

The LASERS Vision

Confidence in our service,
assuring financial security
for your future

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Senator Barrow Peacock
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Representative Kevin Pearson
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Kathy Singleton
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225.953.3867

Spring, 2017 | Volume 28, Number 2

2017 LEGISLATIVE SESSION: RETIREMENT BILLS TAKE A BACK SEAT

On April 10, the 2017 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature convened with only three retirement bills filed that would impact LASERS if passed. Last year, more than 40 bills were filed, so 2017 is expected to be significantly different for the System.

The LASERS Board of Trustees took positions on the 2017 bills, based on the initial language as noted below. Bill statuses will be updated on the LASERS website until the session ends on June 8.

HB 33 – Pearson

Systems Impacted: State and Statewide Systems

Provides for legislative staff attending executive sessions; changes membership on the Board of Trustees from a House Retirement Committee member appointed by the Speaker of the House to the Chairman of the House Retirement Committee, effective on adjournment of the 2020 Regular Session.

Position Taken: **Neutral**

HB 55 – Carter

Systems Impacted: State Systems

(Constitutional Amendment) Removes the prohibition related to the imposition of an additional tax or license on gas, authorizes the levy of a tax, fee, permit, or license on natural gas transported in Louisiana, and creates the Fair Share Fund (the Fair Share Fund may provide additional funds for payments against the UAL).

Position Taken: **Not Yet Taken**

SB 8 – Peacock

Systems Impacted: State and Statewide Systems

Provides for correction of membership enrollment errors.

Position Taken: **Support**

DID YOU KNOW?

You have the option to watch retirement committee meetings in progress by visiting the Legislative website at www.legis.la.gov. On this site, you will find important information such as the schedule for retirement meetings, the names and contacts of both the House and Senate Retirement committee members, a search engine for specific laws, and procedures and rules relevant to the Legislative process.



From the Desk of **Cindy Rougeou**

LASERS Executive Director

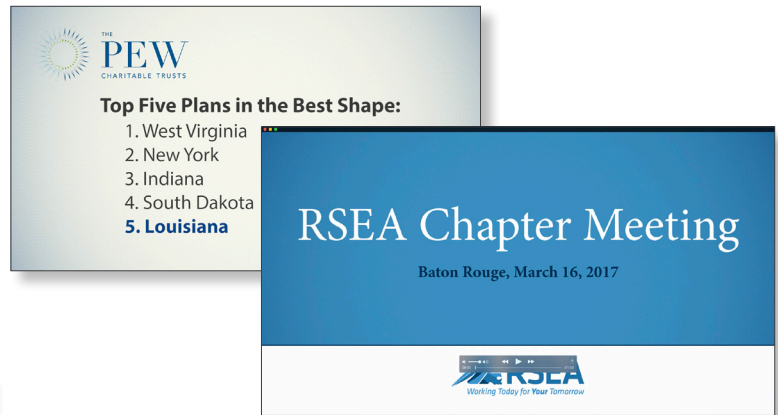
This year, I presented our LASERS update at most of the stops on the RSEA Chapter Tour. Active and retired members from the areas of Shreveport, Alexandria, Monroe, Lake Charles, Acadiana, Baton Rouge, Houma (Coastal Chapter), New Orleans, and the North Shore attended the meetings. As always, the LASERS staff handed out informational packets and assisted members with questions in each location. I appreciate their great customer service!



LASERS Deputy Director Maris LeBlanc and LASERS Trustee Kathy Singleton at RSEA meeting.

The RSEA Tour is always a lot of fun as old friends catch up, new friends become acquainted, and presenting organizations work to pull it all together. Yet, there is always a serious side to the meetings because those who attend look to us for reassurance about their retirement security.

Topics this year included LASERS financial soundness, the 2017 Regular Legislative Session, the federal offsets to Social Security benefits known as the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension



Offset (GPO), the upcoming Board of Trustees Election, and many other important membership topics. For those of you who were unable to attend, we have included a video recording from the Baton Rouge presentation on the LASERS website.

Louisiana was at the forefront of pension reform, beginning in 2005, resulting in an expected savings over time, for LASERS alone, of \$3 billion. Those reforms, including LASERS and TRSL, have already directed \$1.4 billion toward pension debt reduction. Even so, there are those who continue to ignore these facts and search for a way to eliminate the defined benefit plan. As such, it is always important to keep up with retirement legislation during the Legislative Session. A great way to stay informed is by visiting LASERS website and signing up for “Member Connection.”

