

THE LAE VOICE

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Great Public Schools for Every Louisiana Child

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WELCOME BACK!

August brings the return of lesson plans, school buses, students, and a renewed emphasis on learning for the new school year. As an education professional, you hold a unique place in the lives of Louisiana's school children—remember the powerful role that you play in shaping their futures. Roll up those sleeves and get ready for a rewarding year. LAE leaders wish you success in 2015 and beyond! Welcome back!

ST. MARY PARISH MEMBER TO RECEIVE THE CALIFORNIA CASUALTY AWARD FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

St. Mary Association of Educators member Brandan Trahan has been selected to receive the 2016 California Casualty Award for Teaching Excellence, a prestigious award given to outstanding educators across the nation. Trahan is among 42 public school educators who will be honored in Washington, D.C., on February 12, 2016, at the NEA Foundation's Salute to Excellence in Education Gala. His school, Franklin Junior High School, will receive a \$650 award because of his achievement.

"We honor outstanding educators who truly deserve our recognition and empower them to transform the profession by driving innovation that leads to positive student outcomes," said CEO of the NEA Foundation Harriet Sanford. "Clearly, Mr. Trahan is doing just that.

Trahan has been invited to participate in the Global Learning Fellowship, an extensive, year-long professional development opportunity to cultivate

the global competence skills educators use to improve their practice and prepare students to thrive in a rapidly changing world. Fellows contribute to the advancement of the profession by creating global lesson plans that are shared with educators on open source platforms.

"Our participants in the fellowship receive high-caliber professional development opportunities that benefit their students, colleagues, and school systems," Sanford said. "We are thrilled that California Casualty has joined us to pay tribute to these outstanding educators, and we are excited to have a phenomenal educator like Brandan take part in this one-of-a-kind initiative."

The LAE nominated Trahan after he received the LAE's coveted *Teacher Image Award* at the Representative Assembly this past spring.

Congrats, Brandan! Your colleagues are very proud.





FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Debbie Meaux, President

I'm happy to report that this past summer, the LAE was successful in its efforts to advance a positive, pro-public education agenda. We have been deeply involved in the debate surrounding COMPASS and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). We have also helped convince the Louisiana School Accountability Commission to delay the impact of value-added scores until the 2016-17 school year. A full review of the CCSS is now in progress, something for which many have advocated since the standards were forced upon us. With the many changes coming to the curriculum and testing, I believe that we can make

a case to further delay implementation of value-added or do away with it altogether.

During the 2015 Legislative Session, we worked with other labor groups to successfully defeat an attempt by the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry to deprive our members of the professional voice afforded to them through their LAE membership. Another victory this session was the continuation of MFP funding increases that will allow teacher pay increases to continue. The LAE continued its advocacy efforts for additional increases for pay raises

for Louisiana's dedicated support professionals, who also play an integral role in every child's school day. The recognition of the value of all Louisiana school employees, both certified and non-certified, is long overdue!

In the coming year, I hope to see many new faces of members who have made a commitment to become more involved in the association. We cannot continue our fight for strong public schools if we don't have the support of each and every one of you. I pledge my commitment to you and your colleagues to make your professional association the strongest it can be. I hope you will do the same.

Thank you for all that you do, not only for your profession and your school, but most importantly, for Louisiana's students. Have a great school year—let's make it the best yet!

In Solidarity,
Debbie Meaux
LAE President

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Go to lae.org and sign in to the Members Only portion of the LAE website. Once you are logged in, click the slide that says "Sign up for eDues payments. Click on the link that says, "CLICK HERE" to be routed to the site to begin your dues payment change.



Enter your LAE Member ID number and home ZIP code, click "Next," then apply any needed updates to your contact information page. Click "Next."



Select the payment method of your choosing and continue with the enrollment process, as directed. Read and agree to the Terms of Use by first clicking the box next to "I agree" and then the "Confirm" button. You will soon receive an email confirming your payment switch. Don't forget to cancel your LAE payroll deduction with your school board payroll department.

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2015 LOUISIANA LEGISLATIVE SESSION RECAP



LAE members Judy McShan and Diane Vickers learn about legislation from LAE Lobbyist Tom Tate.

The LAE Lobby Team saw many ups and downs during the Louisiana's 43rd Legislative Session, but we are happy to report several valuable accomplishments from this year's annual meeting. Lawmakers reached a consensus on the state's operating budget just before the gavel fell to officially end the session, raising roughly 720 million dollars in new revenue for next year to offset shortfalls; however,

the budget is full of one-time fixes and pull-backs on wealthy corporate tax subsidies which will sunset in one to three years. Some of the revenue-raising measures passed include raising the cigarette tax by 50 cents per pack, increasing vehicle title transfer fees, forcing retailers to collect sales taxes on internet purchases, placing restrictions on the film tax credit program, a partial repeal of the inventory tax credit, and passage of the controversial *Student Assessment for a Valuable Education (SAVE) Fund*. The SAVE Fund is a scheme designed to allow higher education institutions to charge a new student fee, only to turn around and receive a tax credit from the state to cover the fee. Some lawmakers expressed discontent for the measure, referring to it as a "sophisticated money laundering scheme."

