

THE LAE VOICE

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE LOUISIANA ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATORS

Great Public Schools for Every Louisiana Child

Volume 21, No. 1 February 2025

THIS IS YOUR OFFICIAL NOTICE REGARDING VOTING IN LAE'S LEADERSHIP 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 2025 elections.

Our neutral, YesElections, will send elections notifications to those LAE members who've provided a valid email address. To update this information, contact the LAE Membership Department at membership.processing@lae.org.

The elections portal will open March 10 and run through March 31, 2025. 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 and your voting code 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 *YesElections.com*. If you do not receive this email, please be sure to email mcarpenter@lae.org between March 10 and March 31. To vote, you will need your LAE member ID number and your voting Code that will be sent to you by YesElections.



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@YesElections.com or 1-866-384-9978. You will need to have your LAE member number on hand for voter verification purposes. Again, this number can be found on your LAE membership card or in the address section of this newsletter. All ballots must be received by the neutral by no later than March 31, 2025.

UPCOMING 2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The 2025 legislative session will be busy. LAE will set our legislative agenda with specific bills that will impact educators and keep you informed throughout the process via social media posts, hustle

texts, and emails. Your involvement helps bring attention to issues important to us.

Here are some ways to get involved!

1. Make sure we have current contact information for you. Reach out to membership.processing@lae.org to request that your contact information be updated OR go to rb.gy/2a1il to update the information yourself. You could also reach the website using the QR code.
2. Let us know you want to be involved—follow this link: secure.ngpvan.com/hilOqoNo00-RAwoZ7TpH6A2
3. Send your legislators an introductory email and ask them to support educators in this upcoming session.
4. Read all emails from LAE and choose how you will complete the ask in the email (follow a link, write an email, engage on social media, etc.). Legislators want and need to hear directly from educators!
5. If LAE hosts an event at the Capitol or in your area, try to attend. Your presence is important in promoting LAE's message.

There may be other ways you can engage during the legislative session. We will keep you informed!
Get ready to be involved!



LAE eDues
Follow this code
to update your
contact information.



Follow this code to let
us know you want to
be involved in the 2025
Legislative Session.



From the PRESIDENT'S DESK

Dr. Tia T. Mills, President

Greetings to you in 2025, LAE! A New Year means new beginnings! I hope you had an opportunity to create memories with your loved ones during the holiday break. As we start on the last half of the 2024-25 school year, let's set goals to assure success at home and at school.

This will be a busy year for LAE as we anticipate an action-packed legislative season. We want to promote positive change that will help educators, students, and schools. Your valuable input is needed! Your responses and activism are what many lawmakers need to decide how they will

vote on issues that affect us. Don't ever take your influence for granted.

LAE will continue to keep you informed about issues that impact our profession. We request that you stay engaged with your lawmakers. Communicating often with legislators and BESE members can make a difference in decisions they make. Thank you for trusting me as your president to lead conversations about policies that impact you. You deserve the best, and we will make every effort to cover as many priorities as possible to improve your working conditions and personal well-being.

LAE Leadership elections will start soon! The candidates listed in this issue hope for

the opportunity to impact the future of our association and profession. Please review the photos and statements from the individuals who want to represent you! Online voting takes place from March 10 - March 31. Look for an email with your voting instructions. If you prefer to use a paper ballot, the instructions for receiving one are in this newsletter.

If you are interested in representing your local as a delegate for the upcoming representative assembly, contact your local leadership and ask for election information and steps to qualify as a candidate.

We are one! LAE forever!

In Solidarity,
President Mills



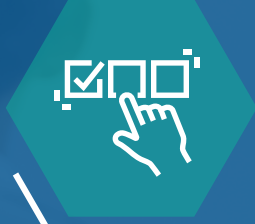
Member Savings Include:

- Up to 75% off ODP Business Solutions regular prices on Best Value List of preferred products.
- Shop online and get free next-business-day delivery** on qualifying orders of \$30 or more.
- Convenient payment options including single account billing or consolidated billing for multiple locations.

To access your savings, visit:
odpbusiness.com/lae

**Free Delivery: Minimum purchase required after discounts and before taxes. Orders outside our local delivery area and most furniture, oversized, bulk items, cases of bottled water and other beverages and special order items do not qualify. Non-qualifying orders incur a delivery charge (minimum charge of \$9.99). Many orders can be delivered next business day (between 8:30 AM and 5:00 PM) if placed online or via phone by 5:00 PM or via fax by 3:00 PM, local time (In most locations). Other restrictions apply.





