



Greater Bridgeport Retired Teachers Association

Bridgeport Easton Fairfield Milford Monroe Shelton Stratford Trumbull

From the President's Podium

Thoughtful: A teacher takes a hand, opens a mind, and touches a heart.

Humorous: There are three good reasons to be a teacher – June, July, and August!

Authors Unknown

Where has the time gone? It was on July 1st of 2015 that I began my term as President of the GBRTA and as I look back at my first newsletter, I see that I could almost copy it for my last newsletter! We are still talking about tax relief, insurance coverage, the Government Pension Offset, and the Windfall Elimination Provision!

At least I can report that in these four years some progress has been made with a 10% reduction on our state income tax payments for 2016 and a 25% reduction for 2017 BUT we are now in a holding pattern. It was supposed to have been 50% for 2018, but due to the poor condition of Connecticut's finances, the 25% reduction was continued for one more year. Gov. Lamont is now proposing that it remain at 25% so it is imperative that you contact your State legislators on this matter.

The prospect of better funding for our

retirement and health insurance accounts also seems to be improving but again, you must stay alert to the news emanating from Hartford. The GPO and WEP legislation



is again working its way through Congress but does not yet have the full support of Connecticut's delegation – let them know your thoughts. See the story below.

Another hot button topic generated by the new administration in Harford has been the idea of regionalization. This thought caused a furor around the state and the position being taken now is to support mutuality of services

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Action on Social Security—WEP/GPO

The Social Security Act, passed in 1935, excluded federal, state and local government employees from mandatory coverage. In 1950 Congress passed legislation that allowed state and local government employees to be covered. Following a referendum, Connecticut members of the Teachers' Retirement System voted against joining the Social Security system. Additional legislation further reduced the benefits retired teachers in Connecticut and in fourteen other states who do not contribute to Social Security.

In 1977 Congress passed the Government Pension Offset (GPO) that applies to spouses who qualify for both their teacher pensions and a Social Security spousal benefit. The GPO reduces Social Security spousal benefits by two-thirds of the retired teachers' pensions.

The Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) of 1983 affects Connecticut's retired teachers who have earned their pensions and also worked at other jobs where they paid Social Security taxes long enough to qualify for retirement benefits. It reduces those benefits by as much as 60% - depending on salaries and quarters of employment covered by Social Security.

The Social Security Fairness Act of 2019 which cancels the GPO and WEP has been introduced in Congress. The House bill is H.R. 141 with 159 co-sponsors and the Senate bill is S.521 with 28 co-sponsors. As of this writing, Representatives Joe Courtney, Rosa DeLauro, Johanna Hayes and Jim Himes have signed on as co-sponsors. Senators Blumenthal and Murphy have co-sponsored the Senate bill. While Representative John Larson has sponsored H.R. 1902,

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Trips

We have made arrangements to participate in the "Friends of Marcella" Friendship Tours.

Departure is from the Commuter Lot at the junction of Route 25 and Route 111 (Main St. in Trumbull).

Checks should be made payable to Friendship Tours and mailed to: Marcella Chamberlain
PO Box 292
Trumbull, CT 06611
203-261-6182

June 6, 2019

On Your Feet—Westchester Theatre

The production tells the story of Gloria and Emilio Estefan and their journey to become the international sensation that they are today. The \$110 charge includes transportation, entertainment and a selection of lunch entrees. Make reservations by May 5th.

July 9, 2019

Lobster at the Delaney House

Holyoke, MA \$106

All-you-can-eat lobster along with a buffet of salads, fruit, Pork Marengo, Focaccia Haddock, Chicken Marsala, ziti, vegetable and dessert. Entertainment provided by singer/comedian John Timpanelli. Reserve by June 10th.

August 12, 2019

Together Again—A Tribute to

Dolly Parton and Kenny Rogers

Aquaturf, Plantsville, CT \$99

Enjoy the music and memories as two talented professionals re-create the best of Dolly and Kenny. With coffee and donuts on arrival, the family style lunch includes salad, pasta, Chicken Francaise, Baked Scrod, vegetables, dessert and beverages. Make your reservations by July 12th.

Flyers for the trips will be available at our meetings and online at www.GBRTA.org

Space is limited!

Questions? Contact GBRTA's Travel Coordinator Angela McKelvey - 203-227-3222

President's Podium

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between towns such as Superintendents, special education services, purchasing, transportation, and the like which could result in cost savings but not force the merger of districts.

The GBRTA continues to support the profession by sponsoring 16 scholarships to area public high school seniors who plan to become teachers and we continue to support the needs of the community with food drives, clothing drives, Samaritan's Purse and continued involvement on an as needed basis in the local school systems.

I urge all of our members to be actively involved not only in our organization but to join others in speaking out on important issues related to our health and welfare. Let your elected representatives in Hartford and Washington know your feelings about such issues. Join one of the many committees of the GBRTA.

And finally, I would be remiss if I did not take a moment to express my thanks to the Board of Directors for their support and encouragement during these four years. Without their participation as well as the support of the general membership, there would be no GBRTA. I look forward to the same support being given to the new slate of officers who will assume their duties on July 1st.

Bob Pitzschler

Action on Social Security—WEP/GPO

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the *Social Security 2100 Act*, this legislation does not address the GPO/WEP problem. It's important that we contact our members of Congress to request their continuing support for eliminating the WEP and GPO and their negative effects on Connecticut's teachers.

To contact your legislators, go to

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/members>



Bob Pitzschler, Lucille Baver and Dianne Harrison finalize plans for the May 9th GBRTA meeting of the membership.

