

# LASERS

Louisiana State Employees'  
Retirement System

Quarterly Membership Newsletter  
**the iBEAM**  
the LASERS Beam Interactive

## The LASERS Vision:

*Confidence in our service, assuring  
financial security for your future*

Winter, 2011

Volume 22, Number 3

LASERS  
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## LASERS Board of Trustees

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**Sheryl M. Ranatza**  
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**Kathy Singleton**  
225.222.6567



## 2011 LASERS Board of Trustees ELECTION RESULTS

(l-r):

*Sheryl Ranatza (Active member representative),  
Barbara McManus and Connie Carlton  
(Retired member representatives)*

(not present):

*Thomas Bickham and Shannon Templet  
(Active member representatives)*

LASERS is pleased to announce the results of the 2011 Board of Trustees election.

Elected to serve four-year terms as retired member representatives are: Connie Carlton, retired from LASERS; and Barbara McManus, retired from the Department of Social Services. Retirees voted by mail, telephone, and Internet. The Board certified the election results at its November 18 meeting.

As you may recall, three active candidates qualified for the three active positions. On July 22, the LASERS Board certified these candidates—Thomas Bickham and Sheryl Ranatza, both of the Department of Public Safety & Corrections, and Shannon

Templet of the State Department of Civil Service— as winners of the positions, eliminating the need for an election by active members.

The 12-member policy-making Board has fiduciary oversight over LASERS. Members include six elected active representatives, three retired representatives, and three ex officio members including the State Treasurer, the Chair of the House Committee on Retirement, and the Chair of the Senate Committee on Retirement.

The new Board Members will be sworn in prior to the January 27, 2012 regular meeting. Congratulations to our newly elected Trustees. The next Board of Trustees election will be in 2013.

## Constitutional Amendment No. 2 Passes



Constitutional Amendment No. 2 passed on October 22 with over half of Louisiana voters speaking in favor of pension reform. This amendment will dedicate a portion of future state surplus funds to reduce retirement system debt. With 531,207 votes cast for the passage of this amendment, it is evident citizens support the payment of retirement debt on a mandated schedule.

The initial Unfunded Accrued Liability (UAL or debt) of LASERS was recognized in 1988 by virtue of a 1987 constitutional amendment. That debt has continued to accumulate over the decades, with the greatest portion coming from the failure of the state to make its required employer contribution and the resulting interest charges due to that failure.

The implementation of this measure is considered another step forward for pension reform. Thanks for making a positive difference.

## Faces OF LASERS

### Nominate a Fellow Member

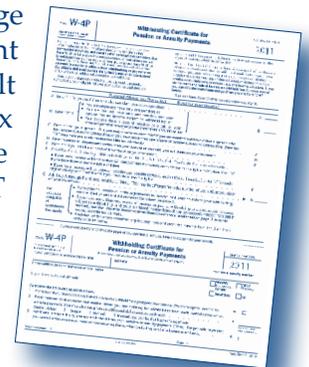
A distinctive LASERS member will be featured each quarter in *The Beam*. If you know an exemplary public employee (and member of LASERS), you may nominate them for a feature story in *The Beam* by filling out the online form at [www.lasersonline.org/FacesNominate](http://www.lasersonline.org/FacesNominate).

We encourage you to read about Col. Winton Vidrine, our first profiled member, on page five in this issue. Col. Vidrine spoke with LASERS about his years with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and what it means to serve Louisiana.

## January 2012 Benefits Payments

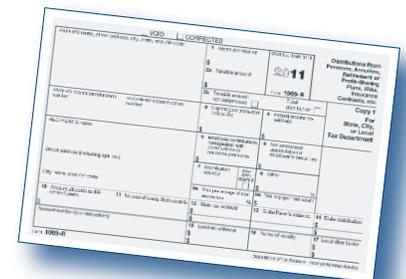
Please note that the January 2012 benefit payments will have an effective date of January 1, 2012. However, your financial institution may not make the funds available until January 3, 2012, due to January 1 falling on a Sunday, and January 2 being a Federal Reserve holiday in observance of New Year's Day.

Retirees may notice a change in their benefit payment starting January 1 as a result of insurance premium and tax changes. Retirees who receive their monthly benefit via EFT will receive an EFT notice reflecting any changes.



