

**HOPE YOUR HOLIDAYS
WERE MERRY AND BRIGHT
A BELATED MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND
HAPPY NEW YEAR 2017**

**TRTA DISTRICT X LEGISLATIVE NEWSLETTER
January 2017**

The 4th quarter issue of the VOICE has been mailed, and should have been received by every member of TRTA.

STOP reading this email! **GO** find your copy of the VOICE!

An Editorial

If we ever needed the information that Tim Lee and TRTA gives us in the Inside Line and the VOICE, it is now.

The lead article in this issue of the VOICE explains our crisis situation with our Health Insurance in terms easily understood. It is entitled **ACTION AND ALERT**. TRTA members should know that **ALERT** means something important is happening and TRTA members need to be aware of that information. **ACTION** means there is something we need to do immediately.

Our crisis is two pronged:

1. **A 1.5 Billion Dollar shortfall** due to the escalating health care and prescription drug costs, coupled with stagnant funding methods. That shortfall has to be paid, either by the Legislature, a combination of contributors, or the retirees who are members of the TRS Care Health Insurance program, (That includes the TRS Care Medicare Advantage members.)

2. The funding for the insurance program is so inadequate; the **insurance program is NOT sustainable.** (TRS CARE cannot continue in its present form without more funds,)

Mr. Lee reminds us that after the previous Legislative Session, a “Select Committee” was appointed to study the insurance situation, and to offer solutions.

Educational retirees nervously awaited the final report of this committee. There was great concern that the report would not be favorable to retirees. That concern was confirmed when the report was released in late November.

On page 2 of the article, Mr. Lee reminds us that our Health Insurance has been a good one for us.

The report states ‘...continuing to fund “TRS Care on a biannual basis is no longer feasible, because costs continue to rise at an alarming rate. (No more money available from the Legislature) If we no longer have adequate funding, the burden of change will fall to the retirees. Mr. Lee said this conclusion is not final, but quite alarming. The two options offered by the committee do not put more funding into the program

Those two options are explained in the article. Charts are printed; giving members in the program what costs would be if the options are used.

AT THIS POINT, let me remind you that because of the changes made by TRS in September, (copayments, higher out of pocket, drugs by mail, etc.), **our TRS CARE will continue as is through 2017.**

It will be in 2018 that drastic changes are expected.

If nothing happens to help us in this Legislative session, Mr. Lee placed a chart on page 4 to show the increase in premiums we could expect.

I have heard others say that “educational retirees don’t get

concerned enough to take action on a problem until it hits them in their face or their pocketbooks.” Well Friends, I think we are at that point. Every member of TRTA needs to get involved in advocacy with their Legislators. We, as members, cannot depend on our officers, our professional lobbyist, and Mr. Lee and his staff to convince the Legislature to make the funding of our Health Insurance a priority.

We are former classroom teachers, we have experience in getting our point over to reluctant students, and I do not see much of a difference with the Legislature.

Tonna Duke

LOCAL UNIT CONTACT TEAMS

Contact Teams, A Definition:

2-4 Local Unit Members willing to cultivate a relationship with a Legislator, Senator or Representative, who represents their Unit. Willing to become a friend, meet with him/her, hopefully before the session starts, willing to call or email the Legislator.

The Purpose:

Educating our Legislators of our priorities. (The crisis with our Health Insurance is our # 1 priority.)

#2 Priority is keeping the Defined benefit type of pension that we enjoy. This is opposed to the Defined Contribution, which we do not want. The Legislators need to be reminded we do not receive Social Security benefits; therefore our Defined Benefit is our only security. There should be a RUSH by Unit Members to be a part of those Contact Teams. Everyone should want to be a part of the education process of convincing the Legislature to help us.

We deserve their help—We helped them when they needed us.

Contact Teams are being formed by Unit Legislative Chairmen. Many

of our Units have completed their teams, and are active at this time. The other Units have been contacted concerning forming their teams by a fast approaching deadline. **The Legislative Session begins January 10th. WE CAN MAKE A GREAT DIFFERENCE IN THEIR DECISIONS ABOUT OUR NEEDS.**

**THE LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGN
FOR ALL UNIT MEMBERS**

Our Local Units were informed in October, November, and December of an organization-wide project that had members “Handwriting” letters to the member’s Legislators, Senator and Representative. We were to tell **our stories** about our insurance program, **TRS CARE**. (How much it has helped you and what will happen if the cost increases or the plan is changed.)