Representatives cut a deal with senators to fully fund the state's public school funding mechanism, the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP). The senate used the MFP to garner votes for the SAVE Fund on the last day of session. The total increase to the public school funding formula will be 85 million dollars. In an unexpected move, the Senate Education Committee had previously deferred the MFP resolution, HCR 18, but in the remaining hours of the session, a conference committee worked out the details by adding originally requested funds. Forty-million dollars will go toward expected student enrollment growth; 36 million will go toward a 1.375 percent increase in the base-per-pupil amount; and eight million dollars will go toward new spending for high-cost services for students with disabilities and those taking dual enrollment college and career education classes. The LAE was pleased with the legislature's decision to provide an increase in the MFP as it is greatly needed in order to sustain basic funding for vital K-12 public education services.

COMMON CORE COMPROMISE ENACTED

Three bills dealing with issues surrounding the Common Core State Standards passed the legislature with little to no opposition. Representative Brett Geymann's proposal (HB 373) will...

- 1.) require BESE to hold public hearings in all six congressional districts to allow citizen input;
- 2.) allow the Senate and House Education Committees to review changes by March 4, 2016 in order to vote to accept or reject all of the changes; and
- 3.) give future governors the right to veto the plan in its entirety.

Senator Conrad Appel's proposal (SB 43) will dictate how BESE will comply with the Administrative Procedures Act as it relates to the Common Core review process, and Representative John Schroder's proposal (HB 542) addresses how students are tested under the new standards. One area that wasn't addressed during the session was establishing a hold-harmless period for students, teachers, schools, and school districts during the transition. It is anticipated that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will tackle this issue soon.

"PAYROLL PROTECTION ACT" REMAINS IDLE

Year after year—for the past four years—the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry has led an effort to silence the voices of Louisiana's educators. Year after year, the attempt fails; 2015 was no exception. The group sponsored the proposal to ban public sector union members from having their dues deducted automatically from their paychecks. This convenience, afforded to



Members Kelly McAullife and Johnell Celestine prepare to testify against HB 418 at LAE's 2015 Lobby Day.

Louisiana's already-over-worked public servants, is neither a special privilege nor a burden on taxpayers. The service is practically costless and available to credit unions, insurance companies, charitable organizations, and other recognized vendors—in fact, union dues deduction is only one of hundreds of payments that employees can choose to have deducted from their paychecks. The legislation would have created obstacles for workers to join and maintain membership

in the professional organization of their choice. Discouraging a Louisiana citizen from partaking in this freedom of association is a direct attack on their constitutional rights. Lawmakers heard workers loud and clear—the debate on the legislation was delayed mid-session and never brought up again. Louisiana’s public sector unions could not have been successful in the defeat of this divisive legislation without YOUR help! Thanks for the time YOU took out of your personal schedule to make calls, send emails, and pay visits to legislators to let them know that this bill was nothing more than an attack on Louisiana’s hard-working public servants. We truly appreciate your efforts!

BANNING SUSPENSIONS FOR STUDENTS IN K-3 FOCUS CHANGES



Members of the Monroe City Association of Educators join the LAE for the Educator Appreciation Day celebration.

Senator Sharon Broome’s proposal (SB 54) to prohibit out-of-school suspensions and expulsions for Louisiana’s youngest public school students passed the legislature after receiving a major

revamp. The original measure proposed banning suspensions and expulsions for students in third grade and younger. The legislation suggested such replacement disciplinary actions as loss of privileges, referral to a school counselor/social worker, and/or sabbaticals. Current rules allow these students to be sent home for willful disobedience, intentional disrespect toward educators, profane language, carrying firearms, bullying, or school disturbances. The LAE opposed the legislation in its original posture because it would have drastically affected a principal’s ability to suspend a student who has a history of disrupting the classroom learning of others. The LAE supports the revamped version of the bill which only bans school authorities from handing down out-of-school suspensions for most school uniform violations for students in Pre-K through fifth grade.

GOVERNOR VETOS COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT; RETIREE RETURN-TO-WORK PROPOSAL GAINS FULL APPROVAL; SUBSTITUTE WAGE INCREASE PROPOSAL DEFEATED

Governor Jindal vetoed a cost-of-living adjustment that would have given a 1.5 percent COLA to retirees having received a benefit for at least one year. Lawmakers approved HB 42, Representative Sam Jones’ COLA Bill, just minutes before the end of the session, but the governor had other plans for the legislation when it hit his desk.

