



# OREA *News Bulletin*

A Publication of the Oklahoma Retired Educators Association

Winter 2010

## Join Me at the Capitol on March 2

I know where I will be on the morning of Tuesday, March 2. I'll be at the state Capitol visiting with legislators in support of the OREA legislative agenda. I want you to be there, too.

Yes, I am asking you to make plans now to attend the 2010 OREA legislative lobby day and luncheon on Tuesday, March 2, when members from all across Oklahoma can speak with one strong voice to lawmakers about our need for a fair and equitable cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) and several other critically important matters.



*Weldon Davis  
President*

For us to be successful, we must have OREA members on hand from every legislative district to lobby every single legislator. It is an ambitious task, but one that we must and can accomplish.

All legislators, House and Senate staff, and Association members will be treated to a complimentary noon meal, which we anticipate will be shared in pleasant, professional and productive conversation in the Capitol's second floor rotunda or in individual legislative offices or conference rooms. Members are encouraged to contact their home district legislators ahead of time to make luncheon arrangements.

Detailed information on the day's activities will be announced soon, but in the meantime, members are encouraged to work with the legislative chair/liaison and officers of their local unit to make plans for a strong presence at the Capitol. Members not normally affiliated with a local unit are requested to contact the OREA office to tell us of your intentions to be a part of the day's lobby efforts.

To help in planning – and ensure wise use of organizational financial resources – OREA must have, by Tuesday, February 23, the names, mailing addresses (including e-mail addresses if available) and telephone numbers of members who plan to attend. Having the information will enable OREA to communicate directly with attendees regarding registration, schedule, lobby briefing materials, parking, shuttle transportation, Capitol security, office locations, elevators, restrooms, medical assistance, emergency contact information, and other matters prior to the day's events. Early planning suggestions from members are welcome.

Please contact Sharon Cox at the OREA office at (405) 523-4373 or (800) 310-2230 toll free with the requested information. Her mailing address is: OREA, Attn: Sharon Cox, P. O. Box 18485, Oklahoma City, OK 73154. Sharon's e-mail address is [scox@okea.org](mailto:scox@okea.org).

The 2010 legislative session is our chance to improve the lives of Oklahoma's retired educators. The success of the March 2 lobby day and luncheon will be one measure of our commitment toward that goal.

I'll see you at the state Capitol on Tuesday, March 2!



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## Legislative Success Depends on YOU!

It's a cliché, but nonetheless true. If OREA is to achieve legislative success in 2010, it will depend on the active involvement of all members. With more than 14,000 speaking with one strong voice, legislators will know we're serious about our legislative agenda.

All too frequently, individual lawmakers are heard saying they don't have to pay attention to retired educators, because they don't hear from them often, and when they do the message is mixed and weak. Many say it is easy to sidetrack retired educators from the specifics of their agenda, sometimes convincing them to work against their own interests.

It's time for us to change that perception by letting lawmakers know we're serious about being treated fairly and equitably in the granting of retirement cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs). They must be helped to understand that it is unacceptable for retirees in other state retirement systems to receive 4% COLAs when retired educators receive only half as much.

Legislators cannot be allowed to rely on the poor funding level of the Teachers' Retirement System as an excuse for our disparate treatment. After all, retired educators are not to blame for forty years or more of legislative funding neglect of TRS.

COLAs and adequate TRS funding are two of the important issues in the OREA legislative agenda. Regardless of the issue, however, our attitude and approach should say that past legislative promises and inaction are no longer acceptable. Positive change must happen now.

Will you get involved in support of the OREA legislative agenda? Go to the OREA website at [www.orea.org](http://www.orea.org) to learn about it. Re-read the October issue of this newsletter, where the OREA goals were on the front page. Discuss them with other OREA members in your local unit. If you're not active in a local unit, then please get active. Work with your fellow members to help OREA speak with one strong voice.

## Join Fellow OREA Members at the Capitol on... Tuesdays & Wednesdays

Check with your local unit's legislative chairperson/liaison or go to the OREA website at [www.orea.org](http://www.orea.org) to get the schedule of 20 Tuesdays and Wednesdays for members to lobby at the state Capitol for the OREA legislative agenda. Get involved. Try it, you'll like it! For further information, call OREA Executive Director Norman Cooper at (405) 523-4371 or (800) 310-2230.

### HealthChoice Loses 11K Participants

Due mainly to the departure of most of the state's four-year colleges and universities from the plan, HealthChoice will have approximately 11,000 fewer active employee and retired members for the 2010 calendar year. Nonetheless, HealthChoice will remain the "choice" of 75% of all participants in state-sponsored insurance programs, down slightly from 77% in 2009. More than 200,000 active and retired state and education employees and dependents will be enrolled in the various insurance plans during 2010.

