

THE BEAM

MEMBERSHIP NEWSLETTER

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

One-Time Supplemental Payment Bill Passed

Governor John Bel Edwards signed **Act 656 (SB 5)** which authorized a **ONE-TIME ONLY** supplemental payment to over 45,000 eligible LASERS retirees and beneficiaries. The legislation, sponsored by LASERS and Senate Retirement Committee Chair Ed Price, was crafted to provide some relief for the average rank-and-file retiree, as a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) had not been granted since 2016.

Specific payment details and eligibility criteria are **on our website**. Please read the information carefully to determine if you meet the eligibility requirements. LASERS will mail a notification letter to members who qualify for the one-time only payment on **August 1**. In addition, notices will be posted to myLASERS accounts. Payments are scheduled to be made no later than **September 15, 2022**.

Please DO NOT call LASERS to find out if you qualify for the one-time only payment. That determination will not be finalized until our eligible retiree list and payment amounts are reviewed and audited by staff. Thank you! ■



(Sitting) Governor John Bel Edwards, (Standing L-R) LASERS Executive Counsel Tina Grant, LASERS Executive Director Cindy Rougeou, Senator Edward Price, RSEA Executive Director Jimmy Anthony, LASERS Board of Trustees Legislative Chair Charles Castille, RSEA President David Thomas, and RSEA Legislative Chair Victor Dennis, Jr.

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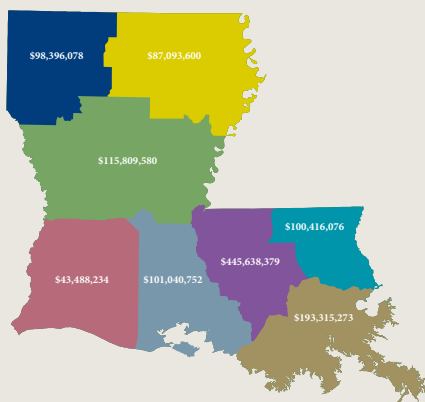


Get the Numbers

Benefits Paid by Region

The *Gross Benefits Paid by Region* publication was recently updated on our website. This chart provides a regional snapshot of benefits paid to retirees during the 2020-2021 fiscal year. The parishes are separated into eight regions: Shreveport, Monroe, Alexandria, Lake Charles, Acadiana, Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and the Northshore. (It does not include DROP, IBO, and lump sum leave payments.)

Check it out at: lasersonline.org/resources/annual-reports/. ■



Investment Performance

Investment performance summaries are updated monthly on our website at lasersonline.org/investments/performance.

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

ATTENTION RETIRED MEMBERS

MARK YOUR CALENDAR: IMPORTANT BENEFIT PAYMENT INFORMATION

Please note that the October 2022 benefit payment date falls on a Saturday which could affect receipt of your funds:
October 1, 2022



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**. ■



RSEA ANNOUNCES 2022 CONFERENCE

RSEA has scheduled its annual Conference for October 11-12, 2022, at the Paragon Casino in Marksville, Louisiana. The conference was canceled the past several years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, so excitement is running high at the opportunity to gather again. More details about registration and the agenda will be posted soon on the RSEA website at RSEALA.org. ■



HAVE QUESTIONS REGARDING MEDICARE?

Counselors with the Louisiana Department of Insurance Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) can assist you with:

- Medicare eligibility
- Preventive Services
- Medicare Savings Program and "Extra Help" on prescriptions

Visit www.ldi.la.gov/SHIIP or call 1.800.259.5300. ■

UPDATE YOUR BANK INFORMATION FOR DIRECT DEPOSIT THROUGH myLASERS

Updating your banking information with us can be done online with just a few simple steps in myLASERS.

1. Go to **myLASERS.org** and log into your account.
2. Find the menu on the left and click on **eForms**.
3. Click on the **Authorization for Direct Deposit** eForm.
4. Complete all required fields.
5. Electronically **sign** the form and **submit** it to LASERS.

Don't have an account? Learn more about myLASERS and get started creating your account at www.lasersonline.org/mylasers-info. ■

ATTENTION ACTIVE MEMBERS


WATCH A RECORDED PREP SEMINAR OR ATTEND A LIVE SESSION ONLINE

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 live virtual seminars 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 members who have no previous LASERS service.

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.

Seminar dates for 2022 are continuously added to our website. Register by going to www.lasersonline.org, and click on 'Register for a Seminar.'