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to learn more



DR. MILLS ADVOCATES ON A NATIONAL STAGE FOR LOCAL ISSUE AND BRINGS HOME THE WIN!



Louisiana Congressman Garret Graves poses for picture with Dr. Mills as they attended the Rally to Repeal.

LAE President Dr. Tia T. Mills has been busy on Capitol Hill to make a big change for Louisiana educators. She met with NEA and other affiliate leaders (Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Kentucky) for the Rally to Repeal GPO/WEP. Senator Chuck Schumer committed to call for a vote on this critical legislation. Some of the speakers at the rally included NEA Vice President Princess Moss and Congressman Garret Graves. She called for action from our members on this important topic—getting rid of the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP)—laws that prevent educators and other public employees from receiving

their social security benefits. Dr. Mills believes this action will help attract and retain educators in the workforce.

All the hard work finally paid off! After 40 years of advocacy to repeal the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), policies that unfairly deny or reduce social security benefits for public employees, passed on the Senate floor. This was a bi-partisan effort headed by Representative Garrett Graves. President Biden signed the repeal into law January 5th with NEA Vice President Princess Moss at his side.



Dr. Mills marches for LAE in the Rally to Repeal at the Capitol in D.C.



The Repeal passed the Senate with a vote on Dec. 20, 2024.



Joe Biden signs the repeal into law January 5, 2025. NEA President Princess Moss is at the far left of the picture.

A Day of Celebration

President Mills and other NEA affiliate advocates were in a packed room in the White House for the bill signing. Dr. Mills was on hand for pictures with Louisiana Congressman Troy Carter, President Joe

Biden, and Congressman Clay Higgins. This was a huge win for educators and other public employees and a feeling of celebration was in the room as noted by the many smiling faces.



Second from left, NEA Vice President Princess Moss, Congressman Troy Carter, and Dr. Tia T. Mills attend the WEP/GPO Repeal signing.



President Joe Biden pauses for a picture with LAE President Mills.



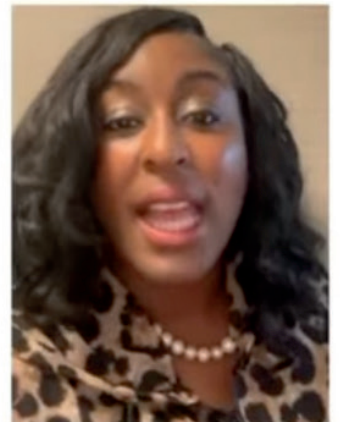
LAE President Mills with Louisiana Congressman Clay Higgins

The Work You Don't See—Make a Plan for the Issue in Your Community

The celebration pictures only tell part of the story. Dr. Mills and many other advocates spent many hours planning, walking, and talking. They planned how to make a change, walked (marched) to make a statement, and partnered with others to increase the impact. LAE, an affiliate of NEA, is part of a larger voice to help get the job done! Sometimes the issue requires years of work, as in the case of GPO/WEP Repeal. Sometimes the work is hard (See the picture of Dr.

Mills walking in the cold rain). Sometimes the issue requires many conversations with legislators of both parties (note the pictures of Dr. Mills and other state affiliate leaders mapping out their plan on a recent virtual meeting). LAE is always advocating for issues that impact educators and students. Get involved on issues that matter to you in your community. Work, plan, and act with other LAE members to make a difference.

More pictures that highlight President Mills' GPO/WEP efforts



This is a still shot of a video in which affiliate leaders encouraged members to get involved.



NEA Vice President Princess Moss (center-left) and state affiliate leaders (including LAE President Tia T. Mills-center-right) march to "Repeal the Steal" at the Capitol recently.



State Affiliate Leaders (including LAE's President Tia T. Mills) and NEA National Vice President Princess Moss and Secretary-Treasurer Noel Candelaria at the GPO/WEP repeal bill signing at the White House.

CANDIDATES FOR 2025 LAE ELECTION OF OFFICE

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 "..."

OFFICE OF PRESIDENT/NEA STATE DELEGATE



D'Shay Oaks
Elected Unopposed

My name is D'Shay Oaks. I am asking for your vote for the Louisiana Association of Educator's President. I work at Vidalia Junior High in Concordia Parish. I currently serve as Vice-President and chairman of the Budget Committees plus a member of the LAE Board of Directors. Thanks for your support!!