If you have questions regarding insurance rate changes, please contact the Office of Group Benefits at 1.800.272.8451. As always, LASERS encourages benefit recipients to review their withholdings annually and, if necessary, request a change by filling out a new W4-P form, which can be found on our website, [www.lasersonline.org/uploads/W4P.pdf](http://www.lasersonline.org/uploads/W4P.pdf).

## Form 1099-R for 2011



Form 1099-R for 2011 will be mailed to retirees by the last week of January 2012. Please allow two weeks for delivery. If you have not received it by February 7, or if you need to print a duplicate copy, you may access your 1099-R online through LASERS Retired Member Self-Service. To report an error or request a duplicate be mailed to you, please contact LASERS at 225.922.0600 or 1.800.256.3000. Should you have questions regarding your 1099-R, we suggest you contact your tax advisor.



If you have been married, and widowed or divorced, marriage certificates, pre-nuptial agreements or matrimonial agreements stating spouses have separate (non-community) property, death certificates, and judgments of divorce must be on file.

TIP: It is not necessary for you to wait until you are ready to retire to provide the required documents. They can be submitted to LASERS through your agency’s Human Resource office at any time. Please ensure that all documents submitted include your social security number so they can be filed into your member record.

When your retirement or DROP application is submitted, you may need to provide a Spousal Consent Form, depending on the option you choose, and an Authorization for Direct Deposit of your retirement benefits.

## Expedite Your Benefits at Retirement

To facilitate prompt payment of your monthly benefit upon retirement, LASERS requests that you have all necessary documents on file. Required documents include a copy of your birth certificate and social security card to verify your eligibility. The same documents are required for your beneficiaries.

**You will not receive your retirement benefit until LASERS has received these documents.**

As always, if you have questions about your benefits, please call our Member Services Division at 225.922.0600 or 1.800.256.3000.

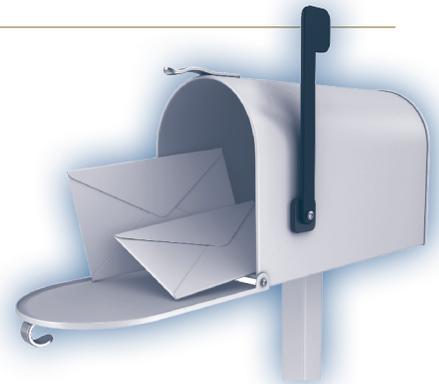
## Possible Change in Mail Delivery May Affect Retirees

Congress is considering legislation to allow the United States Postal Service to cut a day of service, limiting mail delivery to five days a week. LASERS retirees receiving paper checks could be affected by this change.

Retirees will be notified of any impending changes in the mail delivery system. If you have questions or desire information about having your retirement benefits

direct deposited, as opposed to receiving paper checks, contact the LASERS Member Services Division at 225.922.0600 or 1.800.256.3000.

LASERS urges all of our retirees to use direct deposit.



## Please Update Your Mail Preferences

If you have recently moved and have not yet updated your address with LASERS, please do so as soon as possible. Throughout the year, we send important documents to your home address, such as your Member’s Annual Account Statement, 1099 federal tax statements, and *The Beam*. LASERS would also like the opportunity to contact you via email.

If you are a retiree, your physical and email address may be updated by visiting the LASERS website at:

[www.lasersonline.org/EmailUpdate](http://www.lasersonline.org/EmailUpdate)

or download the Change of Address (Form 01-02) form at:

[www.lasersonline.org/uploads/102ChangeofAddress.pdf](http://www.lasersonline.org/uploads/102ChangeofAddress.pdf).

Fill it out completely, sign, and return to us at:

LASERS  
P.O. Box 44213  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-4213

If you are an active employee, please change your address through your agency’s Human Resource office.

# The Board Memo

Connie Carlton, 2011 Board Chair



During my term as board chair, important challenges have been presented to the LASERS Board of Trustees. With each issue, our first and foremost thought has been to act in the best interest of LASERS

members and beneficiaries. One significant concern is the ongoing push by many critics to change the LASERS defined benefit (DB) plan to a defined contribution (DC) plan. Our commitment as a board is to continue preservation of the defined benefit plan for current and future LASERS members.