 **Prefer to watch a previous recording of PREP?** A recent recording of a PREP presentation is available on our website at www.lasersonline.org/resources/video-library/. ■

STAY CONNECTED DURING HURRICANE SEASON

Please be aware that LASERS generally follows directives issued by the Governor and/or Division of Administration for weather-related closures. Closure notices are posted on the LASERS website, social media accounts, and sent via Member-Connection email. Our top priority is to make sure benefit payments are issued on time, so Direct Deposit is essential during hurricane season. Contact LASERS if you have any questions. ■

Q. I'M ELIGIBLE TO RETIRE IN A FEW YEARS. CAN I SUBMIT MY VITAL DOCUMENTS NOW?

A. Yes, we encourage you to submit vital documents such as birth certificates, Social Security cards, etc. at any time during your employment. The best way to submit these is through your myLASERS account. Legal documents requiring a raised seal or original stamp must be submitted as a certified copy to LASERS, but you can request the copy be returned to you by completing the form *Request for Return of Legal Documents Submitted to LASERS*, located on the LASERS website. ■



NEW! Cybersecurity & You

If you already receive LASERS Member Connection emails, you may have noticed a new one targeted to cybersecurity. Each month, our IT staff will share the latest helpful tips and information to assist members in keeping their data and devices secure.

If you have not subscribed to LASERS Member Connection, sign up on our website: www.lasersonline.org/media/member-connection/. ■

Dunbar Award Nominations Open

The Louisiana Civil Service League opened nominations for the 2022 Charles E. Dunbar, Jr. Career Service Award in June. This is the 63rd year for the annual program which recognizes the tremendous contributions made to the State of Louisiana by classified employees. Since its inception, more than 800 classified public employees have been honored with this award.

The deadline to receive nominations is Friday, September 23, 2022. For more information about the award and how to submit nominations, view State Civil Service *General Circular Number 2022-021* at https://www.civilservice.louisiana.gov/files/general_circulars/2022/GC2022-021.pdf. ■

LASERS IMPLEMENTS ENTERPRISE RISK MANAGEMENT SYSTEM



Travis McIlwain

LASERS is currently developing an Enterprise Risk Management System, or ERM, that will provide a formal process that identifies, assesses, and prepares for risk that could interfere with LASERS ability to achieve strategic plan goals and objectives. This collaborative process is being led by the LASERS Chief Administrative Officer Travis McIlwain who is currently working with the Executive Team, Division Directors, and staff in implementing this enterprise-wide approach.

“As a public pension system responsible for managing annual benefit payments of \$1.3 billion, investing assets in the amount of \$14 billion, and serving approximately 93,000 members, LASERS encounters risk daily,” said McIlwain. “A mature ERM system provides for a formal process that everyone at LASERS will play a role in the identification and assessment of how to respond to risk.”

McIlwain commented that LASERS cannot seek to eliminate all risks, but the organization will ensure that existing and emerging risks are identified through the ERM process, and managed within acceptable level of risk tolerances. “While LASERS already has a very mature and effective internal audit function that currently provides risk identification,” said McIlwain, “a formal enterprise system, like ERM, will enhance the internal audit function further. This process will allow us to be the most responsive to change.”

Some of the significant values of an ERM process include:

- Encourages and develops a risk-intelligent culture,
- Reduces silos of risk management activity, and
- Supports the successful achievement of the LASERS Strategic Plan. ■

TIPS FROM OGB: BEAT THE HEAT



Louisiana has experienced record-setting temperatures this summer. The Office of Group Benefits (OGB) would like to remind our members of things you can do to beat the heat and prevent heat-related deaths and illnesses.

Heat-related illnesses, like heat exhaustion or heat stroke, happen when the body is not able to properly cool itself. While the body normally cools itself by sweating, during extreme heat, this might not be enough. In these cases, a person's body temperature rises faster than it can cool itself down. This can cause damage to the brain and other vital organs.

Here are ways to avoid heat-related illnesses:

- **Stay Hydrated.** Drink water and avoid sugary beverages.
- **Stay Cool.** Plan outdoor activities for early mornings or evenings, or indoors during mid-day.
- **Dress to Stay Cool.** Wear lightweight, light-colored, and loose-fitting clothes.

Protecting yourself from too much sun exposure goes hand-in-hand with beating the heat. Sun exposure is recommended because it's our primary source for vitamin D, however, moderation is key.

To help prevent UV damage, you should:

1. **Go for the shade.** Avoid or limit sun exposure between 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
2. **Wear protective clothing.** Long sleeve shirts and pants are ideal. Linens and thin cottons are probably the most comfortable fabrics during the warm summer months—as well as a wide-brimmed hat that shades the face, ears, and neck.
3. **Apply broad-spectrum sunscreen.** Generously apply water-resistant sunscreen with an SPF value of at least 15 to shield against sun-induced skin issues. The “broad spectrum” variety protects against ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) rays.
4. **Pick up those stylish sunglasses.** Effective sunglasses should block glare and 99 to 100% of UV rays and have a wraparound shape to protect the eyes from all angles.

I'm Sunburned, Now What?