### KEEP UP WITH OREA-SPONSORED BILLS

In the 2010 legislative session, OREA, with the support of friendly legislators, will sponsor several bills aimed at achieving the association's legislative goals. As of press time for this newsletter, specific language for some of the bills was still in the drafting process. By the time the session begins on February 1, however, OREA will be able to provide bill numbers, authors, and content information. Members are invited to consult legislative updates weekly on the OREA website at [www.orea.org](http://www.orea.org). To receive regular and late-breaking e-mail updates, members are encouraged to provide their e-mail addresses to Sharon Cox at [scox@okea.org](mailto:scox@okea.org). For a condensed version of weekly updates, members can call the OREA legislative hotline at (405) 525-2230 or (800) 310-2230 toll free.

Plan to  
Attend a  
Great State  
Convention

- The OREA Annual State Convention and inaugural meeting of the House of Delegates will be held Friday, May 14, 2010, in Stillwater at the Wes Watkins Conference Center on the campus of Oklahoma State University. The
- theme for the convention will be “One Strong Voice,” emphasizing the im-
- portance of member unity in the organization’s efforts to improve the lives of Oklahoma’s retired educators.

The convention will feature a dynamic keynote speaker, Frosty Troy, six entertaining and informative workshops, memorial service for deceased members, video presentation of our Very Important Members and other distinguished awards, lively entertainment, silent auction, business partner booths, door prizes, and food, fun and fellowship. A pre-convention social activity with complimentary refreshments is being planned for Thursday evening at a Stillwater restaurant for members arriving the day before the convention.



*Frosty Troy  
Keynote Speaker*

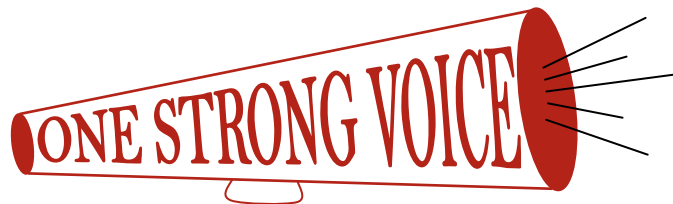
Tickets for the event are a real value, especially if members take advantage of early bird discounts. If purchased between January 1 and February 28, the cost of an indi-



*Wes Watkins Conference Center  
Oklahoma State University*

vidual ticket will be \$10. Between March 1 and April 15, the cost will be \$12.50. From April 16 up to the date of the convention, tickets will be \$15. The ticket includes all convention activities and materials, plus continental breakfast, refreshments, noon luncheon buffet, and parking. Early bird tickets are transferable in the event the original purchaser is unable to attend.

Buy your tickets now to attend a great state convention.



Continental Breakfast  
8:30 a.m.

Luncheon  
12:00 noon

**2010 OREA CONVENTION**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State & Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Oklahoma State University  
Wes Watkins Conference Center  
Stillwater, Oklahoma  
**Friday, May 14, 2010**

Tickets: \$10.00 each if purchased January 1 - February 28  
\$12.50 each if purchased March 1 - April 15  
\$15.00 each if purchased after April 15

Number of tickets ordered \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_  
(Price includes breakfast, lunch & parking)

Mail this order form to: OREA, P.O. Box 18485, Oklahoma City, OK 73154  
Your tickets will be mailed to you - Pre-registration is required!

## Committee Defines Formula for House of Delegates Representation

The OREA House of Delegates, the new legislative body of the organization, will meet Friday afternoon, May 14, as part of the Annual State Convention. The Constitution Committee met in November and December to begin planning for the event. Among many topics addressed, the committee sought to define a formula for local unit representation, outline the duties and responsibilities of a credentials committee, and establish structure and process for the conduct of House of Delegates business as defined in the Constitution and Bylaws.

The committee decided that the president of each recognized local OREA unit will automatically qualify as a delegate, with an additional delegate granted to a unit for 2-30 members, or major fraction thereof. Thereafter, the unit will qualify for additional delegates for every 30 members, or major fraction thereof. For example, a unit with 65 members would be entitled to three delegates. A unit with 76 members would qualify for four delegates. A unit of 500 would qualify for 18 delegates. OREA state office records of a unit's membership as of March 1, 2010, will be used to determine delegate allocation.