OFFICE OF VICE PRESIDENT/NEA STATE DELEGATE



Cynthia Henderson

I have been an active member of the Louisiana Association of Educators for several years and it would be an honor to serve as your LAE Vice President. I have had the privilege to serve as your LAE delegate and activist. Please vote Cynthia Henderson LAE Vice-President. Experience the Difference



Derron Cook

Derron Cook currently serves as St. John AE President, a Collective Bargaining Unit, who champions education rights and proudly promotes social justice reform within education. A NEA Carter G. Woodson recipient determined to "Lift Every Voice" in education, he solicits support as he aims to represent LAE boldly as VP.

FIRST ASSOCIATIONAL DISTRICT



Dr. Fredrick Pinkney
Seat C

VOICE. VALUE. AND VISION. are attributes I want to bring to the LAE Board of Directors. I will continue to improve, defend, and protect our noble profession through transparency and integrity. It will be an honor to represent the educators of the **First Associational District**. Please support with your vote.



Rachel Gifford
Seat C

I am a 2nd grade teacher seeking election to the LAE BOD for District 1. I am a strong advocate for public schools and have the experience necessary to represent all members on the state level. I would appreciate your support and vote.

THIRD ASSOCIATIONAL DISTRICT



Laura Francis
Seat C - Elected Unopposed

I am a dedicated seventh grade teacher in the Vermilion Parish School System. I serve as a basketball, track, and cross country coach, PBIS member, and former VAE Vice President. I am passionate about fostering student growth in and out of the classroom, while inspiring excellence in all endeavors.

FOURTH ASSOCIATIONAL DISTRICT



Katina R. Thompson Givens
Seat A - Elected Unopposed

I currently serve on the LAE Board of Directors, representing District 4. For more than six years, I have worked as the treasurer for EBRPAE and an as educator for 20 years in the East Baton Rouge Parish Public School System

Take Control of Your Membership: Make Your Choice Today!



LAE eDues

As the legislative session approaches with the likelihood that bills will be filed to prevent members from using payroll deduction to pay union dues, consider making the decision today to pay your dues using electronic funds transfer or credit card. "LAE members should be in control of their membership and payment options rather than leaving it to the legislature to decide for us," say Dr. Tia T. Mills, LAE President. Make your choice today rather than waiting for the uncertainty that the legislative session can bring. Use the QR code to access the link.

Becoming a member of LAE was a great choice. Now take the next step and choose your new payment method!

FIFTH ASSOCIATIONAL DISTRICT



Delisa Washington
Seat A - Elected Unopposed

I am dedicated to serving and advocating for all members. Dedicated to public education, I seek your support. Vote DeLisa Washington.

Elementary School Counselor

- 30+ years of active service
- 18 years on the District 5 Board of Directors
- LPAE Executive Board Member
- LAE/NEA & LPAE Convention Delegate
- LAE Ancillary Image Award Recipient



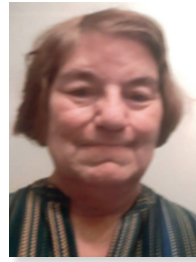
SIXTH ASSOCIATIONAL DISTRICT



Brandy Nora
Seat B - Elected Unopposed

BrandyNora currently serves as St. John AE Secretary, a CBA local. Nora is a fierce advocate for teacher and student excellence. Determined to see all educators and students afforded and opportunity for achieving success, it would be her honor to representing District 6, Seat B on LAE's BOD.

EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL



Donna Festervan
Seat A - Elected Unopposed

As a Para-educator for over 30 years. I have served on the local Executive board, and parish committees. Also have been a delegate to the NEA and LAE Representative Assembly from Caddo for many years.

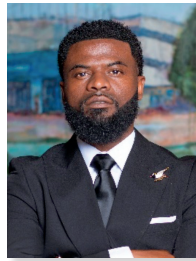
NEA STATE DELEGATE/NEA SUCCESSOR DELEGATE



Shirleen Sanders
Elected Unopposed

No Bio provided

No
Photo
Provided



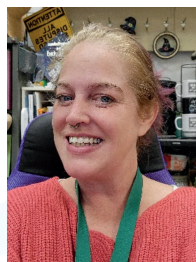
Kendrick Golatt Sr.
Elected Unopposed

During my time with LAE, I have served as President of the Bossier Association of Educators for the past two years. I recently participated in the Louisiana Delegations for the NEA RA in Orlando and Philadelphia. I have demonstrated a strong commitment to LAE's mission through my involvement and dedication.