- Apply a cold compress to the affected area(s),
- Take aspirin or Tylenol immediately to relieve discomfort and inflammation,
- Apply a cooling gel or ointment containing aloe vera,
- Drink plenty of water and avoid alcohol, and
- Avoid further sun exposure until discomfort lessens. ■

THE BOARD MEMO



Judge William Kleinpeter, 2022 Board Chair

CONSIDER JOINING RSEA

If you are one of the 80,000 plus active state employees or retirees reading this article in *The Beam*, I would guess that most of you have heard about RSEA. RSEA was the acronym for the Retired State Employees' Association, but several years ago it simply became

RSEA. The primary reason for this change was the organization's wish to welcome more active state employees as members.

RSEA plays a crucial role for both retired and active state employees. The organization is **YOUR** voice in the Louisiana Legislature and the National Congress on issues relating to retirement and healthcare. Below are a few examples of what they are doing to help us:

- This year, a new law was passed to grant a supplemental one-time only payment to eligible LASERS retirees. This bill was sponsored by LASERS and Senator Ed Price, and supported by RSEA. RSEA staff and members testified before the retirement committees and mobilized members to contact legislators to support this legislation. RSEA played an important part in the passage of this bill.
- Many of our retirees, who have also worked in the private sector sufficient to earn a Social Security benefit, are surprised to learn that the Social Security benefit they expected to receive may be reduced, because of a federal offset law, the Windfall Elimination Provision, (WEP). If you receive a LASERS benefit, any spousal Social Security benefit that you may otherwise be entitled to receive could also be reduced, or even eliminated by the federal Government Pension Offset, (GPO). RSEA is also working on a local and national level, seeking to bring about the elimination of the WEP and GPO. As a member of RSEA, you will get updates on what is happening in Washington on the WEP and GPO. LASERS and RSEA staff work closely together to keep our members informed. The LASERS Board of Trustees consistently supports efforts to repeal or reduce these federal offsets.

I encourage you to support RSEA by becoming an active member or renewing your membership today. There are many reasons to join, and keep in mind that it's a small cost that makes a big impact. There is currently a new member special price of \$9, which you can read about on their website. The regular membership fee is \$19 per year. There are several payment methods available for membership. You can join online at rseala.org or call 877.514.0660. ■



Comments from our Members

“Joey was very professional and courteous, and he answered all my questions.”

Robyn G.

Baton Rouge, LA

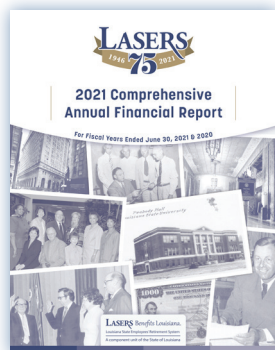
“Adrian went above and beyond. He was well prepared, personable, and answered all questions thoroughly.”

Antoinette L.

Metairie, LA

“Thank you for the form and kindness, Terri. You made me homesick for the good folks in Louisiana.”

Ann W.



LASERS RECOGNIZED BY GFOA

The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) has awarded LASERS a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for our annual comprehensive financial report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2021. This certificate is the highest form of recognition in governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management. This is the twenty-fifth consecutive year that the System has achieved this prestigious award.

Congratulations to LASERS for this important recognition, and especially to the Fiscal and Public Information Divisions for their contributions to the annual report. ■

2022 LEGISLATIVE SESSION RECAP

The 2022 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature ended June 6. Four retirement measures passed, all supported by the LASERS Board of Trustees:

- **Act 656 (SB 5)** by Senator Ed Price provided a **ONE-TIME ONLY** supplemental payment to eligible LASERS retirees and beneficiaries. See page one for details.
- **Act 96 (HB 19)** by Representative DeVillier added employees of the Office of the State Fire Marshal who are Firefighter I certified, and who provide emergency response, or who conduct fire and emergency training, and the director of capitol security and other legislative security officers to the LASERS Hazardous Duty Services Plan.
- **Act 170 (HB 592)** by Representative Zeringue allocated an additional \$21.8 million to LASERS to apply to the balance of the Unfunded Accrued Liability (UAL).
- **HCR 11** by Representative Johnson urges and requests the legislatures of each state of the United States to pass similar resolutions calling upon Congress to

support actions as necessary to review and eliminate the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO).

Six pieces of legislation impacting LASERS failed to make it through the process in this session. Check the LASERS website for a complete list of the retirement bills and action taken on each. ■



MICROSOFT FEATURES LASERS IN CUSTOMER STORY

Microsoft recently recognized LASERS among state and local governments as an organization that lives its customer-centric values by enhancing productivity and security with Microsoft solutions. Our customer story is featured on the Microsoft website, explaining how LASERS sought to accelerate delivery of digital services to members, with a greater focus on cybersecurity and innovation and less on administration.