Utilizing this formula, local units may elect delegates and alternates at any time, but no later than April 10, with delegate forms filed at the OREA office in Oklahoma City no later than April 15. Local unit presidents will be provided more specific information, including necessary paperwork, after the Constitution Committee meets again in January. A broad-based credentials committee, to be appointed by President Weldon Davis and subject to approval by the Board of Directors, will provide administrative authority and guidance over the House of Delegates.

Members of the committee are: Ada Hill (Wynnewood), Chair, Marian Clark (Oologah), Joy Dennis (Enid), Tommy Fulton (Midwest City), Anna Claire Kuchta (Lawton), Theo Crawley (Weleetka), and Nancy Stuckey (Burlington). Ex-officio members of the committee are: President Weldon Davis (Bethany), Vice President Elaine Dodd (Tulsa), and Executive Director Norman Cooper.

## Senator Corn Requests AG's Opinion On Health Insurance Issue

Reacting to the forced exit of TRS higher education retirees from state-sponsored health insurance programs effective January 1, Sen. Kenneth Corn (D, Poteau) has requested an official opinion from the office of Attorney General Drew Edmondson. Specific language in state statutes guarantees common school employees who retired prior to May 1, 1993 the right to remain in the state insurance programs if their employer elects to withdraw, but there is not the same protection specificity for higher education retirees. Higher education institutions, however, are required to offer group health insurance to their TRS retirees regardless of their dates of retirement, even though there are no standards regarding the cost and coverage of a plan of insurance that might be offered.

OREA believes that all TRS retirees should be afforded the same right to continued insurance coverage in state-sponsored health insurance programs, and will communicate its views to the AG's office. OREA will also offer support for legislation that is likely to be offered by Rep. Mike Jackson (R, Enid) on this issue during the 2010 session.



The 2010 election season will be here soon. OREA members can help elect friends of retired educators to the state legislature and statewide offices through their financial contributions to the OREA Fund, the organization's officially registered political action committee. Contributions to the OREA Fund are encouraged at all state level and local unit meetings. Individual contributions may be made payable to the OREA Fund and sent to: OREA Fund, Attn: Kerry Hughes, P. O. Box 18485, Oklahoma City, OK 73154. Contributions of \$50 or more in any given calendar year require a contributor's statement, which can be obtained by calling Kerry at (405) 523-4372 or (800) 310-2230. Thanks for contributing to the OREA Fund.



## OREA ELECTIONS TO BE HELD

OREA elections for President, Vice President and district directors for the Central, East Central and South Central districts will be held in 2010. District directors will be elected for three-year terms beginning July 1 at spring district workshops (see workshop schedule located on the back page). Candidates for district director must be members in good standing of both OREA and a local unit in the district where they seek election. A district map can be found on the OREA website at [www.orea.org](http://www.orea.org). Filing deadline for district director positions is Wednesday, February 24.

A President and Vice President will be elected, each for two-year terms beginning July 1, at the Annual State Convention on May 14. Candidates for either office must be members in good standing of both OREA and a local unit. Filing deadline for the offices of President and Vice President is Wednesday, May 5. Candidates for all offices should contact Sharon Cox at OREA (405.523.4373 or 800.310.2230 toll free) for more information on election procedures.

### Frank Wilson Is New Man on the Job

The Oklahoma State and Education Employees Group Insurance Board recently named Frank Wilson to the top administrator position over HealthChoice health, dental, vision, life and disability programs.

His duties commenced January 1. Wilson has been a HealthChoice employee since 1990, serving most recently as the agency's chief financial officer. He replaces Bill Crain, who retired December 31. Wilson was selected after a several months-long national search.

## State Office Contact Info

Norman Cooper Executive Director 405.523.4371 ncooper.okea.org	Terry Ingmire Legislative Consultant 405.269.5740 t1ingmire@yahoo.com	Kerry Hughes Finance Specialist/ Administrative Assistant 405.523.4372 khughes@okea.org	Sharon Cox Assistant to Executive Director 405.523.4373 scox@okea.org	Tonia Caruthers Membership Specialist 405.523.4374 tcaruthers@okea.org
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P.O. Box 18485 ❖ Oklahoma City, OK 73154 ❖ [www.orea.org](http://www.orea.org) ❖ 405.528.7785 or 800.522.8091  
Direct: 405.525.2230 ❖ 800.310.2230

## OREA Fund Recommends Kenneth Corn for Lt. Governor

The OREA Fund Committee took action December 1 to recommend the candidacy of Kenneth Corn for Lt. Governor in the 2010 Democratic primary election. Corn, now representing southeast Oklahoma District 4 in the state Senate, was the recipient of the OREA "4% Fair and Equal COLA Award" at the 2009 OREA State Convention for his outstanding advocacy on behalf of retired educators.