Together, YOU and LASERS are providing a strong and reliable economic stimulus for Louisiana.

Nominations Open in Board of Trustees Election

Nominations are open for four seats up for election on the thirteen-member LASERS Board of Trustees. Three open seats must be filled by active members and retirees will cast their vote for one seat. If you are interested in running for the Board, you may download a nominating petition on our website at <https://lasersonline.org/about/2017-lasers-board-of-trustees-election/>.

You may also obtain petitions from your agency's Human Resources Office, or by calling LASERS at 225.922.0600 (Baton Rouge area) or 800.256.3000.

A potential candidate for the Board must submit this official petition bearing the names and signatures of at least 25 active or retired members of LASERS,

depending on whether they are running for an active or retired member seat. For purposes of verification, each signature must be accompanied by the last four digits of the signatory's Social Security number.

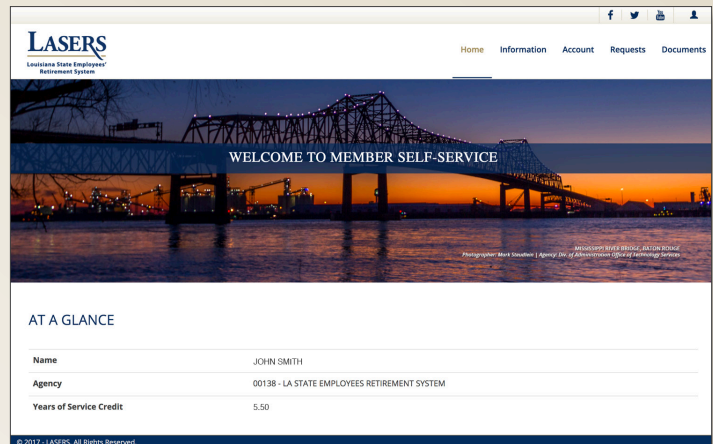
Trustees serve four year terms unless they are filling an un-expired portion of a term. No trustee may serve more than three consecutive terms.

Nominations will close on July 11, 2017. Votes will be cast in September and October and the results certified by the Board and published in November. For the complete schedule of the election, visit our website at www.lasersonline.org.

Member Self-Service: A New Look

When the new LASERS website launched in January, we took that opportunity to give Member Self-Service (MSS) a design facelift. Most of the existing features work the same as the old MSS, but the new version is streamlined and easier to use. Feedback from LASERS members via the “Rate Our Website” survey has been very positive, but as with any new rollout, there are issues to address.

If you have utilized the new MSS on the LASERS website, below is a list of suggestions that may help if you encounter problems:



- ▶ Make sure you have an updated browser on your computer. The new MSS has enhanced security features that will not work with outdated browsers. LASERS is constantly searching for the most up-to-date security measures to keep our data secure.
- ▶ Enhancements and improvements were made to the Benefits Calculator to allow additional types of estimates to be calculated. With the different types of calculations, some issues cropped up and are being resolved now.
- ▶ In changing MSS, problems developed with printing certain pages or documents. As a top priority, we are currently improving the ability to print in all areas of MSS.
- ▶ If you can disable your pop-up blockers, that can help with some issues you may be experiencing.
- ▶ Contact Member Services via AskLASERS on the website, by phone at 800.256.3000 or 225.922.0600, or by taking the “Rate Our Website” survey. Please be sure to tell us specifically what kinds of problems you may be encountering in MSS. The more information we have, the better we can assist.

Stay tuned for additional announcements as new features are added to Member Self-Service.