Gwendolyn Hill
Elected Unopposed

My name is Gwendolyn Hill. I have been a member of the Livingston Parish Association. And a member of the LAE Board of Director, as a ESP. With your support and vote. I can continue my efforts and enforce the best interests of the membership. By attending the National Conference.



Bre Garcia
Elected Unopposed

Bre Garcia is an art teacher in Shreveport and a proud member of LAE. She has served as local delegate in the past and is currently serving as the Secretary for the Caddo Association of Educators. She looks forward to the opportunity to serve LAE as a 2025 NEA Delegate.



Dawn Jordan
Elected Unopposed

I have attended several NEA RA's and love getting to work with others across the states to do the work of the association. I have served as a member of the NEA elections committee and LAE's. I have served as local president for 6 years. Elect Dawn Jordan.



Cheryl Shirley
Elected Unopposed

I attended my first national RA and enjoyed the experience. I won the early bird award at the LAE RA. I would love to continue learning about the organization by attending the NEA RA. Please help me by voting Cheryl Shirley.



Rachel Gifford
Elected Unopposed

I have been an active member my entire career. Seeking your support and vote in the election for NEA State Delegate. If elected I will fulfill all responsibilities to the best of my ability and represent you with integrity at the national conference.



Derron Cook
Elected Unopposed

Derron Cook, St. John AE President, a CBA local, champions educational rights and proudly promotes social justice reform within education. Now, more than ever, he is determined to "Lift Every Voice" in Louisiana's education system. It would be his honor to represent LAE boldly as your next State Delegate.



Anita Green
Elected Unopposed

I am Anita Green, asking for your support as a state delegate in Portland, Oregon at the NEA RA. I will represent you wholeheartedly at the assembly. I am an experienced educator that will advocate for you, A vote for me is a vote for you.

New Date for LAE-Retired Meeting!
Feb. 24-25
Meeting starts Monday at 6:00 P.M.
Hampton Inn and Suites
6124 W. Calhoun Dr., Alexandria, LA
Reservations: 318-445-4449

REMINDER: NOMINATIONS FOR IMAGE AWARDS ARE OPEN



Carla Powell, 2024 State Teacher Image Award Winner.

The LAE Image Awards are presented annually to recognize members whose leadership and actions in their professions have advanced public education in Louisiana. This year, LAE will choose one outstanding teacher, ESP, administrator, ancillary personnel, friend of education, and human and civil rights trailblazer to honor with these prestigious awards.

The association is now accepting applications for the 2025 Image Awards. You can begin working on your application today at lae.org/imageawards.

LAE Image Awards Deadline: Feb. 28, 2025.

Save the Date for the 2025 LAE Virtual RA


Representative Assembly



Location: Virtual
Apr. 4, 2025: Board of Directors' Meeting
Apr. 5-6, 2025: LAE Representative Assembly



Lynda Guidry, a longtime employee of LAE, passed away January 18, 2025. She was a prominent figure in the association since the 70s. She was a teacher and local association president in St. Martin Parish and eventually transitioned to full-time association work as a UniServ Director. She moved into management as LAE Field Services Director and eventually to the role of Executive Director. Lynda was instrumental in securing collective bargaining rights as part of the Vermilion teachers and education support professionals strike. She also played a key role in engaging LAE members during the election and re-election campaigns of Former Governor John Bel Edwards. Lynda was dedicated to Louisiana's educators and students and retired from LAE in 2017.

JOIN THE NEW ORLEANS SAINTS AND PELICANS FOR THE 2025 STEM FEST

STEM Fest

presented by  Chevron

SATURDAY, MARCH 15 | 10AM-2PM
CAESARS SUPERDOME & SMOOTHIE KING CENTER



PURCHASE TICKETS AT [PELICANS.COM/STEMFEST](https://pelicans.com/stemfest)

CHANGES AT HEADQUARTERS

Gregg Mills retires from LAE



After almost twenty-seven years, Gregg Mills began his retirement from LAE December 31, 2024. He served in multiple roles including UniServ Director, Director of the Advocacy Center, and most recently as the UniServ Staff Manager/Lead Organizer. He engaged with members statewide with many training sessions for local leaders and associations. His "Know Your Rights" training was a member favorite. Additionally, Mr. Mills led and planned many LAE Summer Leadership Conference sessions. Mr. Mills described his work with LAE as an "extension of the church" because it was more of a calling than a job, much like his role as pastor of Starlight Baptist Church in Alexandria where he has served for 35 years. He considers the special long-lasting friendships made over the years as an added benefit to a meaningful career.

