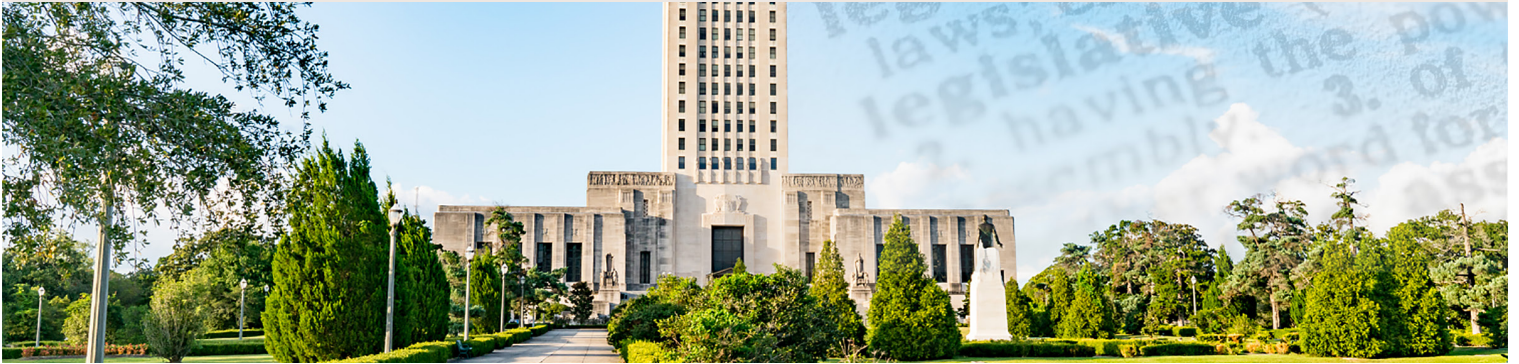


# THE BEAM

## MEMBERSHIP NEWSLETTER

*The LASERS Vision: Confidence in our service, assuring financial security for your future.*



## 2021 LEGISLATIVE SESSION THREE RETIREMENT BILLS TO WATCH

The 2021 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature convened April 12. Three retirement bills were filed that would impact LASERS if passed. The LASERS Board of Trustees took official positions on the bills at its March meeting. Check the LASERS website for updates as action occurs on the three measures or sign up to receive Member Connection emails. The 2021 Session must end by June 10.

### SB 22 – Peacock

**Position Taken: Oppose**

**Systems Impacted:** LASERS, TRSL, LSERS

Provides relative to retirement eligibility for certain new members of LASERS, TRSL, and LSERS, including increasing the retirement age to 67 or the age of retirement set by Social Security.

### SB 24 – Price

**Position Taken: Support**

**Systems Impacted:** LASERS, TRSL, LSERS, State Police

Provides relative to a minimum cost-of-living increase for certain retirees and beneficiaries.

### HB 19 – Mack

**Position Taken: No Position**

**Systems Impacted:** LASERS

Provides relative to the selection of certain optional survivor benefits for members of LASERS. ■

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Beverly Hodges  
2021 Board Chair  
225.342.8844

Barbara McManus  
2021 Board Vice Chair  
337.433.8910

Thomas Bickham  
225.342.6630

Virginia Burton  
225.753.5527

Charles Castille  
225.937.7363

Comm. Jay Dardenne  
225.342.7101

Rep. Lance Harris  
318.767.6095

Judge William Kleinpeter  
225.346.4702

Janice Lansing  
225.342.4698

Sen. Barrow Peacock  
318.741.7180

Lori Pierce  
225.344.4758

Hon. John Schroder  
225.342.0055

Shannon Templet  
225.342.2455



## Comments from our Members

“ Staff is very professional and possessed a strong understanding of the retirement benefits. ”

**Doug M.**

Winnsboro, LA



Derek

“ Derek was great! Very helpful! ”

**John H.**

Lake Charles, LA



Bridget

“ Bridget was extremely helpful. I greatly appreciated her help. ”

**Michael D.**

Baton Rouge, LA

# THE BOARD MEMO



Beverly Hodges, 2021 Board Chair

“ Get up-to-date information on retirement legislation as it happens. ”

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION: STAY IN-THE-KNOW

### Don't Get in Trouble

With the current legislative session in progress, remember to reference the Civil Service circular on “Speaking Publicly on Issues” for an explanation of the rules about political activity as it applies to classified civil servants. Take just a few minutes to read about your rights to address members of the legislature, and support or oppose local community concerns. Stay out of trouble by visiting Civil Service’s website to review *General Circular Number 2020-006*:

[https://www.civilservice.louisiana.gov/files/general\\_circulars/2020/GC2020-006.pdf](https://www.civilservice.louisiana.gov/files/general_circulars/2020/GC2020-006.pdf)

### Check Out the LASERS Website

Please be sure to check the LASERS website for up-to-date information on retirement bills throughout the 2021 Legislative Session. The LASERS

staff continuously tracks proposed measures that would impact the System if passed. You will also find the Board of Trustee positions on legislation and dates of upcoming committee meetings. If you have questions about the legislation, please contact us.

