

# THE LAE VOICE

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE LOUISIANA ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATORS

Great Public Schools for Every Louisiana Child

Volume 20, No. 2 June 2024

## 2024 LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP

### Attack on Public Sector Unions Came Up Short This Year

The 2024 Legislative Session just wrapped up on June 3rd. Anti-union bills were of big interest this year. While these bills were popular in many states this year, Louisiana had more anti-union bills filed than any other state. Much of our energy was spent fighting these bills. Many members responded to LAE calls to action which enabled us to push back in a meaningful way against the bills that could have hurt union activity. For instance, SB 331 was designed to take away the rights and freedoms of an educator to deduct their union dues via payroll deduction. The aim was to weaken the education unions. SB 919 aimed to force educators to rejoin their education union every year and limit union political activity. This bill sought to weaken our political power and our ability to advocate on your behalf. HB 571, another anti-union

bill, intended to eliminate agreed upon leave privileges of school employees in collective bargaining locals, eliminate an employee's right to file a grievance, and repeal an educator's first amendment right to even talk about unions or union activity at work without being prosecuted and/or arrested. HB 956 demanded that collective bargaining votes are collected by secret ballot which is already the standard in place for all collective bargaining locals. Had HB 980 passed, it would have forced education association members to rejoin their union every year and ignored approved collective bargaining agreement stipulations.

While not an anti-union bill, HB 800 called for a constitutional convention that could have hurt public education. In the constitutional convention,

everything in the state's constitution could be considered for change. Removing protection of the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP) funding for K-12 education could have expanded the focus to include home school students, vouchers and private schools. Additionally, other protected items like guaranteed retirement funds and homestead exemption could have been subject to change with a constitution rewrite.

While we can be thankful that these bills did not pass, we must engage in conversations with other educators about how damaging these bills could have been for LAE. Where possible, we need to educate the people we know (outside of education) about why these bills matter to us. We are hopeful that we do not see a repeat of these bills next year.

### \$2000/\$1000 Stipends for Teachers and ESPs.

Teachers and Educational Support Professionals (ESPs) will receive a one-time stipend of \$2,000 for teachers and \$1,000 for ESPs. At one point during the session, the stipend was reduced to \$1350/\$650, but education-friendly lawmakers

restored funding to the original proposed amounts. After many letters from members and other supporters, we avoided this reduction of the initially proposed stipend. Stipends are not enough to get teacher salaries up to the

Southern Regional Average, but for this year, educators can enjoy the hard-fought increase. Get ready to join the conversation next year as we continue to push for ongoing salary increases.

### LAE's Supplemental Pay for Supplemental Duties (SB 205) becomes Act 311

Time to celebrate! LAE's sponsored bill, SB 205 (Act 311), Supplemental Pay for Supplemental Duties, passed both chambers and made it to the Governor's desk for his signature—and he signed it! You may recall that LAE's similarly worded HB 205 went to the former Governor's desk in 2023, and he vetoed it. The veto was a surprise, but it didn't stop us from pushing for it again this year. LAE is proud of our bill, SB 205 (Act 311), authored by Senator Miguez

and several other education committee co-authors, that demands payment for additional duties assigned to educators outside of their normal workday. We heard story after story of teachers experiencing burnout due to additional duties constantly being piled upon them. We listened! SB 205 (Act 311) also calls for payment when teachers are not receiving their daily, unencumbered, 45-minute planning period, or the weekly equivalent of minutes. This

includes instances when teachers are asked to cover other classrooms, perform extra duties, and hold meetings. LAE passed the mandatory 45-minute planning period bill in the 2021 Legislative Session (Act 392); however, it is not being implemented in all parishes. Act 311 ensures that teachers will be paid if they do not get their planning period.

