

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM
RETIREES' ASSOCIATION**

NEWSLETTER

FALL, 2011

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

FROM JACK BRADFORD, PRESIDENT UABRA

Greetings! I hope everyone had a fun and productive summer. The weather may have foreshadowed the climate for this upcoming legislative session. Hot, hot, beastly hot. I am sure you know that our retirement system is under lawsuit from two directions.

The first was brought about by two RSA Retirees-one a working nursing instructor from Jefferson State and the other, a state department employee from Montgomery. The suit alleges that RSA made Alabama investments knowing in advance that the yield to the retirement system would be marginal if even existing. The suit is a class action and yields no reward to the class- it calls for a cease and desist on low yield investments when other higher yield investments are available and would be chosen by a "reasonable and prudent" person and reimbursement of legal fees. There is to be no monetary reward to anyone. My personal concern is that this action will be upheld and will serve to weaken arguments against the House of Representatives action to revise the make-up of the RSA Board of Directors. This action by the House **MUST BE DEFEATED**. If the Board is handed over to the cronies of our politicians, it will only be a short amount of time until instead of our retirement money, we will find a pile of IOU's with a shallow promise to pay back the "borrowed money" as soon as economic times get better. You will be called upon to talk to your legislator and kill this legislation.

The other suit is brought on behalf of municipal workers and police. It calls for a cease and desist action on inclusion of overtime pay in the calculation of retirement eligible pay for retirement purposes. The suit seeks refund of money (plus interest) set aside as it pertains to overtime for retirement. In addition, it seeks legal fees. The retirees will get some money back if the suit is successful but will get a smaller payout from the retirement system throughout retirement. The suit does not address those who have gotten retirement pay based on inclusion of overtime. One might think they would have to repay that additional retirement pay.

It is expected that the attacks on education budgets will continue. Added to this will be new attacks on State retirees. Please keep in mind, you earned your retirement both YOU and your employer contributed as per contract in affect at the time of your employment. Further, participation in the State Retirement System as well as Social Security were CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT--not optional. Those that call either of these programs ENTITLEMENTS do not know what they are talking about. You paid your share and you had no voice about that payment.

On the national scene, Social Security and Medicare are in the crosshairs of those that only know how to cut, cut, cut. Do these folks not know that every budget that is cut results in jobs lost? They are owning more and more of the unemployment problem but not admitting it. Be prepared to contact your Representative and Senator --- your help will be needed to guide their vote. For those who think they will not be affected because they are already retired- there may be bad news for you and it may happen before you can do anything about it.

Your Board Goes to School

Your Board of Directors met for a rigorous seminar session on August 30th at the Botanical Gardens in Birmingham from 1:00 -4:00 pm. They heard from principals of all major programs that impact senior citizens in Alabama. While it was a marathon session, it was very instructional and thought provoking.

Don Yancey represented the Retirement Systems of Alabama and recapped the information shared with you above. Mr. Yancey remained to answer many questions. He left the group with a sense of urgency because of the expected attacks on the RSA.

Karen Haiflick spoke on Medicare and the changes, which may be coming to that program. It is a fact that medical cost continues on a meteoric rise and that as nearly all senior citizens grow older, they make more use of their health care programs. It appears some form of modification will take place in the near future.

Michael Waldrum, M.D., Chief of Staff of UAB Hospital spoke of the rising cost of health care and of the requirements of maintaining the best of practices, equipment and forward -looking research. Malpractice suits are also a driver of costs in a state that appears unable or unwilling to put forth any tort reform measures. We may be looking at multifaceted health program that would allow physician assistants, surgical assistants, nurse practitioners and others to have a prominent role in early screening health care.

April Brush talked to the group about Social Security, and stressed the fact that Washington D. C. policy makers are broadly discussing the program for revamp. It is anyone's guess what form changes will take, but again, change seems to be on the way. The program, based on life tables from decades ago does not fit well with the age that senior citizens are living to in this day and time.

Mary Townes spoke on our Health and Prescription Reimbursement Program, PEEHIP. We have seen some changes in this program this year and the program will be under review again next year. No doubt, the formulary list will be changed and co-pays may rise.