### Sign Up for LASERS Emails

Get retirement legislation updates straight to your inbox by signing up for LASERS Member Connection emails on our website. It’s so easy and you will always be in the loop!

### Consult the Legislative Website

The Louisiana State Legislature website provides in-depth details on legislation, daily meeting schedules, and links to watch committee meetings live. This is one of your best resources for staying in-the-know. ■

## 2021 BOARD OF TRUSTEES ELECTION: NOMINATIONS OPEN

Nominations are open for the four seats up for election on the 13-member LASERS Board of Trustees. Three positions are open for active members and one 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/2021-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 and 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 unexpired portion of a term. No trustee may serve more than three consecutive terms.

**Nominations close July 13, 2021.** Votes will be cast in September and October and the results certified by the Board and published in November. For the complete election schedule, visit our website. ■

# FROM THE DESK *of*



Cindy Rougeou, LASERS Executive Director



## COVID-19 AND VIRTUAL PRESENTATIONS

LASERS continues to make adjustments as necessary to work around the COVID-19 public health emergency. Each division at LASERS remains

innovative in delivering the very best in customer service to our members in these challenging times.

One example is our ability to connect virtually through video or real-time meeting software. We recently utilized this option for the annual RSEA statewide chapter tour. Normally, our LASERS team travels the state during the tour to present the latest retirement information to active and retired members. The live tour was canceled this year because of the risks associated with COVID, but we were able to participate in the “virtual” chapter meeting. We gathered our team of Trustees and staff presenters to create a video filled with important information to share with our members. I promise you are not missing anything you would otherwise see at the live presentations!

I encourage you to watch the video at your leisure and take advantage of the special resource web-page that coincides with the virtual presentation. We cover topics such as:

- Financial stability of the System;
- Actuarial Valuation highlights;
- Significant Board issues;
- Retirement legislation in the 2021 Session;
- Investments overview;
- myLASERS and cybersecurity;
- Social Security offsets;
- Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs); and much more.

We are continuing to compile information on the history of LASERS. The new section on our website provides a comprehensive look at the achievements of the System and the enormous strides we have made over the past 75 years. It has been enlightening to review our progress and rewarding to be a participant in the impact we have had on the State of Louisiana.

Stay tuned! We are in the process of creating a commemorative video featuring the major highlights of our history. Participants in telling our story include past and present Board members, legislators, staff, and a special message from Governor John Bel Edwards. We look forward to sharing and celebrating our anniversary with you! ■

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## COVID-19 Update: LASERS OPEN BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

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As of this printing, the LASERS office remains open to the public **by appointment only**. Appointments will be with a LASERS representative through video or phone. Walk-in appointments are not permitted at this time. **Please check the LASERS website before visiting to confirm current building restrictions.**

Please call 1.800.256.3000 (toll-free) or 225.922.0600 (Baton Rouge) to schedule your appointment. Members may drop off documents at the Security Desk in the building lobby Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Documents may also be mailed or faxed.

LASERS has building safety protocol in place:

- **Face masks are required inside the building at all times;**
- Practice **6 ft. social distancing** from all individuals;
- Two people are limited to an elevator at one time;
- Wash your hands, use our hand sanitizing stations, and avoid touching your face;
- If you are feeling ill, have been exposed to COVID-19, or experiencing symptoms, please **reschedule** your visit.

We appreciate your cooperation while visiting LASERS. Our goal is to protect the well-being of our staff and members while continuing to deliver exceptional service. ■



Throughout 2021, we will recognize people who have made significant contributions to LASERS to ensure the long-term sustainability of the System. In this issue, two women are profiled as "firsts" in the retirement system, paving the way for future generations of Trustees and Executive staff.



## Women of Distinction: [EVELYN WARE PERKINS]

*From School Teacher to Personnel Director*

Evelyn Ware Perkins was the first elected female member of the LASERS Board of Trustees. Known as "Miss Perkins," she received 4,000 votes in December 1947 from retirement system members and began a two-year term on the Board. At her very

first Board of Trustees meeting, she suggested that a handbook for employees be prepared for distribution covering important points in the law that would be of interest to them. In essence, this was a prototype for the first *Member's Guide to Retirement*.