### Other Bills that LAE supported

LAE supported other bills that will make working conditions better for educators. SB 213 grants Education Support Professionals (ESP) up to one year of sick leave if unable to work (as prescribed by a physician). ESPs previously received up to 90 days of sick leave. HB 320 calls for the repeal of certain teacher training requirements and puts BESE in control of requiring future teacher training. HB 322 originally allowed teachers to discipline and remove disruptive students from their classroom without retaliation; however, an amendment to "not authorize a teacher to violate the provisions

of any discipline policy adopted by the public-school governing authority" weakened the bill. HR 281 will create a study group to study K-12 education and report back to the legislature by December 1st of 2024. LAE will be represented by two members on this committee who will bring your issues and concerns to the committee.

LAE also supported several bills that could positively impact students. HB 647 requires that additional student instruction requirements must be offset with the elimination of another requirement for the same amount of time. HB

762 allows career diploma students to take the WorkKeys or Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test in lieu of the ACT test (beginning in the 2025-2026 school year) (if it is signed by the Governor). HCR 44 directs BESE to adopt an appeal process for students who do not pass the EOC test required for graduation. LAE supported HB 424 which required a change in the grading scale for students. Moving to the 10-point grading scale aligns with what non-public schools require.

### Making a difference in policy

Your actions (calls, emails, conversations with other voters) on these bills helped LAE to make a difference in policies that will impact educators and students. Some educators like to think

that they don't need to get involved in policy; however, LAE members know that the policies impact us directly! Using a collective voice, we can speak up and speak out for or against

policies that will impact educators or students. We appreciate all of our educators, and together we will continue to move Louisiana forward.



# From the PRESIDENT'S DESK

Dr. Tia T. Mills, President

**"Summertime is always the best of what might be!"**

-Charles Bowden

Greetings LAE Members,

Summer is here! As many of you enjoy a well-deserved break, know that your union is continuously working for you! Our 47th LAE Representative Assembly was held April 6th and 7th the body of delegates made many decisions on behalf of the association. This issue of The Voice includes a recap of the entire event. Member leaders just wrapped up LAE's Virtual Summer Leadership Conference, and the NEA RA is next during the week of the 4th of July. When this edition is distributed, I hope to meet and collaborate with many of you there!

Nowhere have we fought harder for our interests than at the Capitol this year during the legislative session (Mar. 11th

through June 3). At a time when states across the country have had huge anti-union bills filed and passed, we, here in Louisiana, saw more bills than ever filed against public sector unions. The bills filed in Louisiana were an attack on unions, the concept of unionism, and the freedoms that we value as union members. There were attacks on collective bargaining, dues deduction, the ability to meet and confer about work issues, grievance representation, and raising money for political activity. These are a direct threat to who we are and what we do.

Even the one-time stipend originally allowed in the Governor's proposed budget (\$2000 for teachers and \$1000 for support staff) was reduced at one point, requiring us to ask legislators to restore the stipend amounts.

With all the challenges, we had some big wins for you in the legislature. I am happy to report that the one-time stipend amount was restored to the budget. You can expect these stipends this coming school year. We will continue to push for

a long-term salary increase. None of the anti-union bills were passed, AND our bill that provides additional pay for additional work outside of the school day passed and was signed by the Governor on May 28, 2024! Our accomplishments came about because of us working together to ask for what we wanted. When we band together, we are unstoppable.

LAE's fight does not end because the session has. We will continue conversations with lawmakers and policymakers as the year progresses. This issue of The Voice includes more details about the legislative session.

As we move into summer, please take time for self-care and relaxation. The challenges you face are endless, but remember, you cannot pour from an empty cup. Prioritizing yourself will allow you to return next year rejuvenated! I hope you feel love and respect from LAE all year long! Happy Summer!

In Solidarity,  
President Mills

## MESSAGE FROM NEWLY APPOINTED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR KARLA OWENS

Hello Team LAE!

Please allow me to introduce myself. I am your new interim executive director for LAE. I am excited and honored to join this association.

I look forward to working with you to achieve our mission of **organizing and empowering educators to promote quality public schools, strengthen the profession, and improve the well-being of public school children across Louisiana.**

With over two decades of experience in the NEA Enterprise, I have a proven record of success in leading and managing associations. My roles have included serving as a UniServ Manager in Arkansas and Tennessee, coordinating collective bargaining and school board election



campaigns, and working on several national, state, and local political campaigns. I assisted affiliates in establishing relationships with community partners that led to the mobilization of the community to support issues that affect the teaching profession.

