

CROSSROADS



A Publication of the Louisiana School Employees' Retirement System

APRIL 2020

You are LSERS' priority in the coronavirus fight

LSERS extends prayers and compassion to all our members during this trying time with the Coronavirus. Members are assured that LSERS has a Business Continuity Plan in place so that we can continue serving you during emergency times such as this.

"You are our primary concern," said LSERS Executive Director Charles Bujol. "We recognize the severity of this situation and are focused on issuing payments without interruption. With this in mind, we ask for your patience and that you join with us in working through this Coronavirus event."

With government offices currently closed to the public, the internet and electronic services are essential methods of communicating between LSERS and members via the LSERS website and your online account.

LSERS Website: Frequently check our website at www.lsers.net for up-to-date news releases. Additionally, you will find a wealth of information such as Fact Sheets, Forms, etc., that may help you to better understand your retirement.



Member's Online Account: We encourage you to sign up for your member account access if you've not already done so. Simply go to www.lsers.net > Login > Member Registration, complete the requested information and then follow the instructions. If you need assistance, contact Laurie Stark at 225.925.4890 or lstark@lsers.net.

Need help? We're here

Following is additional information on how to interact with LSERS:

PAPERWORK: Paperwork (other than a notarized document) can be submitted via email to webmaster@lsers.net, fax to 225.922.1001, or U.S. Postal mail. NOTARIZED DOCUMENTS must be sent via U.S.

Postal mail. Whether or not you submit your paperwork electronically or via U.S. Postal mail, we promise to process documents as quickly as possible; please be patient with us.

PHONE CALLS: We will still be available by phone to assist with answering your questions.

BENEFIT PAYMENTS: We fully anticipate existing benefit payments to continue on schedule. New benefit setups, including refund payments, will be processed as quickly as humanly possible during this time.

Brown unopposed for District 3 Board seat

Incumbent Penny Brown was the only candidate to qualify for the Active Member District 3 seat on the LSERS Board of Trustees. Her four-year term begins January 1, 2021.

Ms. Brown expressed her appreciation, saying, "Thank you for your confidence in returning me to this seat, and please call me with any LSERS matters." District 3 parishes include Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Caldwell, Catahoula, Claiborne, Concordia, E. Carroll, Franklin, Jackson, Lincoln, Madison, Morehouse, Ouachita, Richland, Tensas, Union, Webster, and W. Carroll.



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2 2020 Legislative Session on hold

The Louisiana Legislature convened on March 9th for its annual session, but was suspended because of the coronavirus pandemic. The session will reconvene upon the call of the Speaker of the House and President of the Senate.

About four dozen retirement-related bills have been pre-filed, but only a few have the potential to impact LSERS' membership, such as:

House Bill 20 filed by Rep. Rodney Schamerhorn of Hornbeck: Prohibits the use of state and local public funds to pay for retirement contributions and life and health insurance premiums of officials elected after January 1, 2021. The LSERS Board of Trustees took no position on this bill.

House Bill 28 filed by Rep. Barry Ivey of Baton Rouge: Creates a hybrid retirement plan structure for future members employed on or after July 1, 2021. The LSERS Board of Trustees opposes this bill.

Senate Bill 18 filed by Sen. Barrow Peacock of Shreveport: Establishes age 67 as the earliest retirement eligibility age for certain members employed on or after July 1, 2020. The LSERS Board of Trustees took no position on this bill.

For updates, please visit our Legislation website page at www.lasers.net > [Legislation](#). The LSERS staff will monitor all retirement related bills throughout the session.



Empower Retirement transition complete!

All DROP/IBRP LA accounts (*eligible 1/1/2004 and after*) were successfully transferred to the Self-Directed Plan (SDP) administered by Empower Retirement on January 2, 2020. We thank our members for your support and patience during this transition.