Miss Perkins' concern for employees developed in the progression of her career. In 1937, she became the first personnel director for the Louisiana State Department of Public Welfare and served in that capacity for 27 years.

Miss Perkins was a leader within her agency, but also extremely active in overall state government. In 1958, she was the recipient of the Charles E. Dunbar Career Service Award. She also headed the state offices fund drive committee of the Red Cross and served on the Louisiana Personnel Council Board. She often presented at meetings to share her extensive knowledge of management and personnel practices to assist other state agencies.

Prior to her position with the Welfare Department, Miss Perkins was an assistant in research and statistics with the American Telephone and Telegraph (AT&T) Company in New York, which was the largest corporation in the world for much of the 20th century. In her position, she worked with federal authorities to establish the first minimum standards for the department whose employees then numbered about 1,000. She proudly proclaimed that since that time, no one had been employed that did not meet the minimum standards.

Miss Perkins hailed from a family that valued education. She was born in Mississippi in 1899, and came to Baton Rouge with her family at the age of 16. Her father, William Robert Perkins, was a chemist, agronomist, and professor

at Mississippi State College (now known as Mississippi State University) and also in South Carolina. He relocated to LSU in 1915 to be an extension forage crop specialist. Several years later, he became director of the Agricultural Extension Service.

Miss Perkins enrolled at LSU in a commerce curriculum where she was active in the Epsilon Chapter of Kappa Delta, the Y.W.C.A. Cabinet, and the Coed Club. At that time, LSU was known as the "Old War Skule" and was located in downtown Baton Rouge. The Pentagon Barracks, still standing today, housed the cadets and was part of the campus.

Miss Perkins graduated in 1919 with a B.A. from the College of Arts and Sciences. Incidentally, that was one of two years that *The Gumbo* was not published due to World War I. Shortly after graduation, she accepted a teaching position in Lake Charles, but returned to Baton Rouge in 1920.

Miss Perkins continued her education by completing graduate work in psychology and mathematics at the universities of Alabama, California, and Louisiana.

Historic records from 1930 indicate that Miss Perkins lived with her parents in Poplarville, and taught in the public school system in Mississippi. Her father had returned to Mississippi State in 1928 and several years later became the director of the state's agricultural experiment station.

All her life, Miss Perkins was involved in civic and professional organizations such as the Business and Professional Women's Club, Altrusa, YWCA, Baton Rouge Foundation for Historical Louisiana, the Republican Club, First Presbyterian Church, and the Study Club. She was well-known in social circles in Baton Rouge.

In 1971, Miss Perkins was tragically killed at the age of 71. According to *The Advocate*, she was struck by a vehicle on Government Street after leaving Calandro's with a bag of groceries in her arms.

Evelyn Ware Perkins set the tone for future female Trustees on the LASERS Board. Her professionalism, intelligence, and dedication to the betterment of state employees are seen in our women leaders from the 1940s through today. ■

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## *Women of Distinction:* **[GLENDA CHAMBERS]**

### ***Louisiana State Service to National Prominence***



For almost 53 years, LASERS was led by men in the top position of executive director. All of that changed in 1999 when Alexandria, LA native Glenda Chambers was selected to head the System as the first female executive director.

Glenda was not a newcomer to the retirement system. She

joined LASERS in 1988 as the Assistant Executive Director and served under two directors over the next 11 years before she was chosen to lead the agency.

Glenda's knowledge base was extensive and under her leadership, LASERS fund grew to \$6 billion, and a five-year strategic plan was developed and implemented that emphasized improving customer service and investment performance. During her tenure, programs were created for staff training and fiscal accountability. She also oversaw implementation of the new deferred retirement option plan (DROP) which provided a major new benefit option, a pre-retirement education program (PREP) for members was developed, and a new fully integrated accounting system was designed and executed.

Glenda also directed the design and implementation of local area network and telecommunications systems; the internal audit program; a new computer system for membership and benefits information processing; and a fully integrated imaging system for storage and retrieval of all system documents, including a re-engineering of work flow for more efficient processing.

Glenda's background and education contributed to her success at LASERS. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Finance from LSU in 1972. In 1985, she completed a program in policy analysis for Executive Education for State Managers through Duke University. Glenda also received her certification as a Retirement Administrator through the International Foundation for Retirement Education.

She began her career in state government in 1974 as an accountant with the Division of Administration, then quickly moved to the Department of Health and Human Resources for a short time.