I am deeply committed to LAE's mission and am eager to work with you to turn it into a reality. I firmly believe that together, we can achieve remarkable things and pave the way for a stronger future for our affiliate.

In my free time, I enjoy being a mom to Meghan and Carson, raising scholarship funds for my alumni (Southern University), supporting HBCUs, cheering for the New Orleans Saints, and supporting the programs of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated.



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**OPEN**

## **BOARD OF DIRECTOR SEATS**

The following board seats will be open. Members in the following districts who would like to apply should email a letter of interest and a resume to [mcarpenter@lae.org](mailto:mcarpenter@lae.org).

Applicants' information must be received by June 30, 2024, 4:30 P.M.

**District 3 – Seat B**

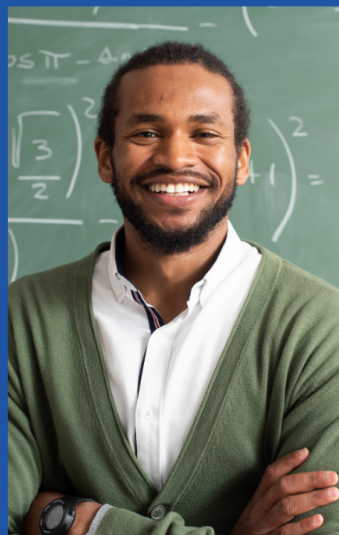
**District 5 – Seat C**

**District 6 – Seat B - Minority**

## **LOOK AT THE ADVANTAGES OF UPDATING YOUR MEMBERSHIP WITH EDUES.**

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## **eDues: fast, easy, secure**

- Choose automatic deductions from a checking or savings account or credit card.
- Edues are safe and keep your membership information private with LAE.
- Payments and membership continue even if you change districts.

*Your dues payment will continue through payroll deduction until Louisiana Association of Educators determines that payroll deduction is no longer a viable option for the payment of your dues. You will receive notice by email prior to beginning dues payments by your chosen method.*

**CHOICE AND PRIVACY!**

# THE POWER OF US—2024 LAE RA RECAP



The Louisiana Association of Educators (LAE) hosted its 47th Annual Representative Assembly (RA) at the Baton Rouge Marriott Saturday, April 6th through Sunday, April 7th. A convening of delegates and guests from across the state gathered to celebrate “The Power of Us,” a theme selected to describe the impact the union can have when we work together for education, educators, support professionals,

and especially our students. Day one’s dress code was all about representing LAE. Members wore shirts, sweaters, and hats to show their LAE pride. Back by popular demand, a superlative competition allowed attendees to interact and vote for their favorites in several categories: RA King and Queen, RA Enthusiast, and the Early Bird Award.

## First Day of Business

Vice President D’Shay Oaks led the Pledge of Allegiance, and Glen Oaks High School student Victoria Woods sang the Star-Spangled Banner. Other highlights from the opening ceremony included remarks from the Mayor-President of the City of Baton Rouge Sharon Weston-Broome; Louisiana Department of Education Deputy Chief of Staff Catasha Edwards; Clarria E. Moore, a representative from Congressman Troy A. Carter Sr.’s office of Louisiana’s 2nd Congressional District; and a video greeting from Congressman Garret Graves, Louisiana’s 6th Congressional District. LAE gave a warm welcome to Noel Candelaria, Secretary-Treasurer of The National Education Association, who addressed the assembly with an inspirational greeting and message of hope for the “Power of Us.”

