

Vermont Retired State Employees Association, Inc.

“Working for Retired State Employees and Beneficiaries”

www.vrsea.org

October 2018 Newsletter

Our Mission Statement: *The Vermont Retired State Employees Association, Inc. (VRSEA) is a membership organization whose purpose is to protect and enhance state retirees’ pension and health care benefits in retirement. Statement of Purpose: The Vermont Retired State Employees Association is a membership organization that seeks to positively influence the Legislature on behalf of our members and to provide an important voice on matters of taxation, pension and health care benefits in retirement. We represent all retired state employees and beneficiaries receiving pensions and other retirement benefits from the state. VRSEA is recognized in Vermont statute as the voice of retired state employees and provides a forum for retired state employees and beneficiaries to weigh in on matters of importance to them.*



Happy Fall to All State Retirees and Beneficiaries!

Greetings to all State Retirees and Beneficiaries! We hope this newsletter finds you healthy, happy and enjoying the nice Fall weather!

State Pension System May Change: Just prior to publication, VRSEA learned that there is an anticipated effort to change the state employees’ pension plan during this legislative session! There are forces in the State House and in the public domain that believe that our pension plan is too expensive and financially unsustainable. Details are scarce at this time but it involves moving from a “Defined Benefit” plan (guaranteed monthly payments) to a 401(k)-type plan. **In our view, that would be disastrous to the financial well-being of thousands of State employees and retirees!** In a 401(k)-type plan, the employer promises to put a certain amount of money in an account. The money is then invested in the stock market. The value of a person’s account may rise and fall with the stock market. Vermont State Treasurer Beth Pearce is very concerned about this issue, and is urging retirees to attend a **Public Pension Symposium** on October 29th at 1:30 p.m. in Montpelier at 109 State Street, Pavilion Auditorium. Treasurer Pearce will also attend VRSEA’s November 1 Board Meeting provide more in-depth information on this important issue. We will keep our members apprised throughout the legislative session as the situation unfolds.

Given all the uncertainty in both Washington, D.C. and Montpelier, it is important to have a solid organization like VRSEA watching out for your pension and health care benefits. We hope you will consider joining us if you haven’t already. Your financial support provides us the funding necessary to continue the ongoing actions pursued on your behalf. Strength in numbers benefits us all. A membership form is included for your convenience at the end of this newsletter. We appreciate working for you and with you.

New Legislative Lobbyists – Komline Consulting, LLC: For the first time in many years, VRSEA has hired a new lobbying firm to represent our members in the State House. Our longtime lobbyist is pursuing other business endeavors. After conducting an RFP process, the Board selected the firm of Patti Komline and Gabrielle Malina. Patti is a former state representative for 12 years. She served on several legislative committees, including House Judiciary, House Health Care and House Ways and Means (the tax committee). A perfect fit for us. Gabrielle is also very conversant with the State House, having served for many years as a staffer to Legislative Committees.

January 1, 2019 Pension Cost-of-Living Increase (COLA): Good news! Retirement Services Director Laurie Lanphear reports that the cost-of-living increase will be **2.6%** for group F members who retired on or after July 1, 2008 as well as for retirees from the A, B, C and D group plans, and **1.3%** for Group E retirees and Group F members who retired on or before June 30, 2008.

January 1, 2019 Health Plan Changes: The following health plan changes resulted from 2018's collective bargaining.

- TotalChoice Plan members will see no changes in Medical benefits.
- SelectCare Plan members will see copay increases as follows:
 1. Primary Care Physician visits from \$20 to \$25; Specialist Physician visits from \$20 to \$30.
 2. Emergency Room visits copays increase from \$50 to \$75.
 3. MRIs will have a new copay of \$30.
- For both the TotalChoice and SelectCare plans: The annual deductible on the Express Scripts drug plan increases from \$25 to \$50.
 1. If you are Medicare-eligible, you have the EGWP prescription drug plan with Express Scripts. There are no changes to this plan other than the deductible increase.
 2. If you are not yet Medicare-eligible you have the same drug plan as active state employees. This plan will have a new drug formulary, (list of covered drugs) effective January 1, 2019. The new formulary details are not available as yet, but VRSEA will be representing you at an upcoming Benefits Advisory Committee meeting with the State and VSEA. We will post any news on the VRSEA web site for you.

