

UAB Retirees Association

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA RETIREES' ASSOCIATION

Newsletter Spring 2011

MAY MEMBERSHIP MEETING



Please plan to attend the May Membership Meeting. The meeting will be held Monday, May 9th at the Homewood Public Library Auditorium. The session will start promptly at 1:30 so plan on arriving by 1:15. Our featured guest will be the Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, the Honorable Sue Bell Cobb. Among the topics to be covered will be sentencing reform and tobacco tax legislation. She has another Birmingham engagement later in the afternoon so she will begin to speak promptly at 1:30. Please plan to arrive and be seated a bit early.

The agenda for this meeting will be jam-packed. Ms. Janice Charlesworth will install our new Board of Directors and Officers. Yvonne Akins, Executive Administrator of the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation will be there to accept a check to begin the memorial fund for Dr. Cecil Nepomuceno. The family of Dr. Nepomuceno will be present as well, wife, Edna, daughters, Celeste Bolton, Joy Barron, and Regina Phillips. This will fund a portion of the Holmes Pavilion renovation and create a place for reflection for patients, visitors and staff at the Spain Rehabilitation Center. Members of the Filipino American Association of Greater Birmingham will be our special guests. If you would like to be a part of this very worthwhile project, you can make a tax-deductible donation by making your check to the Dr. Cecil Nepomuceno Memorial Fund and mailing it to the following address:

Spain Rehabilitation Hospital
Attention: Yvonne Akins
Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
Suite 190
1717 Sixth Avenue South
Birmingham, Alabama 35233

P.O. Box 55682

Mailing Address: UABRA • BIRMINGHAM AL 35255

Dr. Nepo spent his working days making life better for others; it is fitting that his life work is extended through a space that helps patients and their family's progress through the healing process.

The meeting will be capped-off by a State of the University update by UAB Provost, Dr. Eli Capilouto. Our University as well as others will be facing a hard time in the current economic climate. With the problems being faced by retirees, we will have much in common!

Plan to be there and bring someone with you!!

MEMBERSHIP

The recent actions of our state legislators should give you cause for action. Prepare to pay more and more for your state provided health care (PEEHIP), as increases will be put in place several times over the next span of time. Nationally, there appears to be a chance that administration of Medicare will be shifted to the states. I will guess this will result in a program that will vary from state to state depending on several local conditions; not the least of which is available funding. (In the case of Alabama, that's not much)! If our voice is to be heard by these decision makers, we have to have numbers and we have to be loud. We don't have the dollars, but we DO have numbers and further, we VOTE. Locally, we need you to join UABRA. There are roughly 3,000 retirees of UAB but less than 1,000 are members of UABRA. We can do better and we must. Please renew your membership and help us find and recruit others to join.

There is more you can do. When anyone in education retires in the State of Alabama, you get your check from RSA, and you are enrolled in the State health care program (PEEHIP). We are all treated the same. We have the opportunity to get under the same umbrella of organization and protection. The Alabama Education Retirees Association (AERA) represents all education employees in the State. Yes, it is true that the majority are educators from the K-12 arena. However, through this Association we gain a voice in Montgomery. Without this alliance, we are individuals with no organization or united purpose. This next spring, the membership of AERA will be considering an amendment submitted by higher education retirees to amend their Constitution to create a directorship on the Board of Directors that is reserved only for higher education. For that amendment to have a chance of passing, we have to have enough higher education members present to vote at the statewide meeting to gain that passage. To vote, one must be an AERA member. UABRA has the largest "potential" voting delegation of all higher education and is third only to the Birmingham Schools and Jefferson County Schools. That means we have some 18-delegate votes currently and we need at least that many people present at that spring meeting. I wish to encourage each of you to join

AERA and help us to gain a better voice in our future. Don't let retirees become the group that is easy to bully around because we are weak and disorganized! You will have the chance to join AERA at the May Meeting—just ask for a membership application at the registration desk.

At the registration desk, please update any changes in address, e-mail, et cetera, so we can maintain communications with you. If you have forgotten to renew your UABRA membership, bring your checkbook and renew when you register for the May meeting at the registration table.

HELP FOR OUR RETIREES IN NEED

UABRA Board Members, Erma Wesley, Kay Moore, and Peggy Gentry have been conducting some research and have the following to place before our membership:

UAB FACULTY AND STAFF BENEVOLENT FUND

Your University of Alabama at Birmingham Retiree Association is pleased to inform you that the UAB Employee Emergency Assistance Program provides relief to eligible faculty and staff members who are facing financial emergencies. Applicants to the Employee Emergency Assistance Fund must have a documented emergency situation that has caused a financial hardship, e.g. a fire, death in the immediate family if accompanied by other hardships, accident, and illness/disability. Needs are reviewed by a committee to establish eligibility.

{Persons eligible for aid must be full-time or part-time regular employees, full-time temporary employees or **retirees/retired disabled (for up to 90 days following retirement).**}

The UAB Employee Emergency Assistance Program also maintains a list of community resources that may be helpful in providing assistance to you and your family during times of need. For further information and details, contact Lisa Higginbotham, Program Manager in the Benevolent Fund Office at 205/934-1581 or www.uab.edu/benfund.edu
Mailing address: AB B84 1530 3rd Avenue South Birmingham, Alabama 35294-0100.
Rest assured all communication will be strictly confidential.

FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

It has been my honor to have served as your President for an unbelievable four times. The time has come for me to step down. New leadership must come forward to take our organization forward into the future. Now is the time for new leaders to help us through

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the troubled waters ahead. I will remain active and support the incoming President and Board of Directors and I will continue to try to help AERA in their efforts to aid retirees as they seek dignity in retirement. They earned their retirement and they should enjoy it. It is true that retirees use an inordinate amount of health care—remember they gave the best of their life and the healthy part of their life to their jobs—to helping educate others. It is true retirement systems have become expensive—remember, we put a lot of our hard earned money into the system—money we could have used at the time to purchase what was necessary to provide for our needs and for the needs of our families. Retirees don't bring about inflation, they don't start wars, they do love their families and especially their grandchildren, they mellow in these golden years and they enjoy doing for others. They often feel helpless while forgetting they are people of influence, among their families, in their communities, within their states, in their nation. Even if it is with the help of a walker, STAND UP for yourself, STAND UP for retiree rights, let people know what you think. If you write well, contribute to the editorial page of your newspaper—if you speak well, talk on radio or television. Visit community organizations and work for broad understanding of the life and plight of retirees. We are not on the public dole and we are not a drain on society. We are the power plant in our neighborhoods. We populate organizations and fill in the cracks between what people are able to do for themselves and what institutional programs provide. Next time you go to the polls, look around—the poll watchers are seniors—the vast majority of those voting are seniors. Voting is the keenest weapon we have—use your vote wisely. Go to public appearances of politicians—call them—in Washington D.C. in Montgomery—at home—ask them what they are doing for us—be specific and make them answer directly—let them know we are watching their voting record and we are talking with others about that record. It is out of these efforts that their accountability is born.

Our lives might not be greatly affected by the massive changes coming but ask yourself, what will be left for those that follow us? How will good people be recruited to go into education in the future if the very people they serve turn against them? We, you and I can help shape that future into something better. Let's stand strong together. Thanks for letting me be your President.

If you have not yet had a chance to join UABRA, here is your opportunity. Just fill in the enclosed form and mail it to the address indicated. You will then become a part of the force shaping a brighter future for all of us.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jack Bradford". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned at the bottom left of the page.

UAB Retirees Association

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA RETIREES' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER May 2011 (SUPPLEMENT)

LIBRARY BLACKOUT LEAVES RETIREES IN THE DARK

The stars were in perfect alignment, as UABRA members were assembling for the May Membership Meeting, the lights flickered and then the library was plunged into darkness. Moments later the lights came on only to again plunge into darkness. Then we were asked to vacate the library (their legal protection). We were all outside the library when our guest speaker, Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, Sue Bell Cobb, and her entourage arrived.

The Chief Justice, the real person and good sport that she is, seized the opportunity and spoke with those gathered outside the library. The heat was an issue that the library helped with when they distributed complementary soft drinks to the crowd. Chief Justice Cobb stated that Alabama has the fourth highest imprisonment rate in the nation. Yet, Alabama's crime rate has dropped much more slowly over the past 10 years than the national average. It is apparent that those convicted of non-violent drug possession charges are truly attending criminal "finishing school" thanks to our overloaded penal system. Those released quickly hit the revolving door and are quickly convicted again. No counseling is provided. They only do time in the company of highly polished criminals. The Alabama Public Safety and Sentencing Coalition has drafted a package of legislation that addresses the management of the prison population while protecting public safety and holding offenders accountable for their actions. The alternative to this is the construction of additional prison facilities to accommodate some 1,500 or more inmates. The Coalition needs YOUR HELP. Please call your State Representative and your State Senator and ask them to support this package of legislation. The package includes: (HB218, SB 204-Create New Class D Felony Offense and Reclassify Property Statutes; HB 344, SB 286-Revise Drug Statutes to Help Distinguish Between Drug Users and Career Criminals; HB 129 Incentivize Probation Compliance; HB 215, SB 142-Impose Mandatory Reentry Supervision for Certain Non-violent Inmates; HB 134, SB 145- Amend Driver's License Suspension Law to Allow Reinstatement). Please call your Senator and Representative TODAY.

Chief Justice Cobb stated that she had been in recent communication with Dr. David Bronner. He is most concerned by recent legislation, which would put control of the Alabama State Retirement System in the hands of political cronies of the Governor, Speaker ProTem of the Senate and the Speaker of the House. That legislation would give the Governor choice of three people to populate the Board; the Speaker ProTem

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would have two choices, as would the Speaker of the House. The legislation goes on to state that a majority rule would be seven votes. Do you think it is coincidence that these three people's votes happen to add-up to seven? They would control your retirement fund and it would be my prediction that in the near future you would find IOU's in your fund along with a note stating the money is being used for the good of the state and it will be repaid when times are better. The powers that be are also looking into changing our current retirement from a defined benefit to a defined contribution system (you would know how much you put in but be left to the turns of the market as to what you get out each month). This would scrap our current system of defined benefit that lets you know what you will get from your retirement each and every month. You can actually formulate a budget if you know what your income is going to be! Also, many retirees are not experienced in investing in the stock market. Such a change could be devastating to their finances. Get ready for the fight of your life-your retirement is clearly under attack.

Immediately following the unfortunate happenings surrounding our May Membership Meeting, I again contacted the Governor's Office. I have asked if he can speak with us on 20 June 2011. I still have not heard from him. We will be having our May Membership Meeting on JUNE 20, 2011 IN THE AUDITORIUM OF THE HOMEWOOD LIBRARY AT 1:30 PM.

Janice Charlesworth will install the new directors and officers of UABRA. The family of Dr. Cecil Nepomuceno will be specially honored. We will have a speaker of distinction with or without the governor.

Again, I wish to apologize to everyone for any inconvenience caused by the power outage in Homewood for our May Meeting. Please let us make that up to you by your attending and bringing a guest to the meeting on June 20.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jack Bradford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jack Bradford, President
UABRA