Part of our role is to provide lawmakers with information that will help them make prudent decisions as they affect each of you. A new study, *Decisions, Decisions: Retirement Plan Choices for Public Employees and Employers*, was recently published by the National Institute on Retirement Security (NIRS), and can be used as an excellent resource to aid in our efforts to preserve the current DB plan for LASERS members. The NIRS study found that DC plans are more costly to administer. "In addition, DB pensions are more cost efficient than DC plans due to higher investment returns and longevity risk pooling. DC pension accounts, which many private sector employers offer, lack supplemental benefits such as death and disability protection. These benefits can still be provided, but require extra contributions outside the DC plan, which are therefore not deposited into

the members' accounts. When states look at shifting from a DB pension to DC accounts, such a shift does not close funding shortfalls and can increase retirement costs." To read the entire NIRS study, visit the LASERS website and follow the link under "Messages from LASERS."

In September, members of the Board of Trustees attended the 2011 Louisiana Public Retirement Seminar, hosted by the Louisiana Association of Public Employees' Retirement Systems (LAPERS). The seminar is a professional program designed for trustees and administrative staff of Louisiana public retirement systems owing a fiduciary duty to any state, statewide, or local retirement system or fund. Held in New Orleans, this seminar served as an educational forum for us and presented an opportunity to network with peers.

Valuable sessions included presentations by: Bob McCrory, FSA, on *The Future of Plan Design from an Actuarial Perspective*; Viable Investment Vehicles with LASERS CIO Bobby Beale, CFA, CAIA and Phil Griffith, CIO, Teachers' Retirement System of Louisiana; and *Ethics & Reporting Requirements* by Ethics Administrator Kathleen Allen, Louisiana Board of Ethics and LASERS Deputy Director Maris E. LeBlanc. Much of the information shared at the seminar will prove invaluable as we strive to assure the financial soundness of the System through prudent management and exceptional customer service to our members.

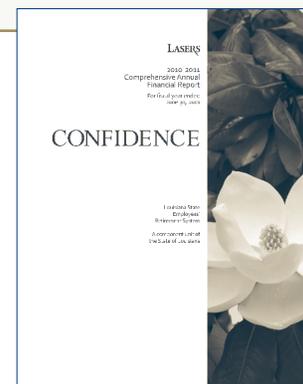
## LASERS Financial Reports Available Online

We are pleased to announce that the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) and Summary Annual Financial Report (PAFR) for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2011, are now available on our website at [www.lasersonline.org/annual\\_reports](http://www.lasersonline.org/annual_reports). In this landmark fiscal year, LASERS investments yielded a 24.3 percent market return, the highest in our history.

The Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) awarded a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting to LASERS for its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2010. This was the fourteenth consecutive year that the System has achieved this prestigious award. In order to be awarded a Certificate of Achievement, a governmental unit must

publish an easily readable and efficiently organized CAFR. This report must satisfy both generally accepted accounting principles and applicable legal requirements.

Also, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2010, LASERS has been recognized by GFOA for outstanding Achievement in Popular Financial Reporting. This prestigious national award recognizes excellence for readily understood financial reports that are less technical in nature, while providing interesting financial, actuarial, and historical information. LASERS is proud to have received this award for the twelfth consecutive year.



# MEET THE Faces OF LASERS

## Colonel Winton Vidrine

Chief of Enforcement Division,  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

It takes many dedicated public employees to make the engine of state government operate. One outstanding example is Colonel Winton Vidrine, Chief of the Enforcement Division at the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF). Vidrine is completing his 42<sup>nd</sup> year with the department, having served as chief for the past 24 years. As we examine his career at Wildlife and Fisheries, many factors explain why he is the longest holder of that office in the agency's history.



LDWF is the fish and game regulatory agency of Louisiana. The division has jurisdiction over the entire state, as well as state and federal territorial waters. The agency enforces both state and federal laws relating to hunting, fishing, and boating safety.

Vidrine began working at LDWF in 1970 as an enforcement division agent, commonly referred to as a "game warden." He chose to be a game warden partly because of his love for hunting and

fishing. Vidrine took his job seriously, working seven days a week. He soon had the most arrests and most cases of any agent in the region. He also quickly recognized the need for agents to have "one voice." In 1972, Vidrine and two other agents organized the Louisiana Wildlife Agents Association. In 1973, Vidrine's friendship with the chairman of the state constitutional convention helped bring about real change. Over the next several years, retirement issues were addressed, a uniform cleaning allowance was created, and the department became better equipped.