The Fund Committee is composed of elected members of the Board of Directors plus other OREA members appointed by President Weldon Davis. The OREA Fund is a political action organization registered with the Oklahoma Ethics Commission. All financial assistance to recommended candidates comes from the voluntary contributions of OREA members.

In other business, the Fund Committee approved operational guidelines for the 2010 election cycle, adopted legislative and statewide candidate questionnaires, and assessed current and projected revenues for 2010 primary and general elections.

## TRS Projects Sharp Drop in State Funding



Executive Secretary Dr. James Wilbanks reported to the Teachers' Retirement System Board of Trustees in November that the system anticipates receiving almost \$50 million less in state dedicated revenues for the 2010 fiscal year. Wilbanks said the projected drop is a result of declining state revenues during the current economic recession, as well as full implementation of legislatively adopted reductions in the Oklahoma personal income tax. TRS annually receives 5.0% of the state's income, sales and use taxes, which in the 2009 fiscal year amounted to \$257 million.

# OREA BOARD of Directors

<b>President</b> Weldon Davis (405) 495-1069	<b>East Central Director</b> Theo Crawley (918) 623-6736	<b>Southeast Director</b> Sharon McKeever (580) 933-7806	<b>Government Relations Chair</b> Lonnie Fuson (580) 355-0131
<b>Vice President</b> Elaine Dodd (918) 744-5830	<b>North Central Director</b> Clyde Pendergraft (580) 765-3809	<b>South Central Director</b> Charles Barrick (580) 332-0052	<b>Finance Chair</b> Matti Palluconi (918) 341-8279
<b>Past President</b> Joy Dennis (580) 237-4990	<b>Northeast Director</b> Marian Clark (918) 443-2645	<b>Southwest Director</b> Jane Mershon (580) 355-1462	<b>Communications Chair</b> Joe Wynn (580) 335-7114
<b>Central Director</b> Roy Cates (405) 324-7751	<b>Northwest Director</b> Nancy Jewell (580) 233-4173	<b>State Membership Chair</b> Marilyn Davis (405) 495-1069	

## HAVE YOU PAID YOUR 2009-2010 MEMBERSHIP DUES?

If you pay dues annually, don't forget to mail in your membership dues check for this year (September 1, 2009-August 31, 2010). Just complete the annual membership form on the right and return to OREA or your local county membership person. Remember to send your local dues to your local membership chair. If you want to avoid renewing each year, choose the continuous membership form below to have your dues payroll deducted monthly in the amount of \$3.00.

### 2009-2010 MEMBERSHIP FORM

#### OREA (State) - Select One

- OREA Annual (\$36.00)
- Continuous (3.00 per month withheld by TRS)
- Be sure to sign the form below

#### NEA-Retired (Optional) - Select One

- NEA-R Annual (\$25.00 - cannot be payroll deducted)
- NEA-R Lifetime (\$200.00 - cannot be payroll deducted)

~ Dues payable by check or money order to OREA ~

**The following section must be completed - please print**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security Number (required by TRS) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

#### **\*Continuous Membership Authorization (Signature needed only for continuous membership)**

I hereby authorize the Teachers' Retirement System of Oklahoma to deduct **\$3.00 each month** from my benefit check and to remit same to the Oklahoma Retired Educators Association for payment of ANNUAL DUES. This authorization is to remain in effect until cancelled by written notice to the Oklahoma Retired Educators Association. I understand this is a voluntary authorization and my receiving a monthly benefit allowance is not dependent on membership in this Association.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please return your payment or dues deduction form to OREA \* P.O. Box 18485 \* Oklahoma City, OK 73154

## TRS ACTUARIAL REPORT RECEIVED

Actuaries for Gabriel Roeder Smith and Company presented the 2009 actuarial report to the TRS Board of Trustees on November 18. The report is a snapshot of the retirement system as of the close of business on June 30. Somewhat surprisingly, in spite of the momentous downturn in the value of TRS assets during the year, the funding level of the system fell only slightly, from 50.5% to 49.8%, even though the funding period – the number of years needed to fully fund the system’s liabilities – rose from 54.4 years in 2008 to “infinity” this year.

Some observers had argued that the TRS Board’s decision in July, 2008, to increase the annual assumed COLA rate from 1% to 2% would be the primary driver toward a longer funding period and a reduced system funding level. Not so, said the actuaries. Instead, they pointed to the decline in value of TRS assets from approximately \$9.5 billion in 2007 to \$7.2 billion as of June 30, 2009. In a positive development, the market value of TRS assets increased to almost \$8.4 billion by the end of October. Had the actuarial report reflected the higher level of assets, the funding percentage likely would not have dropped at all.

