

LSERS Goes On Line Via the Internet (www.lasers.state.la.us)



Members, employing agencies of the Louisiana School Employees Retirement System and the World Wide Web may now access LSERS' Web site via the Internet at www.lasers.state.la.us. The Web site is accessible from any computer with Internet access capabilities.

Helpful Info. on Website

The following system information is available on the Web site:

- > LSERS' Overview, Mission and Directions to Building
 - > Frequently Asked Questions
 - > News Update & Benefit Check Mailout Dates
 - > Retirement Plans: Regular, DROP, Option 5 & Early Retirement
 - > Benefit Options
 - > Directory & Staff E-mail Addresses
 - > Benefit Calculation
 - > Employee Data* ++
(shows service history reports)
- * - requires password by LSERS members.
++ - requires password by employers.

- > LSERS Forms Guideline
- > File Transfer Info for Employers ++
- > LSERS Publications
- > Other Links of Interest

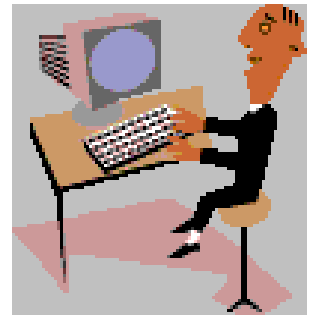
Of particular interest to members is the *Employee Data* webpage which shows the member's years of service, salary and contribution amounts. This screen will require members to key in a personal password in order to access their account history. Members need to contact Judy Hoover, at LSERS M.I.S. Dept., at 225-925-7750, to get their personal password.

Employer On Line File Transfers Available

Employers should note that LSERS is now capable of receiving on line file transfers (checklists, etc.) from employing agencies. It is necessary for school boards to contact Judy Hoover to get their agency password in order to perform the file transfers and access their parish's employee data.

LSERS Web site will be regularly updated to include brochures and handbooks as they are revised. Another important area on the website is *Other Links of Interest*, which includes various Louisiana agencies, U.S government agencies, consumer- and retirement-oriented agencies and professional organizations concerning retirement.

We hope LSERS' Web site will help to serve your retirement planning needs. If you have questions or suggestions about LSERS Web site, please call Paula Shortess, LSERS Communications Specialist, at 225-925-1801, or send e-mail to pshortess@lasers.state.la.us. Note: If you do not own a computer, one should be available for you at your local library. ☒



Board Grants COLA to Retirees

The Board of Trustees approved a cost-of-living increase (COLA) payable to any retiree who retired by January 1, 1998. This year's COLA was calculated as follows: you received one dollar for each year you worked and paid into the retirement system, and one dollar for each year you have been retired.



COLA increases were included in the Jan. 1999 benefit checks of eligible members. If you retired after January 1, 1998, you were not eligible for a COLA this year. ☒

DROP Accounts' 17.51% Awaits Approval

LSERS' actuary has calculated the DROP account interest rate of 17.51% for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1998. However, this rate must be officially approved by the legislative actuary committee at its March 1999 meeting. After this meeting, the DROP interest rate will be posted to the applicable accounts and the DROP account annual statements will be mailed accordingly.

Remember, your account begins to earn interest once deposits stop when you have finished your participation in DROP, even if you continue to work.

If you were eligible for interest as of June 30, 1998, but have since withdrawn all your money and have a zero balance in your DROP account, we will mail you a check for the interest earned on your account.

If you were eligible for interest and still have money in your DROP account, you will see the interest reflected on your annual statement. For additional assistance, please call our office. ☒

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LSERS Board News

At the November LSERS Board of Trustees meeting, ballots were counted and incumbent Betty Jacobs was re-elected to the 2nd retirement district seat.

Ms. Jacobs and Mr. Larry Wilmer, newly elected Louisiana School Bus Operators Assn. (LASBOA) president, were sworn in at the meeting. Mr. Wilmer holds the seat previously held by Mr. Lee Darbonne, former LASBOA president. In January, Mr. J. Howard Broussard was sworn in as the Retiree Representative on the Board. Mr. Broussard was unopposed.

New 225 Area Code

As of April 1999, a new area code will be in effect for the retirement system. The new area code is 225. You may use the 225 area code now, but it will be

mandatory as of April 1999.

Upcoming District 1 Election & Future Changes

An election for the District 1 seat on the Board of Trustees will be held this September. As in prior years, LSERS will mail an election announcement/qualification letter to members of District 1 in April 1999. HOWEVER, this will be the last year LSERS will mail out a separate letter announcing an election and qualifications.

Starting next year, the year 2000, the election announcement/qualification letter will only appear in LSERS newsletter "Crossroads" and on our Web site at www.lasers.state.la.us. Please make a note of this change and be sure to check LSERS newsletter for system information.

Employer & Member Contribution Rates Remain

The percentage taken out of your check for retirement will remain the same for the next fiscal year, which begins July 1, 1999. Currently, your employer deducts 6.35% of your gross salary for retirement. Your employer also pays 6.0% of your gross salary towards your retirement.