Greetings from VRSEA's New President: At the October 4th Board meeting VRSEA elected a new President, Shelley Martin. Former President Marc Metayer remains on the Board as a Trustee. Shelley is a retired state employee who worked for the Agency of Natural Resources for 17 years before retiring. She has served in many organizations over the years, including as a Trustee on the VRSEA Board for the past two years. VRSEA is fortunate to have Shelley's energy and vision, and we look forward to the next two years of her leadership.

New Board Member – Bruce Hyde: VRSEA is excited to have a new and very well qualified Board member. Bruce is a former state representative who served from 1994 to 2000. He then served as Commissioner of Tourism and Marketing from 2002 to 2011. We welcome Bruce and look forward to working with him!

Membership Support – Thank You! We want to thank all the retirees/beneficiaries who have either renewed or joined VRSEA as new members. We also want to thank the members/beneficiaries who provided additional donations to our cause. It is much appreciated. You are our only funding source.

There are 7,000+ retirees and beneficiaries who are receiving Pensions, Medical/Prescription coverage, Dental and/or Life Insurance. To date, more than 1,500 of you have joined VRSEA. We welcome all of you to consider supporting our efforts, which “Help Us to Help You”. VRSEA responds to numerous matters important to retirees and works hard to keep you up to date with what is going on with your pension and health care in retirement. All state retirees will receive this newsletter; however, future newsletters will be sent only to VRSEA members. Stay informed. Support our efforts by investing in VRSEA.

2018 VRSEA Annual Meeting: On September 12, 2018 VRSEA held its annual meeting at the Canadian Club in Barre. Over 100 VRSEA members, vendors and guests enjoyed an extensive buffet luncheon. Outgoing President Marc Metayer opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by a moment of silence to honor the recent passing of Nominating Committee Chair Peggy Moon and the other retirees we have lost this year. After lunch, President Metayer introduced guests Clarke Collins, Jerry Fry and Dave Williams from the State Benefits Division and Laurie Lanphear, Director of Retirement Services. The Benefits and Retirement folks updated VRSEA members on the benefit changes and the pension COLA outlined in this newsletter. The membership unanimously approved VRSEA’s annual budget for Fiscal Year 2019, and reelected four Board members to two-year terms. After the business meeting adjourned, the Board gave out many excellent door prizes.

Door Prizes – Many Generous Donations! We appreciate the wonderful support of our Vermont businesses throughout the state that generously donated many excellent door prizes for our Annual Meeting. A full list of door prizes and sponsors will be posted on our web page, and we urge retirees to support these businesses! Prizes totaling more than \$2,400 in value were awarded to 59 lucky winners, including:

- two \$50 gift certificates to the Lighting Store,
- \$70 (including gift card) from Pet Food Warehouse,
- \$130 gift basket from Stowe Kitchen, Bath and Linen,
- \$189 gift certificate from 802 Toyota, plus two \$100 cash awards from Heritage Toyota/Ford in South Burlington,
- a \$65 family pass to Shelburne Museum
- a \$50 gift card from the Teddy Bear Factory in Shelburne,
- gift certificates to Sarducci’s Restaurant and Hunger Mountain Coop in Montpelier
- two 1-night stays at the Town and Country Spa and Resort in Stowe and the Holiday Inn Express in South Burlington.

Quick Notes

- **2019 Social Security Increase:** The Social Security increase for 2019 is **2.8%**.
- **No Increase in 2019 State Health Plan Premiums:** VRSEA has been notified that there will be **NO** premium increases for 2019! Last year’s increase was less than 2%. When health plan premiums are going up 10% or more a year, we are very fortunate to have a well-managed plan. **VRSEA is actively involved in overseeing the health plan on your behalf.**
- **Annual Open Enrollment in November:** You will be receiving a post card from the Benefits Division.
- **Reminder:** Don’t forget to get your flu shot!

Sincerely,
Shelley Martin
President

VRSEA, Inc. Membership Support Application
Dues: October 1,2018 to September 30, 2019

____ Enclosed are my dues of \$20.00 per retiree/beneficiary
____ Extra help for VRSEA efforts - Donation \$_____

Name (or mailing Label): _____

Address: _____

Phone #: _____

E-Mail: _____

Note: VRSEA will not publish, sell or release your e-mail address. It will be kept confidential without your official permission to do otherwise.

Mail this form with your check to:

(Please make your check payable to VRSEA, Inc.)

VRSEA, Inc.

P. O. Box 247

Montpelier, Vermont

05601-0247

PS: Please keep us current with any changes to the above information, especially if you have a temporary summer/winter address. Thank you!

Please Note: If you have already paid your dues for this year, please do not send another dues payment. However, your donations are much appreciated! Thank you!