LASERS utilizes tools such as Microsoft 365 for cloud-based identity and email, Microsoft

Teams for web conferencing and team chat, Microsoft Intune and Microsoft Defender for Endpoint for mobile device management and antivirus which improved visibility and protection against new threats.

The steps taken by LASERS have enhanced member services in several ways. With seamless collaboration in Microsoft Teams, staff work together more easily to solve member challenges and respond to requests faster. Security-enabled hybrid work capabilities help staff stay productive anywhere on behalf of members. Additionally, LASERS Information Technology (IT) team now has more time to focus on adding new features in myLASERS, the online member account management system, and expanding the adoption of cloud solutions that support faster, more reliable services.

Ultimately, LASERS continues to make technology choices that empower staff to support members more effectively. IT Director Johnathon Sprouse said, "Our goal is to make the transition to retirement as easy and seamless as possible for our members. The utilization of Microsoft technologies allows us to quickly onboard new solutions that enhance customer service. Whatever direction we need to go, we find that Microsoft is already there, helping us accelerate the journey."

Read the complete LASERS Customer Story at www.lasersonline.org/microsoft-customer-story. ■



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JOHNATHON SPROUSE
Information Technology Director

FROM THE DESK *of*



Cindy Rougeou, LASERS Executive Director

“ I was amazed to see the dramatic advances LASERS has made... ”

Over the past five years, our LASERS team has worked diligently to expand services to our members. These improvements were the focal point of my annual report to the LASERS

Board of Trustees. Every division at LASERS has worked in tandem to improve existing processes and implement new ideas to meet our agency mission of providing exceptional customer service.

Looking back over the past five years, I was amazed to see the dramatic advances LASERS has made, and I would like to share three of our most significant achievements.

- 1. Virtual Services:** Accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, LASERS implemented virtual member appointments and educational seminars in 2020. These services allow you to meet with a LASERS representative from the comfort of your home. In addition, we offer virtual seminars (see page 3). We are currently evaluating the need for shorter, topic-specific seminars, and will soon begin offering a 1.5-hour seminar on the Deferred Retirement Option Plan, (DROP) vs. the Initial Benefit Option, (IBO). Be on the lookout for email communications on this if you are interested.
- 2. Cybersecurity:** For years, LASERS has been particularly focused on ensuring the protection of your data. Over the past five years, we have significantly expanded the time and resources dedicated to identifying potential threats to our data systems and developing responses to manage possible attacks. While there are no guarantees

against a future hacking attempt, we have confidence in the experience and dedication of our IT team. Their pursuit of innovative measures to provide LASERS with the best in cybersecurity is continuous.

In addition to enhancing our own cybersecurity practices, we also want to assist you in protecting your personal devices and accounts. You may have noticed increased communications from us with helpful cybersecurity tips through monthly Member Connection emails, social media, *The Beam*, and our website.

- 3. myLASERS:** Speaking of cybersecurity, a large part of our enhanced protection of data over the past five years includes the launch of myLASERS. Our new online account management tool requires multi-factor authentication to log in to view your account information. The cross-divisional project was a complete overhaul of the former Member Self-Service site. With myLASERS, members can do more than ever before, such as check the status of applications, upload documents, and submit certain forms electronically. New features are continually added, and we are excited for the future of myLASERS.

I am proud of the progress LASERS has made in expanding services to our members. You have my assurance that we will continue to live our member-focused mission for years to come.

With that, I would like to point out that LASERS will implement new office hours effective Monday, August 1. **Our new hours are 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.** The change to earlier office hours will allow our Customer Service staff to serve more members by increasing the number of appointments per day. See page 8 for more details. ■



LASERS WELCOMES REPRESENTATIVE IVEY TO BOARD

In June, Speaker of the House Clay Schexnayder appointed **Representative Barry Ivey** to serve as an ex officio member of the LASERS Board of Trustees. Rep. Ivey is replacing Rep. Phillip DeVillier on the Board. Rep. Ivey was elected to the House in 2013 and represents District 65. He serves on the House Retirement Committee, in addition to House and Governmental Affairs, House Executive Committee, Legislative Audit Advisory Council, and the House Select Leadership Committee.

“LASERS has worked with Rep. Ivey since he joined the Retirement Committee in 2014,” said Cindy Rougeou. “The Board looks forward to having his support in our efforts to maintain and protect the soundness of the retirement plan to meet the financial needs of our members.”

Rep. Ivey attended Central High School and graduated from Louisiana State University with a B.S. in Finance. *We welcome Rep. Ivey to the Board of Trustees!* ■



NEW OFFICE HOURS

7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Effective August 1

Due to member demand, LASERS new office hours of 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. begins August 1.

The change to earlier office hours will benefit our active and retired members. LASERS Customer Service staff expect to serve more members by increasing the number of appointments per day. The decision to make this change is part of our ongoing commitment to provide exceptional customer service to our members. ■



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