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ARTC MATTERS

Greetings:

Your organization has been at work advocating for pension security, health care and reduction in state tax for teacher pensions. In 2016, our success in lobbying for a state tax exemption of 25% saved retirees hundreds of dollars- over a thousand in many cases! Through the efforts of ARTC, we have a voice at the Capitol and have been invited to the Governor's office and the Finance Committee office to discuss our issues.

Recently, we lost Bob Lewandowski, President of the Bristol Area Retired Teachers Association, and Legislative Committee member John Kane of Stamford. Both Bob and John were long-standing members of ARTC who contributed greatly to our success. They will be sorely missed.

I would like to acknowledge the time and effort made by our standing committees: The Legislative Committee Co-chairs, Cathy D'Agostino and Sandra Bove, have done an outstanding job in every area advocating on both the state and federal levels. The Insurance Committee under Rick Follman keeps us up-to-date on all matters

concerning medical insurance. The Program/Membership Co-chairs Patty McDonnell and Barbara Kmetz do an amazing job of maintain-

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WHO IS WATCHING THOSE WHO SHOULD BE WATCHING FOR US ?

The state bi-annual budget process has begun with the presentation of the Governor's budget. He is recommending an appropriation to the HIPA (our Health Fund) of 25%. Since 2010, the state has only fully funded the account (33%) once in 2012, leaving approximately \$125 million NOT funded as of 2016. This has presented itself as a LOOMING CRISIS.

The TRB (Teachers Retirement Board) has requested a full evaluation of the HIPA funding by its Health Insurance consultant, Dr. Joe Fields. The report is dated March 9, 2017 and we quote,

"Given the State's recent inability to fully fund the TRB Medical Plan and assuming continuation of current policy, it is likely that the Medical Plan Trust Fund will be exhausted in the next 2.5 years. The current amount that the State is under funding its contribution to the fund is approximately \$16 million per year. Given that the State is flat-funding its contribution, the amount of short-funding increases (assuming no changes to funding) over the next two years to \$20.6 million and then to \$ 26.4 million. This produces a short-funding of \$54.8 million over the two and half year period."

"Given that the balance this year reached

a low of \$54 million, the fund would essentially be exhausted in two and half years. The way in which

cash flows occur in this plan would indicate that any insolvency would most likely occur in October or November of 2019".

Retired teachers have contributed to their health benefits during their entire educational careers. They have adjusted to new legislation (2006) and they expect the state to honor the legislative contract throughout their retirement. The above information reminds us of the saying "WHO IS WATCHING THOSE WHO SHOULD BE WATCHING FOR US?" **THE ARTC IS!**

Your help is needed at this time to protect your hard earned benefits. Write, e-mail, call, speak directly to your legislators and direct them to fully fund the state portion (33%) to the HIPA for the budget years 2017-2018. For the full report, please check the ARTC website at artct.org.

Rick and Louise Follman



Save the Date

SPRING LUNCHEON- TUES MAY 16TH AT 9:00

VHIST WWW.ARTCT.ORG FOR MORE DETAILS



The Governor's Office invited ARTC to discuss Governor Malloy's budget proposals which concern retired teachers. At a meeting which took place with the Governor's staff, *ARTC learned that the Governor is including the promised tax exclusions in his 2017-2018 budget.* We commend Governor Malloy's continued support of CT retired teachers. We appreciate his commitment to promote the fairness of the tax exclusion and his effort to contribute to the health care fund. We also have met with the Finance committee to discuss and seek their support for the tax exclusions. We will continue to lobby legislators for their support of the Governor's proposal as it makes its way through the various Legislative Committees.

As you may know, the Governor is also exploring additional ways for the State to meet its pension obligations. Seeking some support from the towns and municipalities towards teacher pension costs, even with economic fairness built into the equation, is certain to raise controversy. We appreciate that ARTC, representing retired teachers, has been invited to be part of the conversation.

ARTC will continue to monitor the Governor's and Legislature's proposals regarding the maintenance of our pensions. With your support we will continue to promote the interests of all CT retired teachers.

Cathy D'Agostino and Sandra Bove

ARTC PAC

ARTC PAC sponsored a very successful "Meet and Greet" in January, 2017. Members of the ARTC Executive Board and the ARTC Legislative Committee met with about a dozen legislators new to the Capitol. It was an informal session, but everyone seemed pleased with the results. The legislators left the room at LOB with new knowledge about retired teachers' concerns. Check the website artct.org for photos of the event.