In 1975, a complaint was filed with the Department concerning night hunters in Avoyelles Parish. It was alleged that local agents were unable to catch the

hunters, and a fresh eye was needed on the case. Secretary Burt Angelle sent Agents Vidrine, Durward, and McGee to investigate the complaint. After long hours of surveillance, the night hunters escaped on horseback, eventually leaving their mounts and fleeing on foot. Agent Vidrine mounted one of the horses bareback and gave chase. He lost the offenders in the woods, but unbeknownst to them, the horse Vidrine was riding bolted for home, leading him straight to the outlaw camp. When all was said and done, Vidrine had arrested five men and confiscated their horses, saddles, tack, and weapons. For this particular arrest, Vidrine was recognized as LDWF Outstanding Officer at that time. The complaint was dismissed.



Vidrine's bravery and arrest record helped him swiftly make rank at LDWF. In 1976, he was promoted to captain in Opelousas, the youngest in the state. In 1978, he became a major, and in 1980, a lieutenant colonel. In 1988, he achieved the top position as colonel.

Training is Vidrine's main focus in the Enforcement Division. When unique situations arise, he reacts with appropriate training for the safety of his men and the public.

The Enforcement Division of LDWF has responded to many high profile disasters in recent years, both natural and man-made. During hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the Department and its agents became heroes, recognized by the U.S. Congress for their search and rescue efforts in New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. LDWF agents had approximately 450 boats on patrol in the floodwaters and rescued over 22,000 people from flooded streets, homes, and rooftops. LDWF agents worked under harsh conditions for 16 days, with little or no drinking water and food for the first three days.

The LDWF Enforcement Division also played a prominent role in the response to the BP oil spill.

*Vidrine continued on page 7*

# Make the transition to retirement as seamless as possible at a **PREP Seminar**

## Pre-Retirement Education Program (PREP)

The day a LASERS member chooses to retire is a very important date. The anticipation and planning for retirement are both exciting, and in many ways, challenging. We at LASERS look forward to helping our members put the pieces in place that will help make the transition to retirement as seamless as possible. No matter where you are in your career, this seminar will help you with your retirement plan.

Sign up for a PREP Seminar by visiting [www.lasersonline.org](http://www.lasersonline.org), and click the “Seminars” tab under Quick Links. The PREP Workshop link allows you to search for available dates and locations and register. Under the same page, clicking “mail-in PREP application form” gives you the option to download then mail or fax an application.

All enrollments for PREP Seminars are processed through LASERS. If you wish to cancel or reschedule a PREP Seminar, call the 24-hour PREP Line, 225.922.0670 or toll free 800.256.3000. Leave your name, phone number, date and city of the seminar.

**Register at [seminar.lasers.state.la.us](http://seminar.lasers.state.la.us) | Seminars are held from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

### 2012 PREP Seminar Schedule

(T) Tentative

DATES	CITY	LOCATION
05/10 (T) 08/09 (T)	Alexandria	LSU – Alexandria
01/26 05/23 09/27 02/23 06/28 10/24 03/16 07/24 11/29 04/26 08/22 12/12	Baton Rouge	State Police Training Academy
03/15 06/06	Hammond	Southeastern Louisiana University
03/22 08/21 10/18	Lafayette	University of Louisiana at Lafayette
03/21 (T) 08/28 (T)	Lake Charles	Location to be announced
07/26 (T) 09/06 (T)	New Orleans	Delgado Community College
06/20 (T) 12/18 (T)	New Orleans	University of New Orleans
05/09 08/02	Monroe	University of Louisiana at Monroe
05/08 08/01	Shreveport	Louisiana State University – Shreveport
05/15 (T) 10/16 (T)	Thibodaux	Nicholls State University

## Amber Foster Employee of the Quarter



Amber Foster, also known as the LASERS cheerleader, began working at LASERS in 2007. Aside from meeting all of the qualifications, it was acknowledged in her interview that she has a “wonderful personality.” Almost four years later, Amber has proven that statement. She has a way of spreading joy around the office and is always looking at the positive side of things. Amber is well-known for making her co-workers smile through emails.

Amber contributes much more than her great force of positive energy. When it comes to her job and fellow team members, Amber is dedicated, hard-working, and a true team player. Amber is continually exploring new ideas and creative ways to make her job more efficient. Over the past year, she has worked with LASERS staff to automate and streamline the accounts payable process. During a time of transition, Amber jumped to another section and worked overtime to assist with cross-training. Amber was also heavily involved with projects including the testing and implementation of BEANS, an automated bank file transfer system, and she revamped the CAFR to include more user-friendly graphs.

Congratulations, Amber!

*Rougeou* continued from back page

[www.lasersonline.org](http://www.lasersonline.org), and click the “Response to Latest Proposal to ‘Re-Engineer Public Retirement’” article under Messages from LASERS.