Seated: Tina Grant, Demetria Allen
Standing: Trey Roche, Steve Stark

Get to Know Us: Legal Division

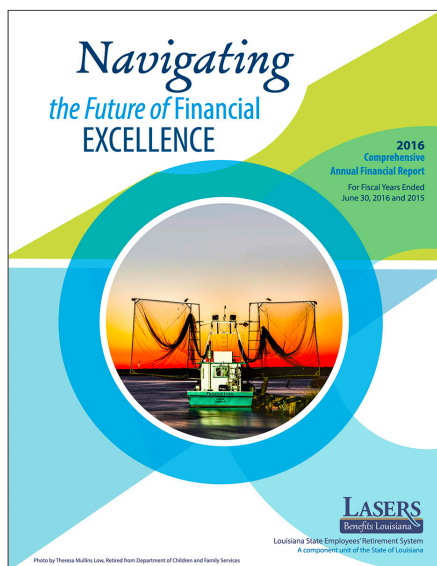
The Legal Division acts as the LASERS in-house law firm and is responsible for all legal matters and issues involving the agency. The fundamental role of the division is to provide accurate and consistent legal advice and representation.

Led by Executive Counsel Tina Grant, the team also consists of Deputy General Counsel Steve Stark, Special Counsel Trey Roche, Administrative Assistant Demetria Allen, and Law Clerk Kara Brown.

In addition to representing and monitoring the work of outside counsel for LASERS in all litigation involving the agency, the team is also responsible for processing all agency contracts and public records requests. The Legal staff supports all divisions within LASERS and offers advice with regard to member issues and statutory interpretation.

Legal is currently preparing for the 2017 Louisiana Legislative Session. During each session, Legal works very closely with the Executive Division by specifically assisting with the drafting of proposed legislation and/or amendments to legislation. At the conclusion of each Session, Legal provides staff training to ensure proper implementation of new legislation and regularly meets with several divisions to assist with specific member issues.

On the challenges and rewards of Legal's work, “The Legal Division faces many complicated and interesting issues but with such a great team, we very effectively and efficiently handle them. I am so happy and proud to work with Steve, Trey, Demetria and Kara,” said Grant.



LASERS CAFR Wins Award for 20th Consecutive Year

The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) of the United States and Canada has awarded a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting to LASERS for its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2016. This was the twentieth consecutive year that the System has achieved this prestigious award. In order to be awarded a Certificate of Achievement, a governmental unit must publish an easily readable and efficiently organized CAFR. This report must satisfy both generally accepted accounting principles and applicable legal requirements. A Certificate of Achievement is valid for a period of only one year. Congratulations to LASERS Fiscal Division and other key contributors on a job well done!

LASERS: Get the Numbers

The latest statistics can be found on the website, www.lasersonline.org. Check out LASERS new Fact Sheet to see on how the System is doing.

Investment performance summaries are updated monthly.

- ▶ View our investments actual asset allocation and target allocation by clicking the *Investments tab*, then *Asset Allocation*.
- ▶ View our investments performance by clicking on the *Investments tab*, then *Performance*.

GET THE FACTS

LEGISLATIVE REFORMS

- Recognized nationally by The Pew Charitable Trusts
- Louisiana in top 5 states with retirement systems headed in the right direction*
- \$8 billion in combined expected cost savings (LASERS and TRSL)

ECONOMIC STIMULUS FOR LOUISIANA

- \$15.5 billion impacting all 64 parishes

ASSETS

as of June 30, 2016

- \$300 million increase in actuarial value of assets from \$11.3 to \$11.6 billion
- 5.43% actuarial return
 - 30-year compounded actuarial return average: 8.13%
 - Expected actuarial rate of return: 7.25%
- Market return July '16 - January '17 was 8.4%, compared to -8.7% for same period in prior fiscal year

ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP

- Lost 21,000 active members over six years

Membership Figures as of June 30, 2016	
Annual Benefit Payments	\$12.8 billion
Average Annual Benefit*	\$25,393
Active Employees	39,284
Retirees	48,201

EFFICIENCIES

- Over \$9 million annual savings through internal portfolio management
- Savings sufficient to fund the salaries of all LASERS employees

COST OF BENEFIT BEING EARNED

- Employer cost decreased to 3.99%; Social Security would cost 6.2%
- Employee will pay 7.25% - 13% depending on plan
- Total employer contribution rate consists of the cost of benefit being earned (normal cost) plus the UAL payment

UAL TURNING THE CORNER

- Principal and interest now being paid for fourth year
- Funded ratio increased from 62.1% to 62.6%

*Pew Charitable Trusts Report

Source: Pew

2016/17

New Online Retiree Workshop Option in July

On Wednesday, July 26, 2017, LASERS will host a workshop **for retirees only** in Baton Rouge and online. Presenters will include the LASERS Executive staff, Office of Group Benefits, EMPOWER Retirement, RSEA, SHIIP, and much more.

