

## The LASERS Vision

Confidence in our service,  
assuring financial security  
for your future

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**Senator Barrow Peacock**

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985.646.6487

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**Honorable John Schroder**

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**Lorry Trotter**

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## 2019 Legislative Session Five Retirement Bills to Watch

The 2019 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature convened April 8. Of the filed retirement bills, five have an impact to LASERS if they successfully pass. The LASERS Board of Trustees took official positions on the bills based on the language as originally filed. Check the LASERS website for updates as action occurs on the five measures or sign up to receive Member Connection emails. The 2019 Session must end by June 6.



### HB 28 – Ivey

**Position Taken: Oppose**

#### Systems Impacted: State Systems

Creates a new Hybrid Plan for employees hired on or after July 1, 2020, and eligible for membership in LASERS, the Teachers' Retirement System, the School Employees' Retirement System, and the State Police Retirement System. The Hybrid Plan would have a defined benefit (DB) and a defined contribution (DC) component. For LASERS members, the following are elements of the plan:

- Employee contribution rate would be variable;
- Employees would share the cost of any unfunded accrued liability of their plan;
- Accrual rate for rank-and-file members would be 1% in the DB portion of the plan; Hazardous Duty Services (HAZ) Plan members would have a 1.33% accrual rate;
- Employees would have a separate account for the DC portion of the plan with a third-party provider; rank-and-file members would receive a 10% credit each month; HAZ Plan members 12%;
- Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLAs) on first \$50,000 of benefit would be payable in odd-numbered years: 2% or the CPI-U for the South, whichever is lower;
- Retirement eligibility for rank-and-file would be five years of service at age 65 or 20 years of service at age 55, actuarially reduced; HAZ Plan members eligibility would be 12 years of service at age 57 or 20 years at any age, actuarially reduced;
- Members terminating with less than five years of service only receive employee contributions; members terminating with more than five years are required to leave funds in DC plan until reaching retirement age;
- At least 75% of DC account balance must be annuitized upon retirement.

### HB 29 – R. Johnson

**Position Taken: Neutral**

#### Systems Impacted: LASERS

Removes the increase in insurance premiums for HAZ Plan members who transfer service and retire with an unreduced benefit.

*Bills continued on page 2*

**SB 9 – Peterson      Position Taken: Neutral****Systems Impacted: LASERS**

Employees of the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) hired on or after July 1, 2019, shall not be members of LASERS. Employees currently enrolled in LASERS retain their membership. The LASERS actuary shall determine the portion of the LASERS unfunded accrued liability (UAL) attributable to the RTA as of June 20, 2019. That portion of the UAL shall be amortized over ten years and paid to LASERS by the RTA in equal monthly installments.

**SB 14 – Peacock      Position Taken: Neutral****Systems Impacted: State and Statewide System**

Provides for term limits for retirement system boards of trustees. Trustees would be limited to 12 consecutive years of service, unless limits otherwise apply. **Trustees for LASERS are already subject to a limit of three consecutive four-year terms.**

**SB 15 – Long****Position Taken: Neutral****Systems Impacted: LASERS**

Changes the qualifications for eligibility in the HAZ Plan for firefighters employed by the Department of Agriculture and Forestry. Firefighters must be trained as wildland firefighters, as provided in R.S. 3:4276(9), to qualify for membership in the HAZ Plan.

**— Watch Committee Meetings Online —**

You have the option to watch retirement committee meetings in progress on the Legislative website at [www.legis.la.gov](http://www.legis.la.gov).



On this site, you will find information such as the schedule for retirement meetings, the names and contacts of the House and Senate Retirement committee members, a search engine for specific laws, and procedures and rules relevant to the legislative process.

## Follow Legislation Affecting LASERS through Email and Social Media

How can you stay up-to-date with the action on bills impacting LASERS throughout the 2019 Legislative Session? Through LASERS emails, Facebook and Twitter accounts!

You can sign up for our emails at [www.lasersonline.org/media/member-connection](http://www.lasersonline.org/media/member-connection).

