



THE LAE VOICE

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE LOUISIANA ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATORS

Great Public Schools for Every Louisiana Child

Volume 12, No. 2 February 2016

JOHN BEL EDWARDS SWORN IN AS LOUISIANA'S 56TH GOVERNOR; LAE MEMBERS PARTAKE IN INAUGURATION DAY FESTIVITIES



On January 11, 2016, LAE leaders and member activists took part in a significant moment in Louisiana's history when they attended the inauguration ceremony for the state's 56th Governor, the honorable John Bel Edwards. Nearly 50 members gathered in Baton Rouge and loaded buses led by a state police escort to attend the swearing-in of Governor Edwards. Thousands of Louisianans assembled at the state capitol to take in the festivities on the crisp, sunny January day.

In his speech, Governor Edwards called upon Louisiana citizens and members of the legislature to work together to embark on the hard work ahead.

"Now is the time for full participation. I'm calling on the legislature to work with me and pass sound solutions; and I'm calling on the people of Louisiana to constructively engage and share your thoughts and ideas. It will be hard work, and yes, it will take sacrifice, but it can be done and it must be done," Edwards said.

"You can expect the unvarnished truth from this administration regarding the challenges we face, the solutions we propose,

and the opportunities we seek. The breeze of hope that got us here today will also drive a current of change as mighty as the Mississippi, but this river can't flow unless the breeze continues. We must put action before idleness, unity before party, and citizenship before self, in order to put Louisiana first."

LAE members wrapped up the day's festivities by attending a ball in honor of Governor Edwards. Dressed in their finest, those in attendance took the opportunity to network with state dignitaries and local officials. Many said the day's events left them with a sense of encouragement.

"I am so proud to be a part of an organization that provides me with opportunities like this," said St. Mary Association of Educators President Sherry Thompson. "I enjoyed getting to spend time with fellow LAE colleagues and others who truly have the drive to make a difference for the educators, schools, and students of Louisiana."



A Louisiana State Police motorcade prepares to lead LAE members to the Louisiana State Capitol.



LAE's past presidents Joyce Haynes and Carol Davis attend the inauguration ceremony with retired member Roy LaFleur.



Lafayette Association of Educators President Rodolfo Espinoza and his wife Kathleen join LAE staff members Charlotte Frattini and Kenton Cooper at the inauguration ceremony.



LAE members gather in Baton Rouge to attend Louisiana's 56th Gubernatorial Inauguration.



Gov. Edwards' family joins him on stage as he addresses the attendees at the inaugural ball.



Sherry Thompson and Brandon Trahan, president and vice president of the St. Mary Association of Educators, attend the inaugural ball.



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Debbie Meaux, President

Over the next few months, I will once again visit several cities across the state asking education employees, parents, and community members one question: What immediate actions need to be taken in order to ensure that every Louisiana community has the public schools it deserves?

These travels are part of the NEA's nationwide *Ask an Educator* campaign, where I, along with other state presidents and NEA President Lily Eskelsen-Garcia, visit with public school employees in an effort to foster discussions among educators and community members.

Last year, I visited Ouachita, Jeff Davis, and Vermilion parishes, where I made stops at several public schools and spent time with parents and other community leaders. In my discussions, I heard a number of concerns — everything from pay issues to dissatisfaction with class sizes to concerns about too little preparation and too few resources allocated to getting students ready for the PARCC tests. I spoke with educators

about the redundancy in required training for certified, university-trained Pre-K teachers. I also heard about the dire need for smaller class sizes and the importance of having paraprofessionals in elementary school classrooms. I heard stories of how support professionals were living with below-poverty wages and dealing with a lack of materials needed to perform their jobs. I learned more about how schools are understaffed, causing custodians to have to do more than their fair share of the work needed to maintain safe and sanitary facilities. A major concern for many employees, both certified and uncertified, was keeping our schools violence free. I brought these concerns to Superintendent John White and other BESE members who promised to take a look at these problems in order to determine what actions are needed to alleviate the stresses caused by these issues.

The LAE also used the feedback gathered from the listening tour discussions to inform the association's agenda for the 2015 Legislative Session; we plan to do

the same with any insights gathered from this year's travels.

As the 2016 Louisiana Legislative Session approaches, I hope you will watch your email closely—as well as your local, state, and national publications—for any call-to-action alerts asking you to contact your legislators and congressional representatives. Though we now have a friendly face in the Louisiana Governor's Mansion, LAE must still fight to bring much needed changes in education practice and policy as we face a reform-friendly BESE and legislature. LAE is in the process of putting together legislation surrounding changes to teacher evaluations, due process, and charter school transparency and accountability.