Based on member feedback during this transition, below is a recapped list of terms and advantages:

Plan Administrator – Empower Retirement is the SDP's Administrator. Once DROP deposits stop or when you retire under the IBRP, the DROP/IBRP account balance will be transferred to Empower Retirement. You must contact Empower Retirement for any DROP/IBRP account needs, such as beneficiary changes, fund investments and withdrawals.

Participant Website:
www.louisianadcp.com

Participant Call Center:
1.800.701.8255 or 1.800.937.7604

Call Center Hours:
Mon-Fri 7 a.m. - 9 p.m. CT; Sat 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. CT
Baton Rouge Office: 9100 Bluebonnet Blvd., Suite 203, Baton Rouge, LA 70809 **Office Hours:** Mon-Fri 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. CT

Fund Investment – Initially, your account balance will be transferred to the default investment option: Great-West Custom Stable Value Fund. This default fund is principal guaranteed and the account earns monthly interest. You, by signing a waiver, may choose to allocate a portion or all funds to other fixed income and equity investment options for higher return opportunities. The waiver is furnished by LSERS and

must be returned to LSERS. You are encouraged to gain full understanding of the potential risks when self-directing your investments. Empower Retirement Plan Advisors are available to interested participants.

Withdrawals – Once you officially retire, you must contact Empower Retirement regarding withdrawals. In the event of death, your designated beneficiary should contact Empower Retirement for balance withdrawal. The withdrawal options with Empower Retirement are very flexible, including periodic payments, fixed annuity payments, partial or full lump sum payments, and roll-over transfers. Withdrawals are exempt from Louisiana state income tax.

Fee – Empower Retirement charges a small administrative fee, 0.06% annually – applied monthly. This fee is very competitive to other plans.

Correspondences and Statements
– Once your account is transferred to

Empower Retirement, correspondences and statements will be issued by Empower Retirement. These include, but are not limited to: Welcome/Participation Letter, Withdrawal Notice, Quarterly Statements, and Annual 1099-R Tax Form.

NOTE: LSERS still manages all retiree monthly benefits, and "old" DROP/IBRP accounts (eligible pre-1/1/2004), including beneficiary updates.

Refer to **Fact Sheet 25: DROP/IBRP LA Self-directed Plan - Empower Retirement** on our website for more detailed information.





Walther sworn in for another term

Mr. Philip Walther was sworn in for another term at LSERS' Board meeting in January. Mr. Walther's four-year term as Active Member District 1 began on January 1, 2020.

Serving members is a big job!

LSERS is happy to provide assistance to its members, and it did a lot of that in 2019! Following are some statistics on member interactions from January 1, 2019 through December 31, 2019:

- ▶ Issued more than 12,700 Annual Member Statements to our active membership.
- ▶ Processed monthly benefit payments to more than 14,100 retirees, survivors, and beneficiaries.
- ▶ Provided person-to-person counsel with more than 590 members.
- ▶ Responded to more than 59,220 phone calls and email inquiries.



DISABILITY RETIREES: Time to report annual earnings

The Statement of Annual Earnings and Disability Receipts has been mailed to all LSERS disability retirees. ***The completed form must be returned to our office by May 1, 2020 to avoid suspension of your monthly benefit.***

If you were retired under disability, but attained age 60 prior to 2019, this reporting requirement does not pertain to you anymore.

If you are a disability retiree and have not received the form, please contact us immediately so your benefits are not jeopardized!

Please complete and mail the original notarized form to LSERS and keep a copy for your records. If your monthly benefit is suspended, and you have health and/or life insurance premiums deducted from it, you will be responsible for paying your insurance premiums until your benefit is resumed.

Questions? Contact Tracy Gaudet at 225.925.6922 or tgaudet@lsers.net.