Our last two PAC meetings centered on a fund-raising letter that will go out to our members. We are paying for special publicity to appear in the Connecticut News Junkie and Capitol Report. The funds we receive also allow us to

meet with legislators and convince them to protect and improve our benefits. Donations received also help pay for the team of lobbyists who keep us informed of special interest groups whose aim is to cut our existing benefits.

We are looking for more members to add to our committee. If you're interested in joining PAC, please contact Michael Norman at mdnorman@cox.net.

Michael Norman, PAC Chair



FROM OUR LOBBYIST



Fresh off the November elections where Republicans saw significant gains in both the State House of Representatives and Senate, the new General Assembly

kicked off the 2017 legislative session on January 4th. Faced with a projected \$1.4 billion deficit, both Governor Malloy and the state's budget writing committees have been hard at work trying to get the state out of the red. In early February, Governor Malloy presented his budget proposal during a joint session of the General Assembly.

The Governor's proposal contained a few provisions important to retired teachers. First, and perhaps most important, the Governor maintained his commitment to increasing the tax exclusion on retired teacher pensions to 50%. As you know, this tax exclusion is a direct result of the longstanding advocacy efforts of ARTC and puts extra money in the pockets of every retired teacher.

In addition, the Governor's proposed budget includes a \$10 million increase from the state to the Retired Teachers' Healthcare Fund in Fiscal Year 2018 and then an additional \$3.7 million increase in Fiscal Year 2019. The state's contribution to the fund will be raised to 25 percent of total healthcare costs from its current funding level of approximately

18%.

Finally, the proposed budget shifts one-third of the teacher pension costs starting next fiscal year onto cities and towns from the state (which currently pays 100 percent.) That would amount to \$408 million in 2017-19 and \$421 million the year after that.

State law prescribes how much teachers must pay into the system, how long they must work before qualifying for a pension, and what they will receive upon retirement. Governor Malloy has said he does not intend to change any of those requirements.

Between now and when the legislative session ends on June 7th, the Appropriations and Finance Committees are tasked with coming up with their own budget proposal which is expected to be released in late April. The Legislature and Executive Branch will then negotiate a final budget that will require the support of a majority of the House and Senate and the signature of the Governor to become law.

The most important thing a retired teacher can do in the next several weeks is to call or write your local State Senator and State Representative and encourage them to support maintaining the 50% exclusion. If you need more information on the issue, it can be found at www.artct.org.

Kevin Graff

BRISTOL



The Bristol ARTC affiliate has had a long term social service project, "Assistance to the Young Mothers and Infants Ministry" at Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bristol. We conduct this project in memory of Pat Duffy who began this assistance venture. At BART meetings we have a large gift bag into which members can drop off baby items such as baby powder, diaper ointment, diapers, onesies, towels, nail clippers, blankets, clothing etc as well as monetary donations. The monetary donations are turned into gift cards for Wal Mart and Shop Rite. Every Monday through Thursday, a soup kitchen supper is served to about 60 persons. Holiday meals are home-delivered at Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter. BART members have been very generous in their support of this project. It continues to be a beacon on hope for those in need.

Bob Lewandowski, president

* This was the last article that Bob wrote for ARTC before his passing. Leonard "Bob" Lewandoski began his teaching career in 1961 and retired in 1996. He taught Social Studies and was the department chair for many years at Bristol Central High School. He actively promoted ARTC's mission and rarely missed a meeting. Bob was a deeply religious man and was a Permanent Deacon in the Roman Catholic Church. He had a great sense of social justice and worked helping to write grants for needy parishes on the Archdiocesan level.



FOR THE 38TH CONSECUTIVE YEAR WE ARE OFFERING A FOUR-YEAR SCHOLARSHIP, OF \$2,000 A YEAR, FOR CT SENIORS WHO ARE PURSUING A TEACHING DEGREE

EVALUATIONS ARE BASED ON THE FOLLOWING:

Academic Record

Character and Personality including community service

Interests and Educational Activities

Financial Need will be determined by the Student Aid Report (SAR).

* winner must maintain college grades in the upper bracket and must continue teacher preparation training for all 4 years.