There is truly power in numbers. Legislators, members of the BESE, and other advisory committee members do listen when large numbers of public school employees unite to carry a single message. Never doubt our power to influence our own fate, especially now that we have a governor who values the opinions of educators.

Once again, I thank you for your commitment to Louisiana's children. I look forward to working with you in the coming months as we continue our advocacy efforts for our public schools, teachers, support professionals, and students. Stay motivated and strong! Your hard work does not go unnoticed!

In Solidarity,
President Meaux

A NEW DAY, A NEW GOVERNOR: WHAT TO EXPECT IN 2016

By: LAE Legislative & Political Director Shane Riddle

As we begin 2016, it is very evident that the Louisiana political environment has recently experienced a significant shake-up. U.S. Senator David Vitter's loss to Louisiana Representative John Bel Edwards in the governor's race set major changes into motion. For the first time in a long time, Louisiana will be led by a democrat. The LAE was intricately involved in the effort to elect John Bel Edwards, but that's not to say it's going to be a walk in the park for the next four years. Even though the governor has an enormous amount of power to wield, the current structure of the legislature will present major challenges to the new administration. There is much work to be done and we need our troops – LAE members – on board now, more than ever before, to move us to a more promising future.

LAE leaders, lobbyists, and member activists have been extremely successful in developing solid, bipartisan relationships with members of both parties in both chambers of the legislature. We must continue to nurture these relationships – in addition to establishing new ones – with legislative leaders who truly stand to help us promote pro-teacher, pro-student, pro-public education initiatives. This task will be crucial in order to face the daunting challenges ahead in the 2016 Legislative Session. In our hands, we hold the power to create positive change in the educational environments of all K-12 public school students. We must focus on strengthening our organization by being the bold voice of the public school employee. We need more members joining us in support of this cause. We must also continue our focus of building stronger bonds with parents, community organizations, and other labor organizations who believe in the value of public education.

Since 2008, the Jindal administration forwarded an aggressive education agenda that favored vouchers and other alternatives to public education while shackling public schools with more testing, not to mention a department of education that asserts control over local school systems and weakens the working conditions of our committed teachers and other dedicated school employees.

While the Jindal era proved challenging, the LAE was able to thwart many of the measures that would have been crippling to public schools. We fought for and prevailed in the case ruling vouchers unconstitutional. We were key players in calling for a comprehensive review of the Common Core State Standards. We had seats at the table and voiced your concerns to a committee of educators reviewing the validity and reliability of the flawed teacher evaluation system and the "value-added" model. We lobbied lawmakers to implement and preserve education funding increases through the Minimum Foundation Program – a rise that contributed to increasing teacher salaries and benefits. We always have and continue to advocate for support professional pay increases. Teachers are now given fairer due process for disciplinary and dismissal hearings. None of these efforts would have been successful if not for the hard work of LAE leaders and member activists.

This year will be paramount compared to years past. The state faces a \$750 million shortfall in the current year and a \$1.9 billion shortfall predicted for fiscal year of 2017. We can expect the powerful forces of corporate reform to continue an all-out assault on public education, which will most likely include continued efforts to take away our right to deduct our association dues directly from our paychecks, as well as attempts to gut public employee pensions in order to balance the state's deficit.

Governor Edwards recently called a special session in order to address the massive budget woes left behind by the Jindal Administration. A recent report released by the governor's budget transition team made it very clear that the state can no longer cut its way out of the current fiscal crisis. The report presents options for reforming several parts of the state's tax and fiscal structure to decrease its complexity, taxpayer inequities, and the inability of the governor and the legislature to effectively respond to financial downturns. Just a week after taking office, Governor Edwards outlined the following solutions for stabilizing Louisiana's budget: 1.) utilize the state's Rainy Day Fund; 2.) redirect non-coastal dollars from the first year of BP oil spill payments to the state; 3.) cut at least 10 percent from \$1.6 billion in discretionary state funds that are dedicated to certain uses in statute, but not constitutionally protected; and 4.) add an additional one-cent to the existing four-cent state sales tax, excluding the purchase of groceries, prescription drugs, and residential utilities. Options to shore up the budget shortfall for the fiscal year of 2017 include changes to the income tax brackets in Louisiana, cuts in the percentage of federal excess itemized deductions Louisiana taxpayers can deduct on their state tax returns, and a proposed constitutional amendment to eliminate the deduction for federal income taxes paid in exchange for lowering individual and corporate tax rates. Other options include raising the tobacco tax to \$1.08 per pack of cigarettes, reducing tax credits, and other changes to the way corporations and businesses are taxed. In addition, Governor Edwards has directed each member of his cabinet to submit proposals for budget reductions based on a minimum 10 percent reduction, as well as a budget that would reflect the current financial conditions without additional revenue.