Lawmakers approved Senator Gerald Long’s measure to expand the pool of TRSL retirees eligible to return to work in a teaching position. The measure also allows retired school counselors, school social workers, and educational diagnosticians to return to work in critical shortage areas.

Legislators defeated a bill that would have increased the percentage of wages a retired teacher could earn while substituting. House Bill 43, sponsored by Representative Bernard Lebas, would have increased the salary cap that a TRSL



Members of the Monroe City Association of Educators join LAE leaders for the association’s annual Educator Appreciation Day celebration.

member who returns to work as a substitute teacher can receive from 25 to 50 percent, while still allowing the retired worker to receive his/her full retirement benefit. Under current law, school districts are struggling to hire qualified substitute teachers to cover for regular teachers on medical sabbaticals or extended sick leave. In many cases, the current salary cap prevents retired teachers from returning to the classroom for more than 40 days within the school year when the district needs them for at least 90 days to cover the period of extended leave. The Senate Retirement Committee ultimately denied the proposal due to increased actuarial costs.

TEACHER EVALUATION BILL SHELVED DURING SESSION

SB 32, a bill which would have lessened the impact that ineffective value-added model (VAM) ratings have on classroom observations and student growth aspects of the COMPASS evaluation didn’t make it out of committee this session. The proposal, brought forth by Senator Fred Mills, would have reduced the percentage of the VAM score on teacher evaluations from 50 to 25 percent. Senators saw little need to act upon the proposal due to the current suspension of VAM. The LAE, LASPA, and several school district superintendents worked with Senator Mills to author the legislation.



The LAE crew at Educator Appreciation Day.



LAE MEMBERS TAKE CENTER STAGE AT THE CAPITOL DURING EDUCATOR APPRECIATION DAY

The LAE celebrated Educator Appreciation Day at the Louisiana Capitol on Monday, June 1, 2105. Members joined the LAE Lobby Team and LAE staff to enjoy popcorn and drinks in honor of Louisiana’s public school workers. Those who attended took part in the legislative process by listening to bill debates. Several members in attendance met with their state representatives and senators to discuss pressing public school issues.

Patricia Colbert-Cormier, Regina Bourgeois, and Barbara Woods volunteer at LAE’s Educator Appreciation Day at the Louisiana Capitol.

LAE ANNOUNCES JOHN BEL EDWARDS AS TOP PICK FOR LOUISIANA’S NEXT GOVERNOR



The LAE Fund for Children & Public Education (LAE-FCPE), the political action committee for the Louisiana Association of Educators, endorsed Mr. John Bel Edwards for the 2015 race for Louisiana Governor.

“This is an extremely important election, and members of the LAE-FCPE took this process very seriously,” said Meaux.

“The future of Louisiana relies on the policies enacted by the individual who is elected to this office. There is no doubt that Mr. Edwards is the man for the job!”

Edwards expressed his appreciation to association members at the 2015 LAE Representative Assembly.

“I am proud to accept the support of educators and school employees,” Edwards said. “Together, we will be able to promote policies that truly prioritize our students. Better days are ahead!”

The LAE gave each candidate vying for Louisiana’s 2015 race for governor an opportunity to complete a survey probing their views on such K-12 education issues as public school funding, standardized testing, teacher evaluations, charter schools, and teachers’ retirement. The candidates were invited to a special interview hosted by the members of the LAE-FCPE this spring to expand upon their survey answers, as well as their campaign platforms. Edwards joined the group and outlined his gubernatorial K-12 education platform, which includes enhancing and protecting local control over K-12 public schools so local taxpayers and school boards can oversee the important decisions that impact the success of their students; establishing Louisiana-centric education standards and

curriculum with reliable measurements of student, educator, and school success; ending the overreliance on standardized testing; and creating a budget that fully funds the cost of K-12 public education.

Meaux said it was this—combined with Edwards’ past legislative successes in the K-12 public education sector—that put him ahead of the other candidates. Edwards’ successes include his 2011 fight to improve the process for auditing schools in academic crisis; his 2012 battle against Governor Jindal’s controversial education “reforms” that diverted critical public school funding to private and for-profit, out-of-state entities; and his 2013 push to allow parents of special needs students to make the final call on whether their children should participate in standardized tests. Edwards also spearheaded the 2013 charge to alter the state’s proposed operating budget to include an increase in Louisiana’s public school funding (the first in five years) with 50 percent of the increase going toward educator pay raises.

“Mr. Edwards is the real deal—a graduate of West Point, army veteran, loyal family man, and pillar of his church,” said Meaux. “There is much to be done, and we truly believe that he is the best individual to take on this monumental task.”

Early voting begins October 10, 2015 and runs through October 17, 2015. Primary elections are on October 24, 2015. LAE leaders encourage you to vote in this very important election!