Links to our official social media pages are located in the header and footer of our website at [www.lasersonline.org](http://www.lasersonline.org).

## What is Phishing?



Two growing trends being exploited by cyber criminals today are **phishing** and **look-alike domains**.

**Phishing** is the use of carefully crafted emails to entice unsuspecting victims to perform an action such as clicking on a nefarious link or divulging private information. Many of the links provided by these phishing emails point to a **look-alike domain**, which can be very hard to spot.

How easily could you see the difference between “domain.com” and “dornain.com?” These links have other methods to trick you into thinking that the link is safe, such as “microsoft.com-hdfkejbnsdfl.hjsncristens.com/fjdhnfkdgndfk.” Many people will see “microsoft.com” at the beginning of the string and not read the entirety of the link to find the actual destination is “hjsncristens.com.” This is just one of the many tricks that cyber criminals use to persuade users to fall for their links.

They also often use a safe looking link as text covering whatever hyperlink would carry out their plan. Hovering over the link with your cursor will usually display the actual destination in the lower left hand corner of the window.

The combination of the enticing phishing email and cleverly disguised links are a potent combination in the cyber criminal’s arsenal. **How do you avoid falling for these tricks? Do not click on any link in an email.** Use your browser and type the address yourself, or at least use a search engine to find the correct link.

A wealth of information is available online to help you understand these tactics. Try searching for:

- *How to Avoid Phishing Scams* by PCMag.com
- *Look-Alike Domains and Visual Confusion* — *Krebs on Security* by krebsonsecurity.com

# The Board MEMO



**Shannon Templet**  
*2019 Board Chair*

In January, I became Board Chair for the second time, and look forward to the year ahead. As a Trustee beginning my eighth year on the Board (and with nearly 30 years under my belt as a state employee), my knowledge of the System has continued to grow with time. You simply cannot take a back seat on this Board! The learning curve is steep and we have required continuing education to keep us abreast of our fiduciary responsibilities. Each Trustee on the Board brings something unique to the table and it is my pleasure to lead this great group of people as Chair again.

With the current legislative session underway, I would like to remind our members that Civil Service has published a new circular on “Speaking Publicly on Issues” that explains the rules about political activity as it applies to classified civil servants. Please take a few minutes to read about your rights to address members of the legislature, and support or oppose local community concerns.

*“The LASERS staff continuously tracks legislation that would impact the System if passed.”*

Go to Civil Service’s website to review *General Circular Number 2019-004*:

[www.civilservice.louisiana.gov/files/general\\_circulars/2019/GC2019-004.pdf](http://www.civilservice.louisiana.gov/files/general_circulars/2019/GC2019-004.pdf)

Remember that you can utilize the LASERS website for up-to-date information on retirement bills during the 2019 Legislative Session. The LASERS staff continuously tracks legislation that would impact the System if passed. Please contact us if you have questions.

Thank you for your service to Louisiana.



## Nominations Open in 2019 Board of Trustees Election

Nominations are open for the five seats up for election on the thirteen-member LASERS Board of Trustees. Three positions are open for active members and two for retired members. If you are interested in running for the Board, you may download a nominating petition on our website at <https://lasersonline.org/about/2019-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/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.

*Nominations will close July 9, 2019.*

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 July 9, 2019. 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.





## From the Desk of Cindy Rougeou

*LASERS Executive Director*

The March RSEA Tour around the state is always an annual highlight for me and several members of our LASERS staff. The tour stops in all of the RSEA chapter areas: Shreveport, Alexandria, Monroe, Lake Charles, Lafayette (Acadiana Chapter), Baton Rouge, Thibodaux or Houma (Coastal Chapter), New Orleans, and Covington (North Shore Chapter). I would like to thank the LASERS Trustees and members of the legislature for their attendance, and especially our LASERS members for their passion and engagement at each of the chapter meetings. Let me give a special shout out to Maris LeBlanc, Trey Boudreaux, Janet Harris, Sarah Bell, Wendy Demouy, Jeanne Peneguy, and Tricia Gibbons; members of our staff who provided information and fielded questions at several of the chapter meetings. Please keep in mind that membership in RSEA is available to both our active and retired members. We appreciate your support of the System and the positive difference you continue to make throughout our state!

