement security with hasty and ill-conceived decisions today.

OREA Gives Testimony to Senate Select Committee

OREA Executive Director Norman Cooper gave oral testimony and submitted supporting written documentation to the Senate Select Committee on Pensions on March 24. The committee had requested input, including recommendations, from various education and state employee organizations regarding potential reforms of the state's retirement systems.

Cooper, in a joint presentation with Joel Robison, head of governmental relations for the Oklahoma Education Association, told the committee that TRS needs improved and more consistent funding to achieve its mission of providing long term retirement security for current and future retired educators. Cooper and Robison made several recommendations to improve revenues, and also suggested some common sense reforms to help the fiscal condition of TRS without harming retiree benefits or altering the defined benefit structure of the system.

OREA will continue to seek input into all discussions affecting retired educators throughout the legislative session.

OREA Board of Directors

President

Weldon Davis
(405) 495-1069

Vice President

Elaine Dodd
(918) 744-5830

Past President

Joy Dennis
(580) 237-4990

Central Director

Roy Cates
(405) 324-7751

East Central Director

Sharon Walker
(918) 623-1158

North Central Director

Clyde Pendergraft
(580) 765-3809

Northeast Director

Marian Clark
(918) 443-2645

Northwest Director

Nancy Stuckey
(580) 431-2286

Southeast Director

Sharon McKeever
(580) 933-7806

South Central Director

Ada Hill
(405) 665-2757

Southwest Director

Jane Mershon
(580) 355-1462

State Membership Chair

Marilyn Davis
(405) 495-1069

Government Relations Chair

Lonnie Fuson
(580) 355-0131

Finance Chair

Matti Palluconi
(918) 341-8279

Communications Chair

Cindy Dronyk
(918) 335-0224

Legislators and Your Local OREA Unit

State Office Contact Info

Your local OREA unit is very important when it comes to interacting with your local state legislators. There are many things members of the unit can do to foster better relationships with them and to make them aware of the needs of retired educators. If your relationship with your legislator is at an optimum, you can then enlarge your sphere of influence at the state level.

Since the OREA Communications Committee received positive comments on its “*OREA in Your Community*” article in the winter **News Bulletin**, it decided to offer the following suggestions:

- Invite your legislators to breakfast to discuss retirement issues
- Invite your legislators to one of your meetings
- Attend lobby days at the Capitol
- Write letters to your legislators to ask for help and to thank them for helping
- Ask what you need to do to get their vote on an issue
- Ask what you need to do to have a bill written to support retired educators
- Write the governor when an important bill is to be decided
- Write all legislators when an important bill is passed

If you have some other ideas, please feel free to e-mail Cindy Dronyk, Communications Committee Chair, at cdronyk@sbcglobal.net.

Norman Cooper, Executive Director
405.523.4371
ncooper@okea.org

Terry Ingmire, Legislative Consultant
405.269.5740
t1ingmire@yahoo.com

Tonia Caruthers, Membership Specialist
405.523.4374
tcaruthers@okea.org

Sharon Cox, Assistant to Executive Director
405.523.4373
scox@okea.org

Kerry Hughes, Finance Specialist
khughes@okea.org
405.523.4372

P.O. Box 18485 • Oklahoma City, OK 73154
www.orea.org
405.525.2230 or 800.310.2230

The **OREA News Bulletin** is published four times yearly in January, April, July and October as the official newsletter of the Oklahoma Retired Educators Association. OREA Headquarters are located at 323 E. Madison, Oklahoma City, OK 73105. The opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the official positions of the organization. Questions, comments, or suggestions about the **News Bulletin** are welcome, and may be communicated to Norman Cooper, Executive Director, P. O. Box 18485, Oklahoma City, OK 73154.

Oklahoma Retired Educators Association
P.O. Box 18485
Oklahoma City, OK 73154

PRESORTED STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #1
OKLAHOMA CITY, OK 731

April 30 is the
deadline for discount
tickets to the 2011
State Convention!