Remember, retirement contributions are not deducted from your operational expense reimbursement check if you are a contract bus driver; they are deducted from your base pay.

Also, retirement contributions are not deducted from your check if you are currently participating in the DROP program. ☒

State Employees Group Benefits Plan Update

If you are a member of the State Employees Group Benefits Program (SEGB) the following information is important to you. If you have any questions about this article, call the Group Benefits Plan office in your area. *The retirement system cannot answer any questions about insurance coverage.*

New EPO Approved

The SEGB Board has recently approved changes in medical management. An overview of the changes is presented here; however, for a detailed explanation of benefits you must contact SEGB.

The changes include the following:

1. Create an exclusive provider organization (EPO) that will have a co-payment design and reduced provider participation. The EPO will offer office visit co-payments of \$15 for primary care and \$25 for specialized physicians.

2. Enhance both the EPO and PPO benefits subject to funding availability, including increasing the lifetime maximum to \$2 million (EPO) and \$1 million (PPO); and revise the PPO drug benefit to \$8 (generic) and \$22 (brand name) co-payment with no deductible required. A 90-day supply of insulin and other diabetes testing materials can be purchased for one co-payment.

3. Negotiate new preferred provider professional contracts to compare to mid-range of industry standards.

4. Negotiate new provider contracts for the EPO.

5. Implement utilization management standards and protocols in the PPO and EPO including:

- ◆ Pre-certification of all inpatient admissions is required; no payment to providers for unauthorized admissions.
- ◆ Pre-certification will be required on selected outpatient procedures.

In addition, the Board approved other changes to the Plan Document:

- ◆ Eliminate the catastrophic illness endorsement.
- ◆ Revise the surviving spouse eligibility rules to include: eligibility ceases if member becomes eligible for other coverage, with the exception of Medicare; and the addition of new dependents is no longer allowed.
- ◆ Allow retirees with Medicare Parts A and B to opt out of Group Benefits and later return to the program. Certain restrictions apply, so you must contact SEGB for additional details.

The retiree representative for retired teachers and other school employees on the SEGBP Board is Dr. Merline Broussard at (318) 893-1660. ☒

ATTN: Employers & LSERS Members

If you need additional copies of LSERS Membership Handbook, please contact our office.



Visit LSERS Web site at:
www.lasers.state.la.us

Proposed Legislation that Affects LSERS Members

As of January 1999, several bills that will directly affect LSERS members are under consideration by Congress. A brief description of each bill is listed below along with whether the retirement system supports or opposes the legislation.

LSERS encourages our members to write to your congressional representative stating if you support or oppose the legislation. While the retirement system is here to serve its members in the legislative process, it is YOU, the members, who have a real voice with your respective representatives and senators.

We encourage you to take an active role in supporting or opposing these bills that will directly affect YOU and YOUR RETIREMENT SYSTEM. Your input may affect the outcome of this legislation.



Current bills that are under consideration by Congress:

Social Security Reform - H.R.

3546, H.R. 3788, S. 1792. These bills would make Social Security coverage mandatory for new public employees. The retirement system opposes this legislation.

Government Pension Offset

- H.R. 2273. This bill would allow a spouse to receive his or her spousal benefit from Social Security without reduction if the spousal Social Security benefit and the spouse's retirement benefit do not exceed \$1,200.00 per month. The retirement system supports this legislation.

Windfall Elimination

Provision - H.R. 2549. This bill would allow members of the retirement system to receive their full Social Security benefit, without reduction, if their Social Security benefit and retirement benefit is less than \$2,000.00 per month. The retirement system supports this legislation.

Here is a list of the Louisiana Congressional delegation and their mailing address if you would like to write to them about this proposed legislation:

HOUSE

- District 1: Election pending
 District 2: William J. Jefferson
 1012 Boggs Federal Building
 New Orleans, LA 70130
 District 3: Billy Tauzin
 210 East Main St.
 New Iberia, LA 70560
 District 4: Jim McCrery
 6425 Youree Dr., Suite 350
 Shreveport, LA 71105
 District 5: John Cooksey
 1101 Hudson Lane, Suite B
 Monroe, LA 71201
 District 6: Richard Baker
 5555 Hilton Ave., Suite 100
 Baton Rouge, LA 70808
 District 7: Christopher John
 556 Jefferson St., Suite 100
 Lafayette, LA 70501

SENATE

John Breaux
 516 Hart Senate Office. Bldg.
 Washington, D.C. 20515-1803

Mary Landrieu
 702 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
 Washington, D.C. 20510-1802

If you would like additional information on pending LSERS legislation, please call or write our office. ☒

LOUISIANA Legislative News

Here is a brief summary of legislation proposed by LSERS for the 1999 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature.

Change in Formula for Payment of COLA's (Cost of Living Adjustments) -

This proposed bill would have COLA's paid based upon a variable dollar amount multiplied times the sum of the number of years of accrued service at the time of retirement plus the number of years since retirement plus the number of years of service in excess of 30 years.