Interim Executive Director Karla Owens said, "Gregg, you have always been an asset to LAE, and we know LAE would not be what it is without people like you." LAE offers congratulations on your retirement and wishes you all the best in your future endeavors!

LaMonica Jones-Harris begins as Field Manager for LAE



Louisiana Association of Educators welcomes LaMonica Jones-Harris as the new Field Manager. Prior to joining LAE, LaMonica served as a UniServ Director for six years with the Alabama Education Association (AEA). She has vast experience in recruiting members, engaging local chapters, and providing advocacy.

Before her work at AEA, LaMonica served as a UniServ Coordinator for the Tennessee Education Association (TEA). She participated in many varied experiences including implementing technology platforms to engage and recruit new members. She also helped to revamp a local affiliate and organized and participated in three statewide-shared staffing events.

LaMonica retired from the Louisiana school system in 2017 after twenty-one years. She served as the Local President of West Baton Rouge Parish and Monroe City Schools. The Monroe City Association of Educators (MCAE) became the fastest-growing local association in the state during her presidency. She received her UniServ training from the NEA Pre-UniServ Academy and on-the-job training under a unique project with the South Carolina Organizing Project. LaMonica looks forward to sharing her skills and expertise with LAE, where she began her union work 20 years ago as a member of LAE's Emerging Leaders.

HOW TEACHERS VIEW THEIR PAY AND BENEFITS

By: Tim Walker, Senior Writer

Published: December 9, 2024

Edited January 23, 2025, Team LAE.

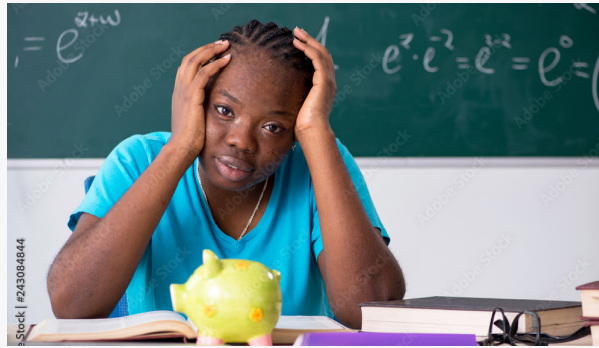
This article, originally published in NEA Today, shows how educators view salary and benefits.

A new survey underscores the importance of professional salaries and benefits like paid parental leave in keeping educators in the profession—and how collective bargaining can have a major impact.

Ask most K-12 public school teachers what would make them stay in the profession, and better pay is usually at the top of the list. Recruiting and retaining educators always begins with professional salaries.

Although the most recent National Education Association (NEA) data shows the average national teacher salary increasing by 4.2 percent in 2022-23, inflation has neutralized the benefits, even in some states where increases were the highest. Too many educators are still facing a challenging financial climate, unable to make ends meet and even afford to live in the communities where they work.

No surprise then that teachers' perceptions of their pay have not changed—and maybe worsened, according to the RAND Corporation's 2024 State of the American Teacher survey. Although two-thirds reported receiving a pay increase between the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years, the survey found that most teachers view their base pay



as inadequate. Released in November, the survey (funded by the NEA and the American Federation of Teachers) looks at how teachers view their pay and benefits, expenses, and intention to stay in their jobs.

How teachers perceive their pay is also influenced, not surprisingly, by other factors, including access to benefits such as paid parental leave, tuition reimbursement and even housing assistance.

"Offering a broader set of benefits and improving the quality of those benefits could improve teachers' perceptions of their pay and improve retention," said Elizabeth Steiner, co-author of the RAND report. "We found teachers who had better perceptions of their benefits also had better perceptions of their pay."

And those better perceptions are significantly more likely to be found in states that allow collective bargaining. In these states, teachers reported not only higher pay, but access to a wider array of other benefits than teachers in states that prohibit collective bargaining.