This year for the first time, an exciting new online opportunity is available for retirees to attend the workshop. If you live outside the Baton Rouge area or just prefer to sit in the comfort of your own home, the online/webinar option may be for you!

To register for the workshop, please go to www.lasersonline.org, and click on the "Retirees" box. While on the Retirees page, click on "Retiree Workshop Registration." The workshop page has instructions

for how to register for either option. Please choose just one attendance option. Seating at LASERS is limited. Registration for attending at LASERS will be on a first-come, first-served basis.

Those who join us online will see only PowerPoint presentations and will be able to hear each presenter through their computer. However, please know that webinar attendees cannot actually see the presenters. It is also recommended that webinar attendees have strong internet connection and computer speakers to avoid any connection and audio issues.

If you have any questions about registering, please contact LASERS. We look forward to having you join us for the Retiree Workshop on Wednesday, July 26!



The Board MEMO

Janice Lansing
2017 Board Chair



Maintaining Credibility

In January, I became Board Chair after having previously served as Vice Chair. My other Trustee roles included chairing the Audit and Investment Committees, both helping to lay the groundwork for my knowledge of the System. As a 20-year plus member of LASERS, it has been an enlightening experience to participate on the Board. I believe all aspects of the LASERS mission are critically important, but maintaining credibility to the members is an absolute must. I am delighted to serve as Board Chair over the next year and to continue to build that high level of trust you have come to expect from LASERS.

If you have not yet visited the newly launched LASERS website, www.lasersonline.org, I urge you to do so as soon as possible. We are receiving great reviews from our members and the amount of information available on the site is astounding. One particular component

I really appreciate is the access to Annual Statements. Even though Annual Statements are mailed to members in March, whether you have opted to go paperless or receive them through regular mail, you may simply log in to Member Self-Service any time on the website to view current and past statements. This year you will notice that the annual statement has been streamlined, using less paper and postage for those that are mailed.

You may also utilize the LASERS website for up-to-date information on retirement bills during this Legislative session. The LASERS staff tracks legislation that would have an impact on the System if these bills were to pass.

Thank you for your service to Louisiana and for being an integral part of LASERS.

Annual Statement Has New Look

Active LASERS members may have noticed a big change in annual statements. The document has been condensed from four pages to two with the most important information included and an easier-to-read format. Download and print or view your statement anytime from Member Self-Service.

Take a look at the new format and get familiar with your *Annual Statement*.

PAGE 1

Current Retirement Plan

Beneficiary Name	Type	Allocation
MARY SMITH		

To update your beneficiary information, complete and submit Form 01-06: Designation of Beneficiary, available on the Member Forms section of our website, www.lasersonline.org.

¹ If you have more than four primary beneficiaries, you can view them on Member Self-Service on the LASERS website. Contingent beneficiaries are not listed on your Annual Statement. They are on file with LASERS if you named any.

LASERS ACCOUNT INFORMATION

You are currently enrolled in the following retirement plan: Regular Employee 3.

For information on your retirement eligibility, consult the Member's Guide to Retirement, located on the LASERS website.

Service Credit Summary

Previous Years' Service Credit: 1.00	Total Eligibility Service: 2.00
2016 Credit Earned During the Year: 1.00	Total Computational Service Credit: 2.00
Refund/Purchase/Transfer: 0.00	*Service credit earned cannot exceed 1.00 year

2016 Service Credit

Service Credit
Since Enrollment

PAGE 2

Benefit Estimate: Will only receive if within three years of retirement eligibility

MONTH	EARNED SALARY	EMPLOYEE CONTRIBUTION
January	\$4,326.58	\$324.49
February	\$4,326.58	\$324.49
March	\$4,326.58	\$324.49
April	\$4,326.58	\$324.49
May	\$4,326.58	\$324.49
June	\$4,326.58	\$324.49
July	\$4,326.59	\$324.50
August	\$4,326.59	\$324.50
September	\$4,326.59	\$324.50
October	\$4,326.59	\$324.50
November	\$4,326.59	\$324.50
December	\$4,326.59	\$324.50
Total for 2016	\$51,919.02	\$3,893.94
Balance as of Jan 1, 2016		\$75,971.54
Refund/Purchase/Transfer		\$0.00
Balance Through Dec 31, 2016		\$79,865.48

BENEFIT ESTIMATE

The estimate provided is unaudited and should serve as guidance only. You are strongly encouraged to request your first eligible retirement date and benefits estimate in writing from LASERS.