LAE's legislative agenda for the upcoming 2016 Legislative Session will focus on increasing accountability and transparency for charter schools, improving the teacher evaluation system (Act 54), cleaning up language on due process disciplinary hearing procedures, continued advocacy for high learning standards developed by Louisiana teachers, and working to sustain salary increases for teachers and education support professionals. The LAE Legislative Committee will work to prepare draft LAE policy priorities for presentation to the LAE Board of Trustees. Please stay tuned for updates on these and all of LAE's upcoming initiatives at lae.org.

THIS IS YOUR OFFICIAL NOTICE REGARDING VOTING IN LAE'S ELECTIONS

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ONLINE VOTING PROCEDURES AND REQUESTS FOR PAPER BALLOTS

Please let the candidate information provided within this newsletter serve as reference when voting in LAE's 2016 online elections. Our neutral, Election-America, will send elections notifications to those LAE members who've provided a valid email address to the LAE. To update this information, contact the LAE Membership Department at 1-800-256-4523, ext. 101.



Election-America
In the business of perfection

banner on the home page. Simply click the banner to be taken directly to the elections portal. You'll need your LAE member ID number on hand in order to log in to access your ballot -- this number can be found on your LAE Membership Card or above your name in the mailing address section of this newsletter. In addition to your member number, you will also need to enter the last four digits of your social security number.

The elections portal will open March 10 and run through March 31, 2016. During that period, online voting will be available 24-7. You can expect to receive an email to your personal email address notifying you when the online election portal is open. This email will provide you with a link to the elections website site, along with your LAE member ID that you need to access your online ballot. To avoid any confusion, you may want to make sure you're able to accept emails from Election-America.com. If you do not receive this email, please be sure to visit lae.org between March 10 and 31 and look for the LAE Elections

PROCESS FOR COLLECTING A PAPER BALLOT

Voting will be by online ballot method. For any member who would prefer to receive a paper ballot, you can request that one be mailed to you by contacting the neutral via help+LAE@election-america.com or 1-866-384-9978. This request must be made before Monday, March 7, 2016. You will need to have your LAE member number on hand for voter verification purposes. Again, this number can be found on your membership card or in the address section of this newsletter.

CANDIDATES FOR 2016 LAE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

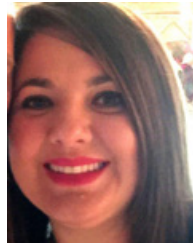
THIRD ASSOCIATIONAL DISTRICT, SEAT C

1. Mark Hayes



I have been a Louisiana public school educator for 29 years. I have served in many capacities in the association including the last three years as your LAE Board of Directors for Region 3. I am asking for your support to be reelected to this position.

2. Suzanne Breaux



I am a teacher in Vermilion Parish and have been teaching for 14 years. I have served in various positions and am currently president of my local. I have attended RAs for both my local and state and would be honored to serve on the LAE Board of Directors.

3. Donna Wilridge



I am an elementary teacher in Acadia Parish. I am currently president of Acadia Association of Educators. Last year I served on the Budget Committee for LAE. I have represented my local at state and national Representative Assemblies. I would be pleased to represent the Third Associational District- Seat C.

4. Alishia Vallien



My name is Alishia Vallien. I am seeking a seat on the Board of Directors and would appreciate your vote. I have been an active member of LAE for about 16 years. I have a master's degree in Educational Leadership. I am a member of Saint Landry Association of Educators.

FIFTH ASSOCIATIONAL DISTRICT, SEAT A

1. DeLisa Washington



- Elementary School Counselor
- 26 years of active service
- 9 years on District 5 Board of Directors
- LPAE Executive Board Member
- LAE/NEA Convention Delegate
- LAE Ancillary Image Award Recipient

Dedicated and committed to continuing to serve and be an advocate for all members.

2. Cammie Maturin



My name is Cammie Maturin. I have been teaching for the past 10 years. I currently teach Physical Education at Magnolia Elementary in New Iberia, LA. I have been an active member of LAE and currently serve as President of the local chapter in New Iberia.