Throughout both days of the assembly, LAE leaders conducted association business. Innovation Committee members promoted the

Superlatives Competition, explained the voting procedures, and helped everyone navigate the voting platform. The preliminary credentials report, presented by Credential Chair Pat Thomas, established a quorum. Current local presidents, past LAE state presidents, and the LAE Board of Directors and Executive Board were also recognized. The next item of business was a review and adoption of the standing rules, administered by NBI and Resolutions Chair Crystal Williams Gordon. President Mills called for the adoption of the 2024 order of business and approval of the minutes from the 2023 RA by President Mills. LAE’s 2024–25 budget explained by Budget Committee Chair Vice President Oaks. Proposed constitutional amendments were also shared. Both the adoption of the budget and the proposed amendments were voted on and passed. Almetra Stansbury, Chair of the Elections Committee, presented the election report.

## AN IMAGE OF EXCELLENCE

Delegates enjoyed the LAE Image Awards Ceremony where the 2024 Teacher Image Award, the President’s Award, and two President’s Distinguished Service Awards were presented. With an expansive career in education, Carla Powell Lewis, an educator in Zachary Schools, was awarded the 2024 LAE Teacher Image Award. President Mills also awarded Dr. Keith Magee with the President’s Award for his extensive contributions and strong commitment to public education and students. Iona Holloway, who received the 2024 LAE President’s

Distinguished Service Award, was the first education support professional (ESP) to be elected to the NEA Executive Committee. Dr. Mills presented another President’s Distinguished Service Award to Joyce Haynes, an LAE Past State President who still serves in education as a local school board president in St. Landry Parish. Each of the honorees were present on the dais with Dr. Mills to receive their awards. The work of the day ended with an evening of fun, food, and fellowship, at the PAC Reception.

## RED FOR ED DAY

Day Two started early in the morning on April 7th, with a Local President’s Breakfast. As the business continued, members decked out in red to celebrate a “Red for Ed” dress theme. Credential Chair Pat Thomas shared the final credentials report. Then, Dr. Mills presented the chair’s report in video format highlighting the biggest

wins, travels, and accomplishments of the association. Several NBIs were presented and voted upon favorably. Crystal Williams-Gordon thanked her committee. Legislative Chair Julia Reed, presented legislative updates. PAC information was then shared by Marcus Thomas.

## A FESTIVE FAREWELL

Guests who donated to the LAE PAC Fund and LAE-Retired PAC Fund were excited to learn who won raffle prizes. The 2024 RA Enthusiast prize was awarded to Shalondo Green, and Robin Clark won the Early Bird prize. This year’s RA King and Queen are Fred Pinkney and Dawn Jordan who showed off their new fancy crowns. The winners and the audience had a great time with the contests. When all the agenda items were complete, President Mills acknowledged all the committees and staff who were responsible for making the RA possible and helping the association move forward. She also

recognized special committees that were not on the RA program but work diligently throughout the year: Professional Practice and Advocacy, Women’s Concerns, and Minority Affairs. Dr. Mills adjourned the meeting with best wishes and safe travels for all. A few moments of personal privilege were allowed as Vice President D’Shay Oaks announced her run for president, and Derron Cook announced his candidacy for vice-president. Commemorative pictures were taken immediately following the end of the session. The work of the association continues with NEA RA in July.



## NBIs

### NBI 1 Passed.

LAE shall develop and implement a comprehensive plan to communicate with members and potential members using modern forms of communication such as social media, email, and the LAE website. Such communications should be visually appealing, succinct, and easily shareable via the same means of communication. The plan should include but is not limited to the following: specific weekly goals for posts for the following social media platforms: Facebook & Instagram; specific weekly or monthly goals for email communications; specific weekly or monthly goals for updating the LAE website, monthly solicitation to locals for items to be potentially shared via social media, email, and the LAE website, and a mechanism for members to submit items of interest to the Association to be potentially shared via social media, email, and the LAE website

**Submitted by Julia Reed**  
**Lafayette Parish Association of Educators**

### NBI 2 Passed

LAE shall forward any photographs taken during Association activities of local members to the local associations within two weeks of the activity to be used in local association and/ or community publications. This shall begin after the 2024 RA and continue after each Association activity.

**Submitted by Julia Reed**  
**Lafayette Parish Association of Educators**

### NBI 3 Ruled out of order

LAE shall investigate the possibility of moving the LAE RA to a different time of year in an attempt to produce a cost savings on the event.