Eligibility requirements for all LASERS Membership Classes may be found in the Member's Guide to Retirement.

Your Estimate has been Calculated Based on the Following Data

First Eligible Date for an Unreduced Retirement Benefit or to enter DROP: 2/25/2014

Final Average Compensation as of the Date of Your Agency's Last Contribution: \$4,314.80

Maximum Monthly Benefit as of the Date of Your Agency's Last Contribution: \$2,988.00

GENERAL DISCLAIMER

Report discrepancies in salary, service credit, or contributions to your Human Resources office. All payments are subject to audit and change.

The accuracy of your benefit estimate depends on how closely our records match your actual data when you request an estimate of benefits.

Previous Year
Contributions

Contributions Paid
Since Enrollment

ATTENTION LASERS MEMBERS

JUST FOR RETIREE MEMBERS

Upcoming Benefit Payments

July benefit payments are scheduled to be paid on the first of the month. Since July 1 falls on a Saturday, receipt of your funds can be affected by whether you receive a check or direct deposit and your financial institution's rules when the first falls on a weekend or holiday.

Direct Deposits are guaranteed to be in your bank or credit union on the first day of the month. When the first falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or holiday, funds may not be available until the following business day. In these cases, please contact your financial institution directly for information on when your funds will be made available to you. That decision is made by your financial institution, not LASERS. If you have not received your direct deposit by the first business day of the month, please contact LASERS in Baton Rouge at 225.922.0600 or toll-free at 800.256.3000.

Paper checks are mailed for delivery on the first of each month. However, **delivery can be delayed because of inclement weather and holidays**. If you have not received your monthly benefit check by the fifth business day of the month, you should take the following steps:

1. Notify LASERS in writing that you wish to have the check reissued.
2. The written notification must include your name, Social Security number, and signature.
3. Sign up for Direct Deposit to avoid this problem in future. Complete Form 04-05, Authorization for Direct Deposit, to start the process.

FOR ALL MEMBERS



Are You Interested in a Great Bargain?

For ONLY \$18 a year, you can join RSEA, an organization designed specifically for you. RSEA advocates for pension and healthcare benefits for active and retired Louisiana state employees. Dues are \$18 and you even have the option to pay on the Direct Withdrawal Plan, with a monthly deduction of \$1.50. To learn more about joining and the benefits of RSEA membership, visit their website, <http://www.rseala.org/how-to-join/>.

LASERS Benefits Louisiana Video Now Playing

LASERS staff members share information on the health of the retirement system and the impact it has on the state and YOU. Check it out on our website: www.lasersonline.org/resources/video-library/.

JUST FOR ACTIVE MEMBERS

Are you a Prepper?

Be Prepared by Checking out the PREP Workshop!

Whether you are a new LASERS member or approaching retirement, a Pre-Retirement Education Program (PREP) workshop can provide you with essential information and tools to help you plan for one of the most important days of your life. PREP has recently been shortened to a half-day presentation. Go online, www.lasersonline.org, and look for the *Register for a Workshop* link on the homepage.

2017 PREP Schedule

DATES	LOCATION
May 4 August 31	Shreveport LSU-Shreveport, University Center, Caddo & Bossier Rooms One University Place
May 9	Lake Charles SOWELA Technical Community College Arts & Humanities Building, Room 145 3820 Sen. J. Bennett Johnston Avenue
May 25 June 22 July 27 August 24	Baton Rouge Louisiana State Police Training Academy Building A, Classroom 1 7901 Independence Boulevard
June 15	New Orleans University of New Orleans University Center, Vermilion Room, #206 2000 Lakeshore Drive
June 20	Hammond Southeastern Louisiana University, University Center, Entrance 1, Room 139 800 W. University Avenue
June 29	Lafayette University of Louisiana at Lafayette Abdalla Hall 635 Cajun Dome Blvd.
July 18	Alexandria LSU-Alexandria Student Union, Brumfield Caffey Ballroom 8100 Highway 71 South
August 17	Monroe Louisiana Delta Community College Conference Center 7500 Millhaven Road