Retired and thinking of returning to work in a school position? 3

If you are retired and thinking of returning to work *in a LSERS eligible position*, this is what you should know:

- ▶ **LSERS eligible positions are maintenance employees, janitors, custodians, bus operators, aids, monitors, attendants, and other regular school employees** who work on school buses helping with the transportation of school children.
- ▶ **You will have an earnings limit which is 50% of your adjusted final average compensation.**
- ▶ **Earnings that exceed the limit can result in a reduction or suspension of your monthly retirement benefit**, and possibly create an overpayment for you.
- ▶ **Your employer must enroll you with LSERS under the Return to Work 1006 provision and report your earnings.** You will NOT pay contributions.
- ▶ **LSERS will send letters to inform you of the annual earnings limit** for each year you are enrolled.

SPECIAL RULE: If you are a retired bus operator and thinking of returning to work as a full-time bus operator, please see the information below:

- Your employer must first certify a critical shortage** with the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- Your employer must enroll you between July 1st and August 31st of each year and submit a declaration of rehire intent** signed by both you and the employer.
- Your benefit will be suspended if you return to work within the first 12 months after retiring.**
- Your benefit will remain suspended only through the duration of the first 12 months;** i.e., if you return to work within 6 months after you retire, your benefit will be suspended only for the remaining 6 months.
- Your employer will enroll you with LSERS under the Return to Work 1007 provision and report your earnings and contributions.** You will pay contributions at a rate of 8%.
- You will not have an earnings limit.**



Refer to [Fact Sheet 18: Retirees Who Return to Work](#) on our website for more detailed information. Questions? Contact Kimberly Stephens at 225.922.0220 or kstephens@lsers.net.

Getting to LSERS is Simple

LSERS' office is off Essen Lane between I-10 and I-12. The street address is 8660 United Plaza Blvd., Baton Rouge.

From I-10, exit on Essen Lane. Turn right if coming from the south and left if coming from downtown or the north. Turn right on United Plaza Blvd. LSERS is the first building on the left.

From I-12 east, exit on Drusilla Lane and turn left. Turn right on Jefferson Highway and left on Essen Lane. Take the second entrance to United Plaza Blvd. on the left. LSERS is the first building on the left. From I-12 west, exit on Essen Lane. Take a right on Essen Lane, then the second entrance to United Plaza Blvd. on the left. LSERS is the first building on the left.



Jeffrey Faulk, Sr., *Board Chairman,*
Retiree Representative - Division 2, 337.893.3315

Eugene Rester, Jr., *Board Vice Chair Pro Tem,*
Retiree Representative - Division 1, 985.516.0369

Philip B. Walther, *Board Vice Chair,*
1st Retirement District, 504.443.4005

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2nd Retirement District, 985-630.0164

Penny Brown
3rd Retirement District, 318.614.3412

Andrea S. Matte
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Executive Staff Officer

Louisiana School Employees' Retirement System
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Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804-4516

Presorted
Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
Baton Rouge, LA
Permit No. 508

Location: LSERS Building, 8660 United Plaza Blvd. - First Floor
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70809-7004
Telephone 225.925.6484, Toll-free 1.800.256.3718
Office Hours: 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday-Friday
Visit LSERS' website at: www.lasers.net

Board Meeting Schedule

May 4	Quarterly Board Meeting	9 am
May 5	Quarterly Board Meeting	8:30 am
June 8	Investment Committee Meeting	9 am
July 13	Investment Committee Meeting	9 am
Aug. 24	Quarterly Board Meeting	9 am
Aug 25	Quarterly Board Meeting	8:30 am

For a complete listing of all board meeting dates and times, visit our website at: www.lasers.net.

LSERS Member Change of Address

Updating your mailing address can easily be done by any of the following methods:

- ◆ Login and access retirement account information at www.lasers.net and update address online.
- ◆ Submit updated information via the Contact Us page on the website.
- ◆ Send a letter or Change of Address Form (Form 2AC) to the LSERS mailing address.

CHECK MAILING DATES

Regular monthly benefit checks are mailed on the last working date of the month and DROP/IBRP checks are mailed on the last working date of the month before the 5th of the month.

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