A letter form is available in the 4th quarter of the **VOICE** for your convenience. The plan is to complete your personal letter, marking at the top the names of your Senator and Representative, then mail the letter to TRTA, attention: Cindee Sharp

313 12th Street, Suite 200
Austin, TX 78701

Jus tear out the form to use and mail. There is a one page flyer for the Legislator on the back of the form. You might want to copy and keep it to use when you contact your Legislators.

At the TRTA Office, all letters will be organized by Legislator. The letters will be hand-delivered to the Legislators by members of the TRTA State Legislative Committee when they visit all of the Legislators in January and February. We need to get our letters to Austin quickly. The next

meeting of the Legislative Committee is January 17, 2017.

We want ALL of the 33 District X Legislators to receive many letters;

we have to do better than two years ago when one of our Dallas representatives received NO letters. **WE HAVE TO GET BUSY!**

A big thank you to those of you who have already sent your letters to TRTA. You can write another one using the official form. Your original letter also will be delivered.

64TH ANNUAL TRTA CONVENTION INFORMATION

The registration form for the Convention can be found on pages 9-11 in the 4th quarter of the VOICE. The schedule for the first two days of the convention is given, as is the third day. This day is what we have in the past called Rally Day, but now is known as TRTA Day at the Capital. Remember to get your Convention Registration in as quickly as possible. The meal meetings fill up quickly.

TRTA DAY AT THE CAPITAL

The third day of the convention is our chance to

- Impress the Legislators.
- TRTA members wear red
- Fill the visitor areas of both Chambers
- TRTA members are recognized by both the Senate and the House
- Members may schedule a meeting/visitation with his/her Legislators
- Photo Ops everywhere
- Ice Cream Party on the east lawn.
- A member not attending the convention can still attend The Day at the Capital.

District X is taking two buses to Austin for Day at the Capital.

These two buses are for our members who are not attending the convention, but wish to take part in TRTA Day at the Capital.

The cost of a reserved seat on the bus is \$15.00. We are also selling our red District X Tee Shirts for \$10.00. This is the same shirt that was sold last year. It did not have a date on it. If you still have your shirt from last year, unless you just want a new one, you may wear your older shirt.

The buses will load at 4:45 am and depart at 5:00 am. This early departure is necessary in order to arrive at the Capital in Austin in time for the group to make its way to the two chambers by 9:30 am. Both buses are equipped with a restroom, and you may take snacks. **The buses will depart the Capital at 3:30 pm to return to the Dallas area.** This plan should allow time for Legislator visits.

The two boarding sites are the parking lot at Park Lane and Hwy 75 at the NorthPark Shopping Center, and the Kroger Parking Lot of Kroger Grocery Store on Hwy 67 in Cedar Springs.

Much more information will be sent to the Units in the near future.

To reserve a seat on the bus:

**Give payment to your Unit Treasurer: \$15.00 for Bus
\$10.00 for Tee Shirt
\$\$25.00 for Both**

Along with payment, give written information to your Treasurer:

- Name
- Phone Number (cell)
- Unit
- Bus Preference
- If buying a shirt, we need the size. Plus sizes are \$15.00.

The Unit Treasurer will forward your payment and your information to: District X Treasurer, Mary Helen Cornish.

**71 Man O War Lane
Fairview, TX 75069
972-542-8622**

Reservations and orders may be taken immediately.

The deadline for reservations and tee shirt orders is Feb, 17th. That date will allow the vender to fill orders for shirts and for them to be distributed.

If you are not attending the convention, please consider riding the bus with your TRTA friends for a DAY AT THE CAPITAL.

**Thank you for reading this Newsletter.
I hope you take action where applicable.
HAPPY NEW YEAR!
Tonna Duke
District X Legislative Chairman
TRTA State Legislative Committee Member**