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EDUCATION SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL, SEAT A

1. Gwendolyn Hill



I am Gwendolyn Hill, and I am running for Education Support Professional. I have over 20 years' experience working with students. I take great pride in my work. I am honest, dependable, dedicated, and extremely hardworking. I am active and resourceful. Also, I am the secretary for my local.

2. Dona Festervan



- Member of Caddo Association of Educators over 20 year
- Member of LAE for over 20 years
- Serve on the Executive Broad of CAE
- LAE delegate to the state convention
- CAE delegate to the NEA convention
- Special Ed Inclusion Para for over 20 years

CANDIDATES FOR 2016 NEA DELEGATE/SUCCESSOR DELEGATE

Please note: The biographies contained were not edited for content nor grammatical or spelling corrections. LAE reserves the right to alter the format of the submissions. If the candidate submitted a biography longer than 50 words, it is indicated with "..."

NEA DELEGATE ELECTION – CHOOSE 12

1. Carol McLaughlin



I am asking for your vote to be a delegate for the NEA. I want to continue being a voice for ESP's Thank you!

2. Ruthie Wright



My Fellow LAE Members;
I have served you at the local and state level for over 30 years. The National level for 6 yrs. I am asking for your vote as a NEA Delegate to continue to represent you.
Thank you,
Ruthie Wright

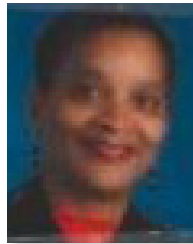
3. Lenora Austin



PHOTO
NOT
AVAILABLE

I am Lenora Austin. I have been teaching for 38 years and a LAE member most of those years. I am currently the treasurer of my local and have served as the chairperson for the state elections committee as well as having been on an advisory committee with NEA.

4. Shelia Washington



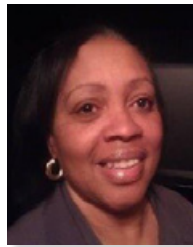
I'm Shelia Washington a Para Educator with 31 years experience in Public Education. At the local level I'm on the Executive Board. Many years I've worked hard to represent your interests and voice your concerns at the National Level. Please let me be your voice again. Vote For Me!!

5. Sarah Scott



I am Sarah Scott, a kindergarten teacher at Denham Springs Elementary. I stand tall and proud as an NEA/LAE member for 48 years. I serve as the Membership Chairperson of my local. Please vote for me to represent you as a delegate at the 2016 NEA Convention. Thank you.

6. Shenerria Houston



LAE STRONG ALWAYS! My name is Shenerria Houston and I am asking for your support to become an NEA State Delegate. I have been a Special Educator for 20 years. My local Chapter is The Baker Association of Educators, where I am an active ASSOCIATION ADDICT!!

7. Kimberly Domangue



****Allow Me To Represent You As NEA Delegate****
•Teacher: First Grade ESL/ELL, Kindergarten And Second Grades (Homeroom)
•Delegate: NEA RA (Two Years)
•Representative: District 5, Seat C LAE Board Of Directors
•Representative: LPAE Executive Board
•Cadre Member, NEA ESL/ELL PD
•Member/Presenter, LAE ELL/ESL PD
•Family Of Professional Educators (Teaching Is In My Dna!)

8. Donald Fontenot



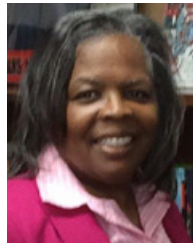
I am a teacher working as an Educational Diagnostician in Calcasieu Parish and have been an LAE member for over 37 years. I have represented Louisiana before at the NEA. I have been active and vocal at LAE and NEA. Please allow me to represent you this summer.

9. Nancy Gingras



I am a Special Education Teacher at Alexandria Senior High. During my 35 years of teaching I have served the members of LAE in many roles including: Building Representative, Local President, LAE Board of Directors, LAE Executive Committee, NEA Board of Directors Alternate, and numerous local, state and national committees.

10. Anita Green



I am Anita H. Green, Librarian at Greenville Superintendent Academy. I am a strong advocate for Public Education. Currently serve on the EBRPAE Board as well as Vice President of EBRPAE. I am asking for your vote to attend the NEA RA as a State Delegate.