MEMBERSHIP

The latest meeting of the Membership Committee produced some interesting facts. We now have 3,400 Life members and 3,040 Annual members. Since July 2015, we have added 1,043 new members! To improve our name recognition, we are using the ARTC website, Facebook, Twitter and Send-Blaster. ARTC PAC pays for additional ads on Connecticut News Junkie and Capitol Report

A big push is on to acquire everyone's correct e-mail. Executive Director Mary Gracyalny is using a new email "Send-Blaster" to deliver messages. When she receives back a rejected e-mail, she mails a special post card asking the member to RSVP with a correct e-mail address. We think this is definitely a good idea!

Barbara Kmetz, co-chair, has been busy structuring a survey, edited by the committee, that will be sent to all members. We're

trying to find out which ARTC services you like and if you are taking advantage of the programs, website, newsletter articles, e-mail blasts that keep you informed about your health benefits and pension.

Co-chair Patty McDonnell is coordinating the Spring Luncheon to be held on May 16 at the Aquaturf. "Senior Scams and Frauds" will be presented by AARP specialist, Erica Michalowski with Detective Mark Solomon. We will have a giant raffle with donated gifts from every affiliate. Glen Moon will present their scholarship. New by-laws will be voted on and a Moe Nirenstein award will be presented. SAVE THE DATE! Tuesday, May 16, 2017! A trifold is presently being mailed with the menu listed inside. Also, you may find the invitation on the ARTC website www.artct.org
Patty McDonnell and Barbara Kmetz, membership

continued from page 1 ing and increasing membership, assisting with Meet and Greet, Lobby Day and our Fall and Spring Luncheons. The Committee for Lobby Day is chaired by Neil Foster who has been organizing this event for several years. He has done a fantastic job handling the numerous details involved. Finally, I would

like to recognize Judy Morganroth of the Scholarship Committee, Barbara Kmetz and Marilyn Feranec, our secretaries and our Executive Director, Mary Gracyalny, who does a fine job running the daily operations of ARTC. Thanks to all of you who support ARTC by becoming members and continuing your membership. **Ed Messina, ARTC president**

Since 1946, ARTC has been a retiree organization exclusively representing CT Retired Teachers.

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More Affiliate Updates

NORTHERN FAIRFIELD

At our annual Fall Luncheon this past October, committee cards were placed on the luncheon tables along with pleas and urgings to our membership to "lend a hand." For the first time we added a Community Service Committee (CSC), our Webmaster, Joretta Kilcourse, volunteered to spearhead. In March, the CSC met for the first time and is in the process of exploring ways our retired teachers may be of service in our area.

Keeping in mind interests of the retired teachers, CSC will be contacting the Literacy Volunteers Group to see how we can be of help. Perhaps we can collect books to provide reading materials to promote literacy. Perhaps we can assist in securing donations. We are making a start by inviting a speaker from this group to address our members at the Spring Luncheon.

This committee will also contact the Lions Club about collecting unneeded eyeglasses for their on-going vision projects. This is just the beginning of good things to come. We thank Joretta and her committee for all of their efforts.

June Jones, Membership

WATERBURY

Each year the Waterbury Retired Teachers Association (WRTA) remembers Waterbury teachers who passed away the previous year. This year we held our 21st annual ceremony. The affair is planned and executed by our members. Retired teachers, active teachers, family members of the deceased and educational and

political officials are invited. Those in attendance are greeted by a member and presented with a program in which each teacher's name is listed. This year we had more than 200 in attendance. Each deceased teacher is recognized by the reading of his/her name and the lighting of a memorial candle. In addition, this year a member created remembrance candles which were presented to the family members in attendance. Gifts are presented to three local schools in the name of the departed and they are represented by symbolic gifts which are displayed at the ceremony. A choir composed mainly of retired teachers presents musical selections. A luncheon follows to which all are invited. Two family members of each of our deceased members are guests at the luncheon.

Michael Ieronimo, President

WINDHAM-TOLLAND

Windham/Tolland's major altruistic project comes straight from the heart and goes to the tummies! We support five, yes five, Food Banks!

At our spring and fall luncheons our MEmbership is both loyal and generous when donating canned and boxed items. Often we'll call the various sites to see if they are low in anything specific. Real fruit juice is a high priority for the children. It takes us 2.5 years to rotate through each Food Bank each season. They are: Daily Bread - Putnam, My Brother's Keeper - Storrs, Covenant Soup Kitchen - Willimantic, TEEG-Thompson, and Friends of Assisi - Danielson.

We are very happy and proud to assist in improving the nutrition of those who live in the Windham/Tolland area.

Denise A Cooley, MEmbership Co-Chair