Employee of the 1st Quarter, 2017: Amy Canella



Amy Canella has been warmly greeting our members with her contagious smile since Fall of 2014. As a receptionist at the front desk, Amy is usually the first image seen by our visitors. She takes tremendous pride in her job, evident by the quality of care and professionalism she shows for our members and co-workers. She ensures that all of our members feel welcome and appreciated for their service. Just a few of the many positive comments made about Amy from our visitors include the following: "Excellent service and attitude;" "Amy was very professional and helpful;" "Ms. Canella was professional and very courteous. She was also friendly. Nice to see a smile these days;" "I came in very nervous and Amy made me relax;" and "It was an absolute pleasure to work with Ms. Amy and the staff."

"She takes tremendous pride in her job, evident by the quality of care and professionalism she shows for our members and co-workers."

Amy was happy to take on additional duties when she was asked to assist with our legal documents. Working closely with the Legal division, Amy prepares each document for imaging. It is extremely important that they are processed timely and accurately in order for LASERS to pay benefits correctly. Considering these documents are specialized and sometimes confusing, Amy does a great job!

Amy Canella represents LASERS well in her position and we are proud to name her as our Employee of the Quarter.

New Seminar Targets Early-Career Members



Are you a state employee hired on or after January 1, 2011? If so, we encourage you to sign up for an Early Career seminar this year! The latest

MINT infographic illustrates the benefits of attending an Early Career seminar hosted by LASERS. Head over to our website, www.lasersonline.org, to see the full image and to sign up for the MINT emails.

Now is a good time to **make a plan.**

EARLY CAREER

Attend a seminar for LASERS members hired on or after January 1, 2011.

Early Career

is a *one-hour seminar* covering information you need to plan your *journey to retirement.*



Stay Connected with LASERS during the Legislative Session



How can you stay informed with the most up-to-date action on bills impacting LASERS during the 2017 Legislative Session? Follow us through LASERS emails and social media! LASERS Member Connection emails are sent to members to notify you on upcoming retirement

committee meetings and updated information on bills impacting the System. You can sign up at <https://lasersonline.org/media/member-connection/>, if you do not already receive our emails. We also encourage you to follow us on Facebook and Twitter. Links to our official social media accounts are located on the home page of our website.

TRAVELING ABROAD WITH MEDICARE

Because Medicare has limited coverage of health care services outside the United States, you may choose to buy a travel insurance policy to get more coverage.

An insurance agent or travel agent can give you more information about buying travel insurance. Travel insurance doesn't necessarily include health insurance, so it is important to read the conditions or restrictions carefully.

For more information, visit www.medicare.gov.



Question: I have heard that I can change my retirement benefit to the maximum if my beneficiary dies before me. How does that work?

Answer: If you are a retiree with a beneficiary who passed away, you may be eligible to increase your monthly benefit. In order to make that change, you must have selected an option at the time of retirement to pay a monthly benefit to someone else if you died. If this situation applies to you, then upon the death of your beneficiary, you should complete Form 10-07: *Application for Change in Retirement Benefit Due to Death of Beneficiary*, and submit that form to LASERS. The form is available on the LASERS website. Once eligibility is confirmed, you could pop up to the maximum retirement benefit.

If you have questions, please call a LASERS Benefits Analyst at 800.256.3000 or 225.922.0600 in Baton Rouge.

Question: What happened to the H.R. 711 federal legislation dealing with the Social Security offset?

Answer: H.R. 711, the Equal Treatment of Public Servants Act, was proposed in 2016 to provide a new formula for the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP). The bill received considerable support, including 100 Congressional co-sponsors, during the last congressional cycle. However, stakeholder groups could not come to a final agreement on the bill's changes to the WEP. The bill was delayed in committee with a promise from the author, Rep. Kevin Brady, to continue to move forward in the next congressional cycle. Currently, major political issues such as tax reform and immigration are taking precedence. Rep. Brady has expressed his intention to file new legislation on WEP reform by late summer 2017 and to work closely with all stakeholders.

LASERS will continue to keep members informed of WEP reform legislation as it happens.

The Louisiana State Employees' Retirement System (LASERS) distributed this document digitally. No publication costs were incurred.

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