In 1976, Glenda became a Revenue Tax Auditor with the Louisiana Department of Revenue and Taxation. She was

promoted to Revenue Supervisor, then to Director of Income and Corporation Franchise Taxes. In 1985, she was promoted to Assistant Secretary of the department and was responsible for the management and administration of fourteen state tax divisions collecting \$1.5 billion in annual revenues. She was also responsible for the management of 400 employees.

Glenda left the Department of Revenue to come to LASERS. "Things have changed so much since I started at LASERS in 1988," she said. "We didn't even have voice mail or a fax machine. The total staff was 39 people. Most had started in the file room and progressed to other jobs, including in the Information Technology (IT) and accounting divisions. We wrote the first ever job descriptions to require degrees in most jobs, beginning with accounting and IT. There was no newsletter or membership handbook. We didn't have a communications director, so I wrote *The Beam* for the first couple of years and developed the handbook. I was delighted when we finally added staff to handle those functions."

When Glenda retired from LASERS in 2002, she became the Executive Director of the National Association of State Retirement Administrators (NASRA). During her time at NASRA, the organization placed an emphasis on providing factual, timely information based on solid research to explain the impact of public pensions on employees, employers, and the economy. Glenda was also a Charter Member of the Board of Directors for the National Institute on Retirement Security (NIRS). NIRS was established in 2007 by NASRA, the Council of Institutional Investors, and the National Council on Teacher Retirement as a research and education organization to contribute to informed policymaking.

Thanks to Glenda's influence and knowledge, both NASRA and NIRS have impacted and benefited state retirement systems around the country for many years. Glenda retired from NASRA in 2011, but the contributions she made on a national level are still evident today.

Current LASERS Executive Director, Cindy Rougeou stated, "It is a rare individual who rises to prominence on a state and national level with a passion to protect retirement benefits for state employees, but Glenda Chambers is such a person. With her improvements to agency efficiency and service to our members, she set a high bar for all future executive directors."

Today, Glenda and her husband reside in Tennessee where she enjoys her well-deserved retirement. Seven grandchildren keep her busy. ■



## Beware of Medicare TV Ads

You may have seen celebrity-endorsed TV ads that promise huge Medicare savings in one quick call.

These ads are actually a private, for-profit lead generation scheme that is selling your call to an agent who will try to sell you a specific Medicare Advantage Plan that may not be right for you and may not provide the savings you expect.

For truly non-biased information and guidance on your Medicare options and potential savings, call Louisiana Department of Insurance SHIIP Medicare counselors at 1.800.259.5300 or visit [ldi.la.gov/SHIIP](http://ldi.la.gov/SHIIP). ■

## Get the Numbers

### Visit the LASERS Website for Investment Performance

Click on the *Investments* tab, then *Performance*. Investment performance summaries are updated monthly.

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

### Did You Know?

In **1947**, LASERS first investment was approved for \$200,000 in U.S. Treasury Bonds, Series G & H.

In **1982**, LASERS assets reached \$1 billion and the first money managers were hired.

Learn more at [lasersonline.org/about/history](http://lasersonline.org/about/history). ■



*from the Office of Group Benefits:*

## ACCESS HEALTH UPDATE

The Office of Group Benefits is pleased to announce that services provided by Access Health, Inc. will continue to be available to you after April 9, 2021. Please disregard any previous notifications concerning termination of these services.

This means you and eligible dependents can receive covered services at an Access2Day clinic with no out-of-pocket cost. More information on covered services can be found on the OGB website. To find the nearest Access2Day clinic near you, visit [www.access2dayhealth.com/ogb](http://www.access2dayhealth.com/ogb) or call 1.800.797.9503.

For further information regarding this notice, please contact OGB Customer Service at 1.800.272.8451.

## OGB ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The Office of Group Benefits recently expanded our social media footprint. You can now follow OGB on Facebook! Visit us at [www.facebook.com/Louisiana-Office-of-Group-Benefits-104727715047427](http://www.facebook.com/Louisiana-Office-of-Group-Benefits-104727715047427) to stay up-to-date on information about health and wellness programs offered by OGB. Additionally, we invite you to follow us on Twitter at @OGBLouisiana and @LiveBetterLA. And did you know we have a YouTube page with videos about all our health and wellness plans? Check us out at [www.youtube.com/channel/UCbYwtQ0Oe4lbRQ7wz\\_KdVFw](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbYwtQ0Oe4lbRQ7wz_KdVFw).