During the recent fiscal year, the number of active members of the retirement system grew from 88,678 to 89,399, while the number of retired members actually receiving benefits from the system grew to 46,796 from 45,238. The average annual annuitant benefit rose from \$17,532 to \$17,775. The average age of active members of the system rose to 46.0 years from 45.9 last year. Ten years ago the average age of an active member was 44.4 years.

In a disappointing development, the positive external cash flow that TRS had enjoyed for two consecutive years came to an end. Each of the last two years saw the system receive more in total revenues than it spent. This year, the system spent \$914 million dollars on all aspects of its operation (including benefits paid to annuitants), while receiving \$907 million in revenue, for an operating loss of -0.1%. In three out of every four years since 1970, the system has operated at a loss, relying on investment income to overcome budget deficits. Such operating losses reflect the chronic failure of the state legislature to adequately fund TRS.

Members interested in learning more about the TRS actuarial report are invited to contact Norman Cooper at (405) 523-4371 or (800) 310-2230 toll free.



### MEMBERSHIP HAS BENEFITS!

Your membership with OREA gives you access to many member only benefits. Association Member Benefits Advisors (AMBA) helps to make the following benefits available to OREA members:

- First Diagnosis Cancer Policy
- Dental Insurance
- Astrum Hearing Solutions
- Vacations-to-Go Cruises
- Rental Car Discounts (Budget, Avis & Hertz)
- Apple Computer Discounts
- 1-800-FLOWERS Discounts
- AMBA TravelPERX Travel Deals
- Medical Air Services Association (MASA)
- Vision Plan
- Government Employee Travel Opportunities
- La Quinta Inn & Suites Discount
- Dell Computer Discounts
- Identity Theft Solutions
- Barnes & Noble Online Discounts

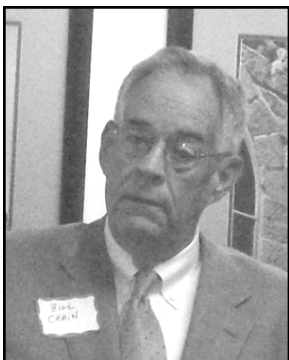
The OREA endorsed dental and vision plan information was mailed to all members in November. If you did not receive a packet, or would like additional information on OREA benefits, contact AMBA at 1-800-258-7041. Membership with OREA is required in order to obtain these benefits.

Benefit speakers are also available to speak at your local meetings. To request a speaker, please contact Jeanie Coffey, AMBA Director of Association Relations, at 800.258.7041, ext. 332.

~ Advertisement ~

## Salute to Bill Crain, Retiring HealthChoice Administrator

After more than a decade as chief administrator of HealthChoice, Bill Crain retired effective December 31. He was honored for outstanding and dedicated service at the December meeting of the Oklahoma State and Education Employees Group Insurance Board.



Crain's leadership at HealthChoice was marked by a positive professional relationship between the agency and OREA leaders. He was always quick to respond to organizational and individual needs in a positive and courteous manner. While possessing the detailed knowledge and skills necessary for the management of a huge government agency, he maintained the common touch. There was never any doubt regarding his empathy for the active and retired members of the health program, even during a difficult 2009 as HealthChoice struggled in the transition from one claims processing company to another.

Retired educators are better off as a result of Bill Crain's service. We wish him and his family the best in retirement.

## SPRING DISTRICT WORKSHOP SCHEDULE ANNOUNCED

The following schedule has been announced for OREA spring district workshops:

### Central District

Friday, March 5th, 10:00 a.m.  
OREA Headquarters, Oklahoma City

### South Central District

Thursday, March 18, 10:00 a.m.  
Chickasaw Center, Sulphur

### East Central District

Friday, March 26th, 10:00 a.m.  
First Baptist Church, Muskogee

The following districts will not have a workshop:

**Northwest District**

**North Central District**

**Northeast District**

**Southeast District**

**Southwest District**

The **OREA News Bulletin** is published four times yearly in January, April, July and October as the official newsletter of the Oklahoma Retired Educators Association. OREA Headquarters are located at 323 E. Madison, Oklahoma City, OK 73105. The opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the official positions of the organization. Questions, comments, or suggestions about the **News Bulletin** are welcome, and may be communicated to Norman Cooper, Executive Director, P. O. Box 18485, Oklahoma City, OK 73154.

Oklahoma Retired Educators Association  
P.O. Box 18485  
Oklahoma City, OK 73154

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