#### Rationale

LAE faces many current challenges to our budget, and we need to investigate every avenue to trim expenses.

**Submitted by Julia Reed**  
**Lafayette Parish Association of Educators**

## PROPOSED AMENDMENT RESULTS

**Amendments 2 – 8, 10 – 11 passed. Amendment #11 was not in the previous issue of the Voice and is printed here. The previous issue of The Voice, posted on the LAE website (lae.org), has the text of each of the accepted amendments.**

### Amendment 11

**Article 6-1(c) of the Bylaws is amended to read:**

Should no candidate receive a majority of the votes cast, a runoff will be held between the top two candidates. Positions on the ballot shall remain the same as in the regular election. The neutral party as stated within this Article shall be chosen by the Board of Directors

with recommendations from the Executive Director and Associate Executive Director. Ballots shall be prepared by the executive Director or his designee, with the approval of the Chair of the Elections Committee and shall be distributed to each member of record as of January 15. Ballots shall be distributed to members no later than May 1. The neutral party shall tabulate the votes received by May 31 May 11 and shall submit the results in writing to the Elections Committee no later than June 15 May 25. The announcement should be made in the next official journal. Candidates for runoff election may withdraw from the election by notification to the Executive Director or his/her designee, by certified/return receipt, no later than April 22. Upon receipt of such notice, the runoff election shall be canceled. In the event a candidate in a run-off election should die, the other candidate shall be seated for the position for which the runoff election was being held.