Gerald Johnson, Ph.D., who does high quality polling within Alabama spoke to the thoughts on the minds of senior citizens, which he tapped through statewide polling.

Janice Charlesworth, who heads the Alabama Education Retirees Association talked about the absolute need for all educators to hang together through these tough times. K-12 is grossly underfunded and higher education is quickly pricing itself out of the market.

UABRA GETS HEALTHY

Erma Wesley, Board Member and Membership Secretary reports that the flu shots on September 16th went well with approximately 120 taking advantage of this covered health preventive service. Please refer to your **Medicare & You 2012 handbook** for other Medicare-Covered Preventive Services. The noted preventive services will "help you achieve better health, better care, and lower health care costs".

Financial Health for UABRA

Board Member and Treasurer of UABRA, Rebecca Bradley, reports that our ending balance as of September 30, 2011 is \$20,067.76. Thanks to your Board of Directors and their careful handling of money, we can also inform you that our dues have never changed. They are the same as they were 10 year ago when we were founded and the Board sees no reason to increase dues for the foreseeable future.

Membership of UABRA for September 2011

Board Member and Membership Secretary of UABRA, Erma Wesley, reports that we have more than 1,200 members. While this seems a lot and it is the largest in the State for all higher education. UAB has living retirees numbering more than 4,400! That means that we have only 25% participation in UABRA. We have a lot of work to do. This means a few of us are working hard to try to hold our retirement package together and to lend dignity to retirement. If you have friends or neighbors, folks that sit by you at UAB football or basketball games, ask if they have joined UABRA yet and help them get involved. We need numbers and we need to be united. Without these two things, our retirement and the retirement of those who follow us will be in jeopardy.

Fall Seminar to be Held in November

Please mark your calendars for the Fall Seminar that will be held on Tuesday, November 1, 2011 at 1:30 – 3:00p.m., Homewood Public Library Auditorium. The seminar will feature David C. Smitherman, President and CEO of the Better Business Bureau of Central Alabama & Wiregrass. David assumed his duties in April of 2006 and is responsible for 25 employees with offices in Birmingham, Montgomery, and Dothan. David is also President of the BBB Educational Foundation, Inc. that provides seminars, conferences and programs to member businesses, the public and significant effort to educate youth on the basics of financial and consumer skills.

David will speak on how seniors and others can quickly become victims of fraud and scams. David says "So you think you have just won the lottery? Hold on, this could only be the beginning of your troubles. ID theft and scams directed toward our seniors are rampant and especially troublesome here in Alabama. Come and hear more about how to protect yourself and your family."

Spring Seminar Honors Cecil Nepomuceno, M.D.

Our Spring Seminar will feature an update on the Holmes Pavilion Project that was initiated in honor of Past UABRA President Cecil Nepomuceno, M.D. The project will be an ongoing effort that will feature a special area for reflection within the Spain Rehabilitation second floor for use by patients, staff and visitors. Others are welcome to help in the funding of this very worthwhile project and can do so by contacting Ms. Yvonne Akins at Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at SRC Room 109. Ms. Akins will be on hand to share with us the progress up to that time.

Spring Brings UABRA Elections

Start thinking about CANDIDATES for the Board of Directors!

This spring, five board members will rotate off the board and five new members will be elected. The future of our Board and our Association rests in your hands. Nominate yourself or nominate others. We need the best board we can muster.

Spring is an Important Time

At the Spring State - wide meeting of AERA, an amendment will be presented which will give higher education a place specifically for higher education on the AERA Board of Directors. This amendment must pass. You will be called upon to help us pass this most important measure. Currently though Higher Education represents nearly 20% of AERA membership, we have no designated place at the table.

All of higher education will have to work together to get this passed. When called to help, please do everything you can to complete your assignment. This deals with your future and is most important. Our next goal is to gain a designated seat for higher education at the Retirement Systems of Alabama Board of Directors. You can accept that this is important or be content with others making important decisions for you.

PLEASE KEEP THIS DATE & TIME: FALL SEMINAR...

NOVEMBER 1, 2011, 1:30-3:00pm...HOMEWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY AUDITORIUM