

UAB Retirees Association

NEWSLETTER

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President's Message

I am happy and excited to be writing to you at this time. Only a few short months ago, UAB retiree, Ray Underwood, contacted me. Ray indicated that a meeting had taken place and it centered on the creation of a retirement association for UAB. Ray asked if I would like to become involved and asked if I would attend an upcoming meeting. That meeting was held at the Marshall Conference Center on the Campus of UAB and had as featured speakers, Janice Charlesworth, Executive Secretary of the Alabama Education Retirees Association, and Dr Wayne Teague, former State Superintendent of Schools. The need for a strong UAB retiree voice in matters confronting the State of Alabama was central to the message of this meeting. At that time, the Governor's Tax Package was the topic of the day and all those connected with education in Alabama looked deeply to discover for themselves if this was the answer or the beginning of additional questions. The voters of the State decided the answer to this issue on September 9, 2003 with a resounding defeat of the package.

Prior to the statewide vote, the fledging UAB Retiree Association had two additional organizational meetings. The young association chose the following officers for it's inaugural year: Board Members, Ray Underwood, Bill Moates, Denny Bearce, Vice President, Joan Padalino Secretary/Treasurer, and I, (Jack Bradford), was drafted as the President. In a subsequent meeting, we heard from Alice Jones, UAB Honor Student, who was on academic leave to serve the Governor's Office. Alice gave a stirring talk on the need for additional tax revenue to bolster sagging K-12 and Higher Education budgets, as well as to preview the possible consequences for retirees.

While our retirement is secure, our COLAs and cost of PEEHIP are up for grabs. Next year, our PEEHIP drug costs are going to go up and there is little we can do about it. The same is true for the overall cost of our health coverage. It looks like our portion of cost (out of pocket) will climb and the co-pay will likely go up as well. There is a degree of fairness in these increases and here is why PEEHIP is the insurance option for Alabama Education Retirees. Those retiring are closing on advanced age and advanced opportunity to draw more heavily upon health insurance. Those in active education roles are younger and enjoy, on the average, better health and use the health system less. Someday, if PEEHIP becomes the "State of Alabama Health Plan", we may enjoy less expensive health benefits for retirees but in the meantime, it looks like we will be paying more. What can be done in the meantime?

First and perhaps foremost, we can get and stay healthy. That means looking out for our own health, eating healthy, exercise, rest, setting aside worry, examining our bad habits and giving them up including smoking, chewing tobacco, and drinking. This will cut down on the use of our PEEHIP benefits. Get a check-up, get a buddy and begin a fitness program. This approach not only results in lower rates, but higher esteem and we will feel better as well.

ISSUES BACKED BY AERA IN THE UP-COMING LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Two primary issues will get the backing of the Alabama Education Retirees Association when the legislature is called back into session. The first of these measures is the adequate funding of TRS and PEEHIP. Both of these measures have been addressed in the budget request submitted by Dr. David Bonner. AERA is supporting this budget request on a statewide basis. TRS and PEEHIP are the very core of the quality of retirees quality of life.

AERA will conduct a very special session in January on Effective Lobbying. Through this announcement, I wish to hear from UAB retirees who have interest in this important program and who might also have personal friendship or working relationships with any of the Jefferson County delegation to the State Legislature. Please contact me at once with the Legislators name that you wish to make lobby contact. One retiree will be assigned to each of our delegation. A communication network will be formed to let those folks know when an issue of interest to our retirees is coming before a committee or is up for a vote. Contact me at: Jack Bradford 860 Richfield Road, Deatsville, Alabama 36022, or call me at (334) 290-1102, my e-mail is golferjb@bellsouth.net. The session on lobbying will be conducted in Montgomery in January and I'll have to make reservations for interested parties.

UAB RETIREE ASSOCIATION PLANS AND PRIORITIES FOR THE YEAR 2003-2004

Considering the fact that our association had no shape, form, or standing before May of this year, we have come a long way. I checked on the number of members in our UAB Association on October 26, 2003 and it stood at 179. My personal plan is to try to get the association on firm footing prior to the first Annual Meeting in May 2004. At that time, elections will be held for Officers, Board Positions, and Committee Leaders. It is essential that we achieve a high degree of organization before and during this meeting, as the budget crisis and thus, the threat to our benefits will be highest during the legislative session in 2004-2005. I would wish that we would have liaisons appointed to all other higher education institutions that could aid in all of the retirees of higher education having a coordinated voice that would be heard clearly in Montgomery.

To achieve these initial goals, it is imperative that the existence of the UAB Retiree Association get to all retirees of the Medical Center, University College and University of Alabama Hospital and that we have as many UAB retiree members as possible. In the lobbying game, size does matter.

Jack Bradford, Acting President