If you were unable to attend your chapter meeting, below are a few important topics from the presentation. Additional information is available on the LASERS website and if you have questions, please contact our Public Information Division.

- LASERS is financially sound with the fund value over \$12 billion as of June 30, 2018;
- 2019 Regular Legislative Session features only a few bills being tracked for their impact on LASERS (see page one for details);
- Update on the Federal offsets to Social Security benefits known as the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO);
- 2019 LASERS Board of Trustees Election;
- Rehired retirees returning to work;
- Minimum required distribution at age 70-1/2;
- The importance of signing up on our website for both Member Connection and MyLASERS, (currently Member Self-Service).
- And various necessary LASERS forms to keep your information up-to-date.

One of the highlights from the tour was recognition of LASERS Trustee Barbara McManus as Lake Charles RSEA Chapter Member of the Year. Barbara is so deserving of this honor and we are proud of her achievements.

This year LASERS will produce a new video addressing many of the important issues that apply to retirees; such as COLAs, rules concerning rehired retirees, and much more. Be on the lookout for this new resource.

As always, LASERS remains member-focused; we are here because of YOU. Whether you are new to the System, approaching retirement, or already retired, let us know if you have questions or need assistance. We are here to help. Thank you!



*LASERS Executive Director Cindy Rougeou, Member Services Director Tricia Gibbons, and former LASERS Board Trustee Connie Carlton*



*RSEA Legislative Affairs Director Frank Jobert, LASERS Chief Operating Officer Maris LeBlanc, and RSEA Executive Director Jimmy Anthony*



*LASERS staff members Tricia Gibbons, Mark Diaz, and Wendy Demouy*



## Barbara McManus Named RSEA Lake Charles Chapter Retired Member of the Year

In March, LASERS Trustee Barbara McManus was named Lake Charles RSEA Chapter Member of the Year. She received the honor during RSEA's annual chapter tour around the state.

McManus currently serves as an ex officio member of the RSEA Board representing LASERS retired members. She retired from the Department of Social Services with 35 years of experience. McManus has served on the LASERS Board as both an active and retired member, and was elected in 2017 for a tenth term. She currently serves on the Lake Charles Symphony Board, Advisory Board of Christus/St. Patrick Foundation, and Board of Trustees of Boys Village.



## Civil Service Spotlights LASERS Staff Member David Brasseaux

The State Civil Service Employee Spotlight series highlights all the great and positive things state workers do across all agencies and puts a face to state government.

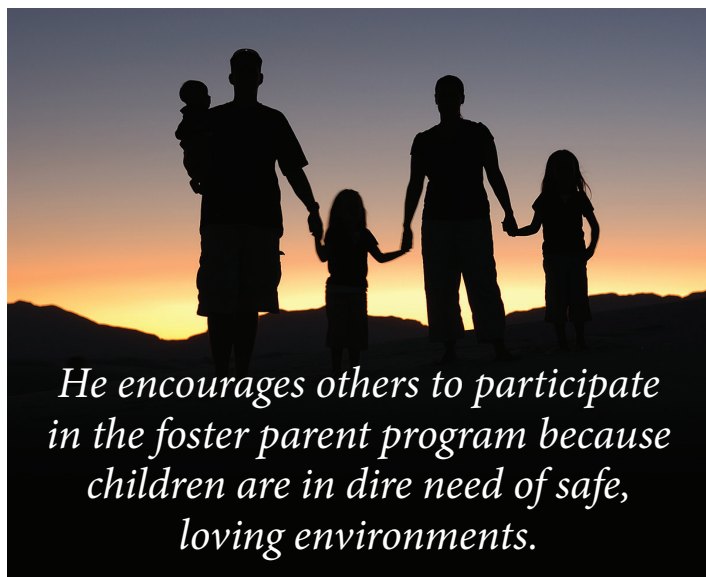
In March, LASERS IT Applications Project Leader David Brasseaux was selected for the series for demonstrating integrity, leadership, trust, respect and excellence every day.