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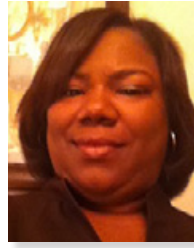
NEA DELEGATE ELECTION (CONTINUED)

11. Linda Jones



- *Reside Abbeville, La.
- *Employed Vermilion Parish School Board
- *Past employment Vermilion Truancy Assessment Center
- *Current- Eaton Park Elementary – bookkeeper
- *Association Rep – Eaton Park Elementary

12. LaMonica Jones



13. Karen Richardson



I am a SPED teacher in Vermilion Parish. I have served in various positions and am currently treasurer of my local. I proudly serve on the LAE Board of Directors. I've attended RAs for both my local and state and would be honored to represent you at this year's RA.

14. Cyndy Rutherford



While serving as a member of the NEA for over 30 years, I've had the opportunity to hold positions on the executive board for EBRPAE, and assist on numerous committees while attending the NEA-RA. A vote for me will assure that you have quality representation at the Representative Assembly!

15. Lisa Hayes



My name is Lisa Hayes. I have been an educator in Livingston Parish for over twenty years. By attending the RA conference in Washington D.C., bringing back new and innovative ideas to assist my colleagues. Not only would my fellow teachers benefit, but paraprofessionals, parents, and service providers from my attendance.

16. Tia Mills



As a state delegate, I've served as Treasurer and chaired the Legislative Committee. Currently, I've served as Caucus Secretary, member of the NEA Resolutions Committee, and on the New Business Item Committee. With your support and vote, I can continue my efforts and enforce the best interests of the membership.

17. Gwendolyn Hill



I am Gwendolyn Hill, and I am running for state delegate. I have over 20 years' experience working with students in elementary schools. I take great pride in my work and am honest, dependable, dedicated, and extremely hard-working. I am very resourceful at finding effective new ways to accomplish goals.

18. Diane Vickers



I am Diane Vickers and I am asking for your vote in my election as a delegate to the 2016 NEA RA. I am a proven leader, a professional educator, and active on the local, state, and national level in NEA. A vote for me, is a voice for you.

NEA ADMINISTRATOR DELEGATES – CHOOSE ONE

1. Candace Robertson

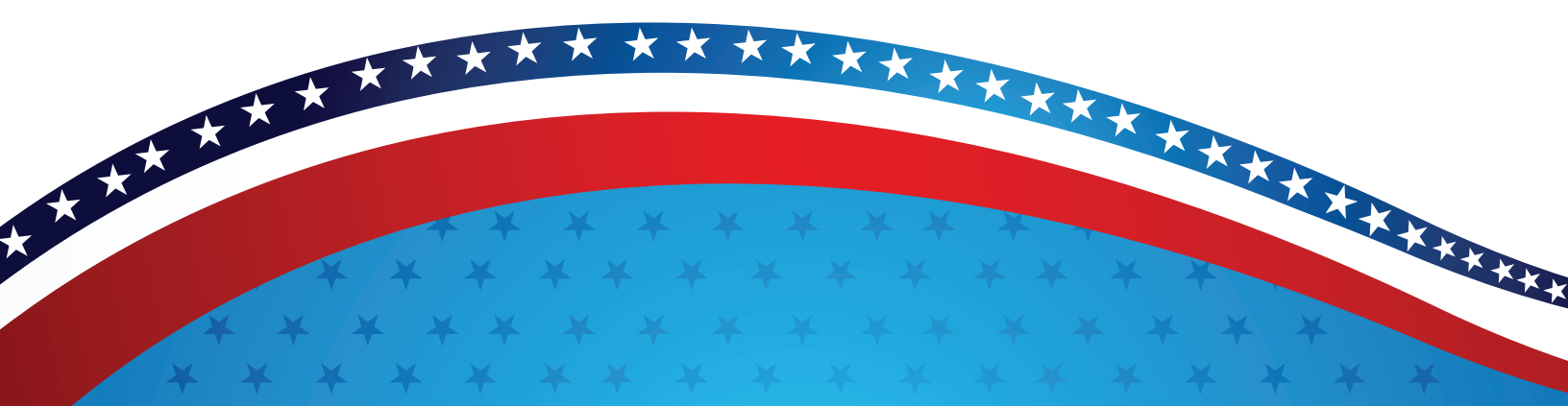


- Active Member for 14 years
- Association Roles: Building Representative, Board of Directors, NEA RA Elections Committee
- Local Delegate: 2006 LAE RA, 2007 NEA RA
- State Delegate: 2009-2014 NEA RA
- Committed to Public Education

2. Cynthia Henderson



The LAE played an important role in my training for the position of Assistant Principal. I am offering my services, and experiences as your NEA State Delegate. It was an honor and privilege to serve you last summer. I respectfully ask for your vote to continue the progress we've made.