How Teachers' Benefits Compare

With so many teachers reporting their salary as inadequate, a large number look to work extra duties in the school system for extra pay. The survey revealed that 65 percent of teachers reported taking on extra work, such as coaching sports, mentoring or serving as department chair. However, one in four teachers said they were not paid for this extra work.

RAND compared the teacher data to a separate, nationally representative survey of working adults. They found that teachers in single-earner households spent larger shares of their household incomes on housing, childcare, and student debt payments than similar working adults in single-earner households. Thirty-seven percent of teachers who were housing cost-burdened (housing costs

exceeding 30 percent of household income) said that they were likely to leave their schools, and 30 percent said they would leave the profession.

Employer-provided benefits could help teachers pay for these household expenses, but they are uncommon. Overall, teachers held less favorable views of their benefits than other working adults.

Indeed, working adults reported better access than teachers to benefits such as paid personal time off, paid parental leave, and tuition reimbursement. The largest difference was for paid parental leave. Only one-third of teachers reported having paid parental leave, compared to nearly half of similar working adults.

The Impact of Collective Bargaining

In many of these non-collective bargaining states over the past few years, educators' tireless advocacy has notched up major wins in state legislatures that have produced large, even historic, salary increases.

Still, there's no denying the "union advantage." The fact is educators who work in states with collective bargaining laws make more money.

According to the RAND survey, teachers in states where bargaining is prohibited reported lower base pay and smaller pay increases. They were also less likely to be paid for extra work.

The survey discusses four types or sources of pay increases: obtaining an additional degree or credit, a new union/association bargained contract, state policy, and an additional year of experience (see graph below). Fifty-six percent of teachers reported receiving only one type of increase, with 19 percent reporting two. Just two percent reported receiving three. Teachers in states that required or allowed collective bargaining were more likely to report receiving two types of pay increases.

In addition to higher pay, the RAND survey found that more teachers in states requiring collective bargaining reported having employer contributions to retirement plans, paid parental leave, employer

contributions to health insurance premiums, paid sick leave, and tuition reimbursement.

This is largely due to unions demanding and winning not only higher pay but paid family leave and other critical benefits to improve the lives of educators and help keep them in the profession.

"There are a confluence of factors and circumstances that relate to how teachers feel about their pay," Steiner said. "Benefits play into that. Expenses play into that and obviously salary increases play into that."

Still, in addressing teacher retention, Steiner added that it's important not to lose sight of working conditions as well—workload, administrator support, collaborative relationships with colleagues, and class size.

"These all play a role in how teachers perceive their job. So, pay and benefits are conditions that help teachers feel their work is valued, but they are not the only—and in many cases maybe not even the most important—factors that will determine how long they want to stay in the classroom."

WASHINGTON MARDI GRAS: PRESIDENT MILLS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR KARLA OWENS REPRESENTED LAE AT PREMIER NETWORKING EVENT

President Tia T. Mills and Executive Director Karla Owens attended the Washington Mardi Gras, an important event for connecting with lawmakers and other key stakeholders from Louisiana. During visits with congressmen, they thanked them for supporting the repeal of GPO/WEP. "LAE must be present where critical discussions occur," says President Mills. Washington Mardi Gras is a multi-day networking-with-lawmakers event ending with a costume ball and parade in Washington, D.C.



Dr. Mills enjoyed the Mardi Gras decorations and festivities while networking with legislators for LAE.



Louisiana State Senate Education Chair Rick Edmonds paused for a picture with President Mills.



Dr. Mills continued conversations with State Representative Roger Wilder about barriers endured by Louisiana educators. She served on his K-12 Education Study Group at the state Capitol in fall of 2024.



Louisiana Congressman Troy Carter pauses for a photo with President Mills.

TIME-SENSITIVE
LAE ELECTIONS
INFO INSIDE

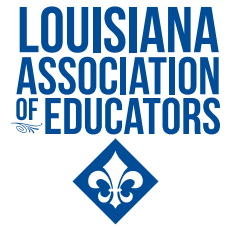
THE LAE VOICE

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

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Feb. 24-25
NEW Date
LAE-Retired Conference

Feb. 28
Image Award
Submission due

March 3-5
Mardi Gras
Office Closed

March 21-23
NEA ESP
Conference

April 4
Board Meeting

April 5-6
LAE Virtual R.A.

April 16 @ 4pm
Aspiring Ed Virtual
Representative Assembly

April 18 - April 21
Spring Break
LAE Office Closed