## ELECTION RESULTS

### Education Support Professional at Large (Board of Directors)(Seat B)

Gwendolyn Hill

### NEA State Delegates

Dr. Tia Mills

Anita Green

LaChina Clay

D'Shay Oaks

Gwendolyn Hill

Rachel Gifford

Cynthia Henderson

Elizabeth Sullivan

Tanya Jackson

Dawn Jordan

Clara Staten Ellis

Valencea Johnson

Katrice Antoine

Katina Thompson-Givens

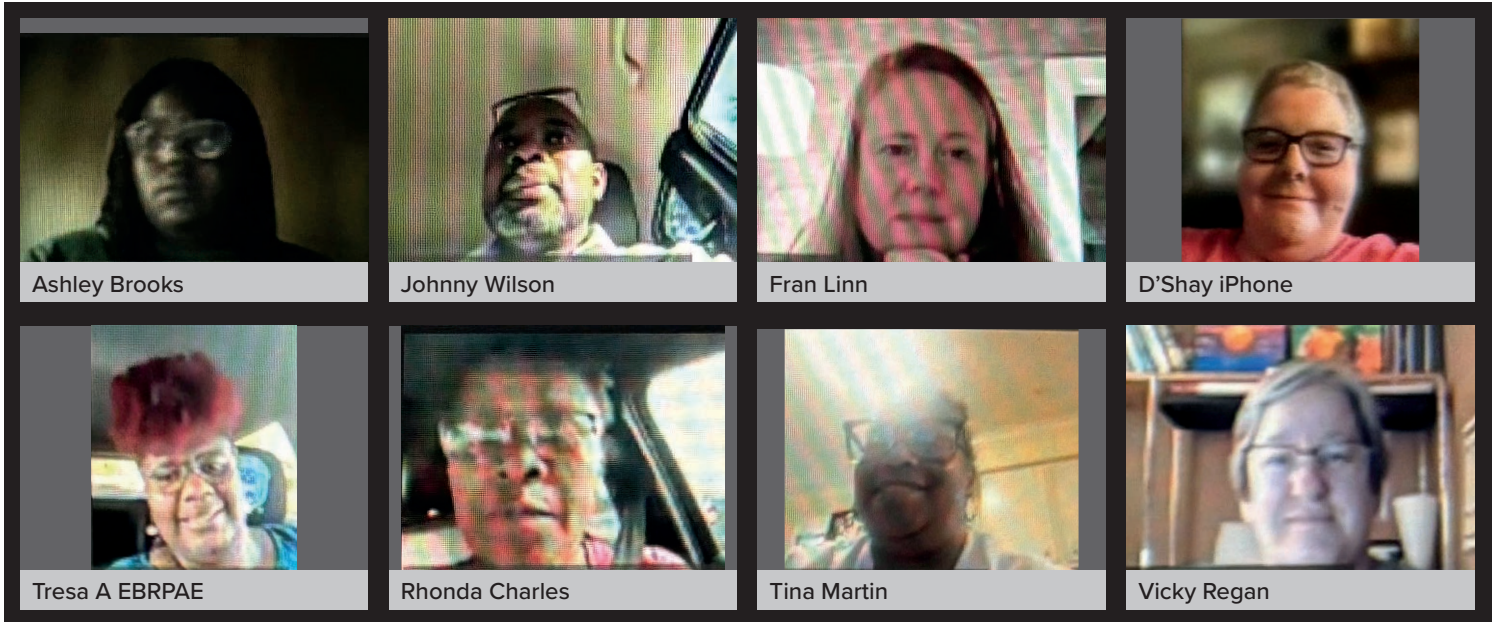
Tresa Augustine

JaDeric Talbert, Aspiring Educator

### NEA State Successor Delegate

Brandy Nora

# MEMBERS WORK TO STRENGTHEN LOCALS AT 2024 SUMMER LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE



LAE hosted the virtual 2024 Summer Leadership Conference June 12 and 13. The conference continued with the Representative Assembly theme of "The Power of Us." LAE President Dr. Tia T. Mills welcomed members to the two-day conference and reminded them of the importance of the work we do as a union. NEA Organizational Specialist and Guest Speaker Fran Linn talked about important details of the LAE Year Round Organizing Campaign. She later co-presented with LAE UniServ Director James "Jim" Croad about the ongoing Auto Pay Campaign. They gave details about why members should consider using new methods of dues payment instead of relying on payroll deduction. LAE UniServ Directors Grant Shreiner and Caleb Holmes discussed how local associations can use member meetings as a platform to make powerful decisions. NEA Member Benefits Specialist Glenda Jones, shared ways that LAE members can use benefits, discounts, and services that are available to members. LAE UniServ Director Sheila Washington trained participants on the roles and responsibilities of officers and association representatives. She also provided tips and tricks on how to attract new members to local association events.

Two anticipated topics offered during the summer leadership conference included the "Advocacy 101: Know your Rights" and "Using our Power with the Legislative Process." LAE Field Staff Manager Gregg Mills and LAE UniServ Director Shelly Byron discussed member rights and how to handle member advocacy. LAE Government Relations Director Marcus Thomas provided a summary of the 2024 legislative session, highlighted important LAE wins, and answered member questions about new legislation. Of similar interest for members was the information provided on new policies. Teaching and Learning Center Director Suzanne Harris explained details about the new accountability plan that BESE adopted prior to the start of the conference.

The conference concluded with an open space session where members asked questions about topics of interest to them.

Summer Conference is always a popular event with members who are ready to strengthen their local associations and prepare for back-to-school membership events.

## Trauma Informed Pedagogy Professional Learning Network

June 27- July 16, 2024 5:30 P.M.

**Benefits:**

- LAE member exclusive
- Learn how trauma negatively impacts student learning and what strategies can make a difference
- Meaningful content and engaging conversations
- Amazing resources
- Virtual meetings
- One hour sessions



Mark your calendar for four sessions!

June 27  
July 9  
July 16

5:30 - 6:30 P.M.

**Register Today!**

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Questions?

Dr. Suzanne T. Harris [sharris@lae.org](mailto:sharris@lae.org)



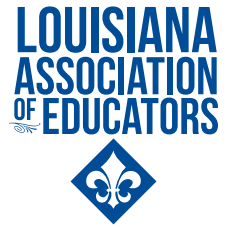
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Dr. Tia T. Mills, President  
Karla Owens, Executive Director

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

July 4, 2024  
Independence Day  
LAE office closed