Memorial Service

At the May GBRTA meeting the following deceased members will be remembered:

Kenneth Mouldin	March 5, 2018
Ralph Veneruso	June 15, 2018
Ina Kolaric	June 18, 2018
Cynthia Morton	June 19, 2018
Ralph Money	July 1, 2018
Jeanne Baklic	September 13, 2018
Alice B. Nealon	September 21, 2018
Anita Henschel	September 29, 2018
Lorraine Brodsky	November 15, 2018
Veronica Litrop	December 20, 2018
August Tomasetti	December 20, 2018
Malfada (Mickey) Gigliotti	January 26, 2019
Rita Hibyan	February 6, 2019
Mary Rose Patton	March 4, 2019
Helen Breck	March 7, 2019
Deanna Culbert	April 14, 2019

Save the Date

- May 14, 2019 ARTC Spring Luncheon— Aquaturf
- May 21, 2019 CEA-R Spring Luncheon— Aquaturf
- Sept. 18, 2019 Trip—*Music from the Soul*—Grand Oak Villa
- Oct. 10, 2019 GBRTA Meeting and Luncheon—Testo's
- Nov. 14, 2019 GBRTA Meeting and Luncheon—Testo's



A special thank-you to Debbie Ruby who will be leaving Connecticut for a new home in North Carolina. Debbie's work in preparing baskets and other prizes for our Scholarship Raffles has been very much appreciated. We will miss her help and her colorful outfits- always with matching shoes.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Annual Dues—\$20

Life Membership \$250

The membership year runs from July 1—June 30. Members whose dues are two or more years in arrears will be dropped from the membership file and must repay two years of back dues for reinstatement.

Please check the address label on this newsletter. If the message after your name is anything other than *Life Member* or *July 1, 2019*, your dues are in arrears.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Year Retired _____ School System _____

New Member _____ Renewal _____ Amount of check _____

Mail form and check, payable to GBRTA to

Ann Block 60 Ridgeview Avenue Trumbull, CT 06611

By-Law Changes

In the Spring of 2018, an Ad-Hoc committee of five members of the Board of Directors was formed with a goal of reviewing the organization's By-Laws to determine if any changes should be made since the last update in 2015. At the November Board Meeting, the committee proposed several changes to the document, mostly grammatical, and a few more substantial.

Some of the key amendments would be to change the payment of dues to be in line with when we meet and to clarify the duties and responsibilities of some of the Board positions and committees. These recommendations were presented to the membership at the April meeting and will be voted upon at the May meeting. A copy of the By-Laws is available at our website: <http://www.gbrta.org>

Election of Officers

At the March Board of Directors meeting, the Nominating Committee presented a slate of officers to be considered for those Board positions that are elected by the Membership to serve for fixed terms. The term of office is two years and each position is limited to two terms.

The Board gave unanimous approval to the nominations of: President—RoseMarie D'Aquila, First Vice President—Sandy Petrucelli-Carbone, and Recording Secretary—Sue Berescik. Continuing for a second term will be Corresponding Secretary—Rita McDougald-Campbell, and Treasurer—Helen Scinto. According to the By-Laws, as the immediate Past President, Bob Pitzschler, will automatically become Second Vice President.

Meet Connecticut's Teacher of the Year



Sheena Graham, Connecticut's 2019 Teacher of the Year was our guest at the April 11th meeting. Pictured here with her Harding High School Choir, she is currently in her 36th year of teaching. Sheena has received numerous awards and honors throughout her career as an educator including the Beard Excellence in Teaching Award, the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's-Teacher of the Year Award, the NAACP-

Teacher of the Year Award, and the Choral Director of Distinction Award .

However, Sheena says, "to be recognized as still being relevant and selected as Bridgeport's Teacher of the Year and Connecticut's Teacher of the Year after thirty-five years in education, is the highest honor above all!"

Ms. Graham thanked the audience of retired teachers for the opportunity to appear before them and left an assignment for us. She observed that Connecticut's financial problems would likely result in cuts to education that would, as always, be reflected in the classroom. She shared her concern that the effect on teachers and their students would be harmful to the learning environment.

Sheena observed that teaching was a demanding profession at all times and each of us knows that the lure of springtime adds to the effort needed to keep students focused. She reminded us that our colleagues in the classroom would appreciate a call or note letting them know that we were thinking of them and appreciated all that they were doing.

Join Us for Lunch at Testo's Restaurant

1775 Madison Avenue, Bridgeport

10:30 am

Price \$28

May 9, 2019

Choice of: Roasted Chicken

Baked Ham

Scrod Oreganato

Reservations by May 3

Cancellations by May 6

Make check payable to GBRTA with menu choice and your phone number on the check.

CHECKS MUST ACCOMPANY RESERVATIONS; NO PAYMENT ACCEPTED AT THE DOOR.

Reservations and payment to: Trudi Black

487 Church Hill Rd.

Trumbull, CT 06611

Phone: 203-261-6576

Our special guest at the Memorial Service and meeting will be the Rev. Edward McAuley, pastor of St. Bridget of Ireland Parish in Stamford. Father McAuley retired in 2001 from the Trumbull Public Schools where he served for thirty-years as a high school Social Studies. He was married for twenty-three years prior to the passing of his wife in 1995. He is the father of three grown children and the proud grandfather of two. He was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Bridgeport in 2006.

We look forward to the unique perspective that Father Ed will share with us.

Email GBRTA.org@gmail.com

Website www.GBRTA.org