Eligibility for the Board of Trustees -

This bill clarifies that a person participating in the DROP will be eligible to run for a position on the Board of Trustees. Also, a member of the Board would be allowed to enter the DROP and maintain his or her position on the Board of Trustees.

Election of the Retiree Serving on the Board of Trustees - This bill would establish that the retiree member of the

Board of Trustees would be elected by the retirees of the system rather than appointed by the Board of Trustees.

Change in Formula to Calculate Benefit

This bill would allow the retirement benefit calculation to be based on 3% for ALL years of service. This bill would take effect July 1, 1999. **If you are planning to retire soon, and this bill passes, only those members who retire ON or AFTER July 1, 1999 will be eligible for the 3% for all years of service calculation.**

Change in DROP Classification Term -

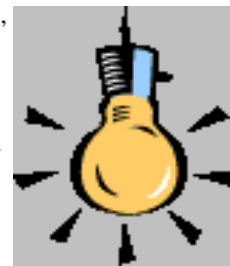
A person in the DROP will be termed a DROP *participant*, not a DROP *retiree*.

An additional bill that relates to some LSERS members is being sponsored by Senator Hines, as follows: **(SRS 99-157)**

This bill would include school bus operation compensation as earnable compensation for computation of

retirement benefits as well as including it in the compensation from which retirement contributions are deducted.

For your information, the 1999 Regular Session is March 29, 1999 - June 21, 1999. If you have any questions about LSERS' legislative matters, please contact Randy Roche, LSERS Legal Counsel, at 225-925-6561 or e-mail: rroche@lsers.state.la.us. ☒



**LSERS
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Joe Seymour
Chairman
3rd Retirement District
318-728-2729

Boyd Zeke Zitzmann
Vice Chairman
1st Retirement District
504-682-3512

J. Howard Broussard
Vice-Chair Pro-Tem
Retiree Representative
318-662-5436

Betty Jacobs
2nd Retirement District
225-925-5667

Sylvia Myers
4th Retirement District
318-478-7162

Larry Wilmer
President, La. School
Bus Operators Assn.
318-964-2869

W. Fox McKeithen
Secretary of State
225-922-1000

Ken Duncan
State Treasurer
225-342-0010

Francis C. Heitmeier
Chairman, Senate
Retirement Committee
225-342-2062

Victor T. Stelly
Chairman, House
Retirement Committee
225-342-2445

Patrick Cosper
Director

Debra Dudley
Assistant Director

Paula Shortess
Communications Spec./Newsletter Editor

How To Plan Your Road to Retirement

*Helpful Information on Retirement
Web site Addresses*



The following website addresses are provided as an informational public service. Any references to organizations, commercial products, trade names, trademarks, manufacturers, or otherwise, does not constitute endorsement or recommendation by LSERS.

Louisiana links:

La. School Employees Retirement System
= www.lasers.state.la.us

Teachers Retirement System of La.
= www.trsl.state.la.us

La. State Employees Retirement System
= www.lasers.state.la.us

Info Louisiana
= www.doa.state.la.us

Dept. of Education
= www.doe.state.la.us

Dept. of Revenue
= www.rev.state.la.us

State Employees' Group Benefits Program
= www.groupbenefits.org

Louisiana Legislature
= www.legis.state.la.us

United States government links:

Social Security Administration
= www.ssa.gov

Administration on Aging
= www.aoa.dhhs.gov

U.S. Internal Revenue Service
= www.irs.ustreas.gov

U.S. Savings Bonds
= www.publicdebt.treas.gov

Consumer-oriented links:

Better Business Bureau

= www.bbb.org

Consumer Information Center

= www.pueblo.gsa.gov

General retirement information:

American Association of Retired Persons

(AARP) = www.aarp.org

SeniorNet

= www.seniornet.org

National Conference on Public Employee

Retirement Systems (NCPERS)

= www.ncpers.org

**For additional links, please visit LSERS
Web site.** ☒



Don't forget to
notify LSERS if
your address has
recently changed.

A total of 24,200 copies of this newsletter was published at a total cost of \$2,084 by Franklin Press to provide members of LSERS with information concerning changes and policies of the system. This information is not a substitute for, nor provides any rights or benefits, except as contained in the LSA Revised Statutes governing LSERS. This newsletter was printed in accordance with R.S. 43:31B.

Mailing Dates for Benefit Checks:



Retirement Checks for:

March, April,
May, June & July

Mail Dates:

February 26,
March 31, April 30,
May 28 & June 30

Louisiana School Employees' Retirement System

P.O. Box 44516 - Capitol Station

Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804-4516

Location:

LSERS Building

8660 United Plaza Blvd. - First Floor

Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70809

Telephone (225) 925-6484, Toll-free 1-800-256-3718

Office Hours: 8:00a.m. to 4:30p.m., Monday-Friday

Visit LSERS Web site at: www.lasers.state.la.us

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