WELCOME TO LAE'S NEWLY ELECTED OFFICERS!

*THE CANDIDATES LISTED BELOW RAN UNOPPOSED AND WERE ELECTED BY ACCLAMATION.
CONGRATULATIONS AND WELCOME TO THE LAE BOARD OF DIRECTORS!*

LAE PRESIDENT

Deborah Meaux (Elected, Unopposed)

LAE VICE PRESIDENT

Daryl Roberson (Elected, Unopposed)

FIRST ASSOCIATIONAL DISTRICT, SEAT C

Vacant (No Nominations Submitted)

SECOND ASSOCIATIONAL DISTRICT, SEAT A

Anthony Jackson (Elected, Unopposed)

SECOND ASSOCIATIONAL DISTRICT, SEAT C

Michael Doughty (Elected, Unopposed)

FOURTH ASSOCIATIONAL DISTRICT, SEAT A

Diane Vickers (Elected, Unopposed)

FOURTH ASSOCIATIONAL DISTRICT, SEAT C

Anita Augustus (Elected, Unopposed)

SIXTH ASSOCIATIONAL DISTRICT, SEAT C

Kathy Randolph (Elected, Unopposed)

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE LAE CONSTITUTION, BYLAWS, AND RULES

*DELEGATES WILL VOTE ON THE FOLLOWING PROPOSED AMENDMENT
AT THE APRIL 10TH LAE REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY*

ARTICLE V. Board of Directors

Section 2. Composition.

The Board of Directors shall consist of:

- a. The President, who shall serve as Chair; and the Vice-President, who shall serve as Vice-Chair;
- b. Three classroom teacher-members nominated through an open nomination procedure and elected by a secret ballot vote of the membership from each of the six Associational Districts (one of the three positions in each of the six districts shall be filled by an ethnic minority candidate);
- c. At-large representation of the following groups: non-administrator, educational support members; non-administrator, higher education member(s); and ~~administrator members~~ who may be active, educational support, or higher education members; shall be represented on the Board of Directors in proportion to their membership in the Association; and shall be nominated through an open nomination procedure and elected by a secret ballot vote. The number of representatives allotted to each at-large group shall be based on the same proportion as that of the 18 district representatives to the total number of Association members. Each at-large group shall be eligible for one representative on the Board of Directors for each multiple (or major fraction thereof) of the representation number for district members. [Representation number is defined in the Definitions section of the Bylaws.]
- d. the state elected Louisiana members of the NEA Board of Directors; and
- e. the LAE-Student Program President and the LAE-Retired President shall be an ex-officio member.
- f. **An Administrator nominated through an open nomination procedure and elected by secret ballot vote of the membership shall be an ex-officio, non-voting member.**

DID YOU KNOW...

The Teachers' Retirement System of Louisiana offers FREE ONLINE SESSIONS for members to understand their retirement benefits?

TRSL is your most trusted resource when it comes to retirement guidelines and benefits. The organization offers members access to online sessions so that they can learn specifics surrounding their retirement options. Webinars are held on Thursdays at 4 PM and only last about 30 minutes. Upcoming topics include:

Feb. 25: Social Security offsets
Apr. 14: Returning to Work
May 12: The Retirement Process

Mar. 17: Retirement eligibility
Apr. 21: Understanding DROP
June 30: Legislative updates

Want to learn more about your benefits? Go to www.trsl.org/main/events?cid=7864 to sign up for your session(s) of interest.

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Debbie Meaux, President
Lynda Guidry, Executive Director



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**LOUISIANA
ASSOCIATION
OF EDUCATORS**



In this Issue...

1. John Bel Edwards Sworn In As Louisiana's 56th Governor;
2. From The President's Desk
3. A New Day, A New Governor: What To Expect In 2016
4. This Is Your Official Notice Regarding Voting In 2016 LAE Elections
5. Candidates For 2016 LAE Board Of Directors
6. Candidates For NEA Delegate/Successor Delegates
7. Welcome To LAE's Newly Elected Officers
8. Proposed Amendment To The LAE Constitution, Bylaws, And Rules
9. Did You Know...

UPCOMING EVENTS

February 14
Valentine's Day

February 28
Read Across
Louisiana

April 8
LAE Board
Meeting

*LAE Headquarters CLOSED

February 8 - 9:
'Mardi Gras Holiday'

February 20
LAE Board
Meeting

March 14
Louisiana Regular
Legislative Session begins

April 9 - 10
LAE Representative
Assembly