LAE HOSTS ANNUAL REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY IN BATON ROUGE

Nearly 100 LAE representatives from across the state descended upon Baton Rouge for the 2015 LAE Representative Assembly. Highlights from this year's annual member meeting included two days worth of discussion surrounding association business, a dynamic address by President Debbie Meaux, and the endorsement of John Bel Edwards for Governor of Louisiana.

Event attendees took time to honor several talented individuals with the prestigious *LAE Image Awards*. St. Mary Parish junior high school teacher Brandan Trahan walked away with the coveted *LAE Teacher Image Award*. East Baton Rouge Parish ancillary Katina Givens-Thompson took home

the *LAE Ancillary Personnel Image Award*. Lafayette teacher and civil rights activist Patricia Colbert-Cormier received the *LAE Human and Civil Rights Trailblazer Award*. Lafayette Parish Association of Educators President Rodolfo Espinoza walked away with the *2015 LAE President's Award*. The delegates also recognized two state union leaders—Louisiana AFLCIO Executive Director Louis Rene and Professional Firefighters Association of Louisiana President Chad Majors—for their commitment to solidarity. These two leaders stood strong alongside the LAE and other education organizations to fight harmful legislation during the 2014 session.

Thank you to all who attended!



The LAE honors Katina Givens-Thompson with the 2015 Ancillary Image Award.



Lafayette Parish teacher Patricia Colbert-Cormier is named LAE's 2015 Human and Civil Rights Award Winner.



St. Mary Parish teacher Brandan Trahan receives LAE's 2015 Teacher Image Award.



LAE delegates take care of business at the 2015 LAE Representative Assembly.



President Meaux addresses the 2015 RA delegates.

LAE MEMBERS UNITE, INSPIRE, AND LEAD AT THE 2015 NEA REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY



Louisiana delegates attend the 2015 NEA Representative Assembly in Orlando, FL.

LAE representatives were among the 7,000 educators from all 50 states who gathered in Orlando, Florida, this summer to attend the NEA's 94th Representative Assembly (RA)—the top decision-making body for the nearly three-million-member association. Embracing the meeting's theme, *NEA: Unite. Inspire. Lead.*, Louisiana delegates joined their colleagues to tackle issues with far-reaching implications for the profession. Delegates passed two high-profile new business items (NBIs) addressing the importance of focusing on shared responsibility for our educational systems across the nation.

Delegates also approved an NBI that addresses issues of institutional racism. The measure calls for a coalition of partners to work together to eradicate policies that perpetuate institutional racism in education and expand

educator-led professional development in areas of cultural competence, diversity, and social justice.

The indispensable role educators play in forging progress on these fronts was a recurring theme in many of the speeches delivered at the RA.

“Whatever journey brought you to this room, your hearts are wrapped around your students. From the very beginning, our mission has never changed: we wake up every day set on doing whatever we can to ensure that our students have every opportunity to learn, to grow, to succeed,” said NEA President Lily Eskelsen García.

In her keynote address, García congratulated educators everywhere for their relentless advocacy in helping shape a better Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

“A minor miracle occurred because of you. We demanded an end to the toxic testing produced by AYP that limits what it means to teach and what it means to learn to what fits on a standardized test. We told our senators to replace the failed, one-size-fits-all bubble sheet with a dashboard of multiple indicators of success, and they listened,” García said.

Next year's assembly will be held in Washington, D.C., from July 1–6, 2016. For photos and additional highlights from the 2015 meeting, go to ra.nea.org.

ATTENTION: LAE BOARD VACANCIES

The LAE Board of Directors is composed of association leaders who are active education employees and who have been elected by their peers to act for the association in between meetings of the Representative Assembly. You must be a member for at least three years to be eligible to apply for one of the vacant seats listed below:

First Associational District, Seat C: Allen, Beauregard, Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Claiborne, Desoto, Jackson, Jeff Davis, Lincoln, Natchitoches, Red River, Sabine, Union, Vernon, and Webster

Fourth Associational District, Seat C: Baker, City of Bogalusa, East Baton Rouge, Livingston, Tangipahoa, Washington, Zachary, LSD, and SSR Central

Sixth Associational District, Seat C: Jefferson, Lafourche, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. John, St. Mary, St. Tammany, and Terrebonne

If you are interested in applying, please send your letter of intent and resume to Laurie Guillot at lguillot@lae.org by August 20, 2015. The next LAE Board meeting is scheduled for August 22, 2015, and the seats will be appointed at this meeting.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

August 22
LAE Board
Meeting

September 5
Committee
Day

October 31
LAE Board
Meeting

August 20
Deadline to apply
for LAE Board
of Directors

September 7
Labor
Day*

October 16-17
Executive
Committee

* LAE Headquarters
Closed