I wish to recognize and thank Suzanne Adams for her 10 years of service at LASERS as Retirement Benefits Administrator. Suzanne has retired with a total of 36 years as a state employee and we wish her all the best. We are extremely fortunate to have Cindy Taylor take the helm as our new Retirement Benefits Administrator. Cindy has been at LASERS since 2001.

LASERS is comprised of many dedicated public employees, both active and retired. We are proud to serve our members and hope each of you enjoy a happy holiday season.

*Vidrine* continued from page 5

During this disaster, agents were on continuous duty for the longest period of time in the history of the agency. Fifty patrol boats were working the Louisiana shoreline to keep seafood from being brought ashore. Vidrine says this was a serious, stressful situation because they could take no chances of people getting sick from contaminated seafood.

During the recent flooding along the Mississippi River, Vidrine was once again in the midst of disaster planning. He was at the Morganza Spillway when the flood gates were opened to relieve the levee system, just as he was in 1973 when they were opened for the very first time. When asked how he mentally copes with the pressures of these high profile situations, he replied that the “policy and protocol are in place.”

Vidrine says the most stressful and terrible part of his job is to lose an agent. Since its formation, seven LDWF agents have been killed in the line of duty. The Ken Aycock Award was created in honor of one of these field agents. Vidrine won this award in 1995.

The nomination form reveals the esteem and respect of his colleagues: “As personal witnesses to this daily ritual of protecting our profession, he has never wavered in his efforts to do the right thing for the right reason.” Their closing comment, “he is always on our side,” speaks to Vidrine’s commitment and caring for the agents that serve Louisiana.

As the longest holder of the chief enforcement position, Vidrine attributes his staying power to “his guys (agents), his staff, and doing what’s right.”

Vidrine is also passionate about his family. He has worked in Baton Rouge most of his life, but commutes one and a half hours each way to his hometown of Washington almost every day. Home is a 40-acre farm he shares with his wife of 48 years. Vidrine credits her for being the backbone of his career.

When asked about his plans for the future, Vidrine replied, “I think about retirement a little more now than in the past.” Without a doubt, he will continue to promote the importance of LDWF, be a proponent of training for his agents, and serve the public. Maybe he will even have more time for hunting and fishing.

For the complete story on Colonel Winton Vidrine, visit the “Meet the Faces of LASERS” page at [www.lasersonline.org/faces](http://www.lasersonline.org/faces).

For more information about the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Enforcement Division, visit their website at [www.wlf.louisiana.gov/enforcement](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/enforcement).



## From the Desk of **Cindy Rougeou** LASERS Executive Director

2011 has been an important year at LASERS. Some of our significant accomplishments include the completion of a successful Board of Trustees election, our member services retirement analysts counseling

thousands of members, and posting the highest fiscal year market return in our history at 24.3 percent.

Much of our success at LASERS can be attributed to the hard work and efforts of our Board of Trustees. They have worked tirelessly over the past year seeking to strengthen your retirement security and enhance the financial soundness of our system. My sincere appreciation goes to Connie Carlton for her year of service as Board Chair and to Barbara McManus, our Vice Chair. They are experienced leaders who never waiver in their commitment to LASERS. Both Barbara and Connie were recently re-elected by LASERS retirees to serve another four year term. Charles Castille and Susan Pappan have completed their terms and will rotate off the Board of Trustees. Both have made innumerable contributions to support LASERS and will be missed.

We are pleased to welcome two new members to the Board. Shannon Templet is the Director of the Office of Civil Service and Thomas Bickham is Undersecretary of the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections. They join Sheryl Ranatza as recently elected active members on our Board. All will be tremendous assets to LASERS.

The LASERS Board of Trustees continues to find proactive ways to reduce the cost of the retirement system. At the November 18 board meeting, trustees recommended a legislative change that can save Louisiana **\$40 million**. If adopted, this cost method change will lower the percent of payroll that the State would pay to the system. This simple statutory change would free up real dollars that can be used by our State next year to fund other critical needs, such as reducing system debt.

While we are optimistic about 2012, new challenges are on the horizon for LASERS. We have already responded to a proposal from Blueprint Louisiana to "re-engineer public retirement." I spoke at the Baton Rouge Press Club in October and addressed all of the Blueprint Louisiana recommendations. To read the complete response, visit

*Rougeou* continued on page 7

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