## COVID-19 VACCINE UPDATE

Effective March 29, 2021, Gov. John Bel Edwards opened up the eligibility for the COVID-19 vaccine to all residents age 16 and older. The Office of Group Benefits encourages our members to get the vaccine as this will help our state get one step closer to fully opening for business. That means a return to all the things we love in Louisiana: festivals, food, live music, and sports (that includes tailgating!).

The Louisiana Department of Health is coordinating the COVID-19 vaccine distribution effort in Louisiana. Visit [ldh.la.gov/covidvaccine-locations](http://ldh.la.gov/covidvaccine-locations) to find a vaccination site near you.

You should also continue to follow the guidelines set forth by the CDC and the Louisiana Department of Health. ■

COVID-19  
VACCINES

**WHO GETS IT NOW?**

**Everyone in Louisiana  
ages 16 and older is  
eligible to get vaccinated  
against COVID-19.**

<http://covidvaccine.la.gov>

LOUISIANA  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

<http://ldh.la.gov/coronavirus>



# ATTENTION LASERS MEMBERS

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR: IMPORTANT BENEFIT PAYMENT

Please note that the following benefit payment dates fall on weekends, which could affect receipt of your funds:

- **Saturday, May 1, 2021**
- **Sunday, August 1, 2021**

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 call us at **225.922.0600** (Baton Rouge) or **800.256.3000** (toll-free). ■

## ATTEND A LASERS SEMINAR VIRTUALLY!

Whether you are a new LASERS member or approaching retirement, our educational seminars provide essential information and tools to help you plan for your retirement. We currently offer two seminars virtually to meet the needs of our members.

**EARLY CAREER SEMINAR:** This two-hour virtual seminar is for LASERS members hired on or after January 1, 2011, but who are *not* within five years of retirement eligibility. This seminar introduces members to LASERS and educates them on membership in a defined benefit retirement plan. We encourage registration for *all new hires* who meet the above requirements, especially those with no previous LASERS service.

Available virtual Early-Career seminar dates include:

- **Wednesday, May 26, 2021**
- **Thursday, June 24, 2021**

**PREP SEMINAR:** This four-hour virtual seminar is for LASERS members who are approaching retirement. This seminar includes information on Social Security and the Office of Group Benefits. It also includes a presentation from Empower Retirement. We encourage registration for any member inquiring about retirement and/or approaching retirement.

Available virtual PREP seminar dates include:

- **Tuesday, June 1, 2021**
- **Wednesday, June 9, 2021**
- **Tuesday, June 29, 2021**

Register by going to [www.lasersonline.org](http://www.lasersonline.org), then click on **Register for a Seminar**. New dates are continually added to our website, so check back often! ■



## New Features in myLASERS!

You can now receive notifications from LASERS straight to your email or phone. To view and adjust your notification settings, log in to your myLASERS account, and click your account icon in the top right, then select **Communication Preferences**. Use the check boxes to change your selections for each category. While you're there, change your annual statement to paperless delivery (*pre-retirement members only*). This helps save the cost of printing and mailing.

Interested in checking the status of an application or form you submitted to LASERS? You can now do that in myLASERS! Click on the **Application Status** menu item to view the new page.

**Electronic Forms (eForms)** will be available in May. It will be as easy as filling out the form, signing, and submitting electronically. No printing, mailing or faxing. Initially, the eForms available will include *Designation of Beneficiary, Request for Retirement Benefits Estimate, Request for First Eligible Letter for Social Security, and Application for Repayment of Refunded Service*. Additional eForms will be available in the near future.

Need to create your myLASERS account? Learn how to create an account by going to [lasersonline.org/myLASERS-info](http://lasersonline.org/myLASERS-info). ■



# BEAM-ME-UP *Your Questions Answered*

**Q: Does LASERS have information on Medicare selection? If so, how can retirees access Medicare information?**



**A:** LASERS encourages active members approaching retirement and retirees insured through the Office of Group Benefits (OGB) to learn more about how Medicare affects their insurance options, as well as how and when to apply for Medicare. As you or your spouse approach the age of 65, we strongly advise you contact OGB to ensure you understand your options. General information is on the *Medicare Information Page* on the Retirees section of the LASERS website. In addition to contacting the Office of Group Benefits, the *Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP)* can provide valuable information on understanding Medicare and available benefits.

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

In an effort to go green, we encourage you to subscribe to receive *The Beam* newsletter via email.

As a subscriber, you will receive *The Beam* directly in your email inbox and no longer receive a paper copy.

Subscribing to the Paperless Beam will reduce paper usage and cut printing cost. [Subscribe to the Paperless Beam now.](#)