Brasseaux got his start in state government in 2003 immediately after college. He worked for the Department of Corrections for six years before beginning his 10-year stint with LASERS. Colleagues describe Brasseaux as dependable, diligent, and unfailingly positive. His primary responsibilities involve internal operations that serve the LASERS staff. One of his major achievements was developing an application that completely mechanized the payroll system, creating a more efficient, paperless process.

Brasseaux knew at an early age that he excelled at figuring out problems, solving puzzles, and creating efficiencies. A native of Lafayette, he decided to attend the University of Louisiana at Lafayette (ULL) and earn his degree in Computer Science. Influenced by his dad, a professor of history at ULL, and his mom, a public school teacher, he chose to combine his computer skills with a career in public service. Brasseaux takes great pride in being a state employee and serving Louisiana.

One of his passions is foster parent advocacy. Since 2008, Brasseaux has worked through the Department

of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to foster and adopt four children. He and his wife also have one biological child. He encourages others to participate in the foster parent program because children are in dire need of safe, loving environments.



Music, especially Cajun/Zydeco, is also a great joy for Brasseaux. He plays guitar, two of his daughters play piano, and one son is a drummer; forming their own house band. Not surprisingly, with deep roots in Acadiana, he also cites boudin as the food he craves most often and his favorite restaurants are in the Scott area.

We are proud to have David Brasseaux on the LASERS staff and featured through Civil Service! Check out his story on the Civil Service website.



## JUST FOR RETIREE MEMBERS

**Do I need to enroll in Medicare even though I am covered by my spouse's employer plan?**

- If your spouse will also be retiring soon, then **YES** you should enroll in Medicare.
- If your spouse plans to work longer, then you **MAY** have the option to defer enrolling in Medicare.

For more information, contact the Senior Health Insurance Information Program at 1-800-259-5300 or visit [www.lldi.la.gov/SHIIP](http://www.lldi.la.gov/SHIIP). Follow SHIIP on Facebook@LASHIIP.

## Important Benefit Payment Information

**reminder**

Please note that the **June 1, 2019 benefit payment date falls on a Saturday**, which could affect receipt of your funds.

Direct deposits are guaranteed to be in

your bank or credit union on the **first day** of the month. Be aware that if the first falls on a weekend (Saturday or 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 monthly benefit payment 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.

## Attend the Retiree Workshop on July 24 in Baton Rouge or Online

**LASERS will host a workshop for retirees in Baton Rouge on Wednesday, July 24, 2019.** Presenters will include the LASERS Executive staff, Office of Group Benefits, EMPOWER Retirement, RSEA, SHIIP, and more.

**Retirees may also attend the workshop online.** 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.

Registration for the Retiree Workshop will be available on our website soon. LASERS will notify retirees through email once registration is open. We look forward to having you join us for the Retiree Workshop in July!

## JUST FOR ACTIVE MEMBERS

## Sign Up for a LASERS Workshop Today!

If you are 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.



Go to our website, [www.lasersonline.org](http://www.lasersonline.org), and click on *Register for a Workshop* on the home page. **Workshops are four hours in length.**

### 2019 PREP Schedule

*Seminars are held from 8:30 a.m. to Noon.*

DATES	LOCATION
May 16	Lake Charles SOWELA Technical Community College
May 23 June 20 July 23	Baton Rouge LASERS
June 6	New Orleans University of New Orleans University Center
June 18	Hammond Southeastern Louisiana University Center
July 16	Lafayette University of Louisiana at Lafayette
July 17	Shreveport Louisiana State Exhibit Museum
July 18	Alexandria LSU Alexandria

## Sign Up for the Early Career Workshop

If you are a new LASERS member, an Early Career workshop can provide you with an overview of the System and information to help you plan for your future retirement. It is never too early to start planning!



Go to our website, [www.lasersonline.org](http://www.lasersonline.org), and click on *Register for a Workshop* on the home page. **Workshops are one and a half hours in length.**

# Retirement Readiness Fair 2019

LASERS hosted a Retirement Readiness Fair at the LaSalle Building in downtown Baton Rouge on April 2, 2019. More than 300 members attended!

The goal is to make this fair an annual event, moving to various locations where LASERS members work, making it easy for them to drop by during the course of their day. Last year, it was held in the Claiborne building. A similar event was conducted in Shreveport.

Attendees at the Fair visted with representatives of LASERS and Empower Retirement. In keeping with the theme of providing retirement readiness, not only through financial security, but happiness and engagement and healthy living, representatives of the Office of Group Benefits, RSEA, East Baton Rouge Parish



LASERS staff member Amanda Kimble

This was a great opportunity for LASERS staff to connect with members.

Library, CASA, LSU Leisure and Arts Program, SHIIP (Senior Health Insurance Information Program), Volunteer Louisiana, and the YMCA were also available to help active members envision their life as a retiree.

Two demonstrations of the LASERS website were conducted and videos about DROP and IBO were shown. This was a great opportunity for LASERS members to connect with our staff and learn about their retirement aspirations.



LASERS staff members Sarah Bell and Wendy Demouy



LASERS staff members Autumn Oldham-Sullivan, Adrian Ackermann, and Carlos Jones



LASERS staff member Jeanne Peneguy

## MyLASERS – Coming Soon

LASERS Member Self-Service will soon become MyLASERS, offering enhanced security and greater interaction.

MyLASERS will include the ability to schedule appointments online, submit forms electronically, upload important documentation (Social Security cards, birth certificates), and more.

The new MyLASERS will also contain a message center, which will serve as a personal inbox for LASERS to send you important messages and reminders.

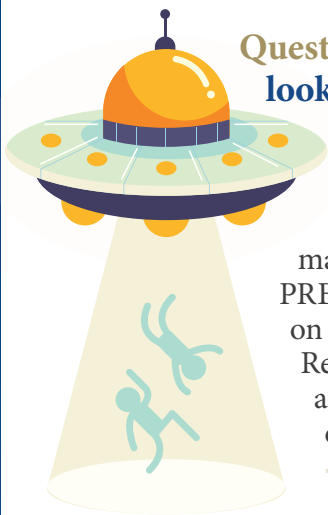
How will you be able to take advantage of these new features? If you have not already done so, create an account by going to [www.lasersonline.org](http://www.lasersonline.org). Click on 'Login: Member' and click on 'New to LASERS? Create an account' at the bottom.

We will send out MyLASERS launch information to our Member Connection email subscribers. Sign up for emails at [www.lasersonline.org/media/member-connection](http://www.lasersonline.org/media/member-connection).





## BEAM ME UP *Your Questions Answered*



**Question:** I have been employed with the state for a while, but I am not looking to retire for several more years. Is it too early for me to attend a PREP?

**Answer:** It's never too early to educate yourself about your LASERS retirement benefits. You are eligible to attend a PREP at any point in your career, and you may attend multiple times. PREP workshops are held statewide throughout the year. In PREP, participants will learn eligibility requirements for retirement, receive information on purchases of service credit, understand the types of retirement including Actuarially Reduced, Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP), the Initial Benefit Option (IBO), and much more. See page 6 for upcoming locations and dates, along with instructions on how to register for a PREP workshop.

**Question:** I'm retired and I want to send my retirement benefit payment to two different banks. Can I do this?

**Answer:** LASERS can only direct deposit your benefit payment into one institution. You can speak to your financial institutions about setting up a draft from one account to the other.

**Question:** I'm retired and living out of state. Can I have my state's income taxes taken out of my LASERS check?

**Answer:** LASERS does not have the mechanism to withhold another state's taxes out of your benefit check.

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