

## PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

*Larry D. Ridgeway, AURA President, 2016-2017*

After returning to the Loveliest Village four short years ago, I joined the Auburn University Retiree Association (AURA) and have been a member of the Board of Directors for the past two years. It is now my honor to serve as your president for the 2016-17 year.

AURA was formed in 1995 as an outgrowth of meetings to address proposed changes in retirement benefits that would negatively impact Auburn University retirees. Since that time, AURA has expanded to include retirees from both Auburn University and Auburn University at Montgomery. AURA was the first advocacy organization for university retirees in the state of Alabama. AURA works closely with the Alabama Education Retirees Association (AERA) to educate and motivate education retirees in this advocacy effort.

Over the years, AURA has benefited from strong leadership from many of our current and former members. Given the current attacks on public employee retirement systems from a variety of sources, the need for our organization has never been greater. It is absolutely essential that we have a large and dedicated group of individuals willing to advocate for the continuation of our pension benefits and the provision of quality health care programs at a reasonable cost. Please think about retired AU or AUM colleagues you know and explain why they need to be members.

While AURA's committee structure worked very well in the past spreading out the work among many dedicated volunteers, our committees now

need to be re-energized and filled by willing volunteers. Please see the committee volunteer form elsewhere in the newsletter. Whether a

fairly new retiree or one who has been involved in the AURA leadership in the past, please consider volunteering to serve on one or more of these committees. We need you!

Some of the other organizational challenges AURA is facing include: examining and redefining our purpose; learning what activities our members would like in addition to our fall dinner and spring luncheon; and implementing better ways to communicate to our membership through a redesigned and up-to-date website, emails through an AURA listserv, and potentially an online newsletter. Over the next few weeks, we will be working to design a survey of the membership which will be distributed to get your ideas and feedback. I know you probably get a lot of survey requests, but please complete this one when you get it. We need your input to make AURA the best it can be.

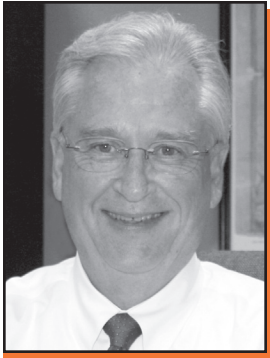
The contact information for our Board of Directors is provided elsewhere in this newsletter. Please feel free to contact any of them with your ideas and suggestions. I especially welcome your feedback as I lead AURA in the year ahead. I hope to see many of you at our catfish dinner on October 13. Thanks for being a member of AURA; we appreciate your support of our retirees. ♦



# Report of AURA Legislative Affairs Committee

## *“Education Retirees in stronger position for 2017 Legislature”*

*Gerald W. Johnson*, AURA Legislative Affairs Committee



The Alabama Legislature convened a Special Session in August to address needed funding for Medicaid. The proposed solution was a lottery or at least to let the people vote on a lottery. The final version of the lottery bill provided for ten percent of the lottery receipts to go to the

Education Trust Fund, over and above the regular ETF budget, one percent to go to volunteer fire departments, and the rest to go to the State General Fund. The first one-hundred million dollars that would go into the GF was designated for Medicaid. Of interest to education retirees, in the process, amendments were proposed to allocate five percent of the lottery receipts to a COLA Trust Fund to provide COLAs for education retirees.

All was for naught. For a variety of reasons time ran out to enact lottery legislation and the effort failed. The Legislature will reconvene on September 6 with three possible meeting days left in the session and the possibility of using some of the state's \$1 billion oil spill settlement with BP to fund Medicaid.

State funding problems will continue because Lottery revenue, if and when a lottery bill is enacted and voters approve, will be insufficient to fund Medicaid and meet other state GF needs. In addition, a lottery will not produce any revenue for FY 2017. Thus, the next regular session of the Legislature in February 2017 will again have to produce balanced budgets with insufficient revenues. The Legislature will have the same options as in past sessions— increase taxes, cut programs or use ETF revenues to meet GF obligations and needs.

Fortunately, for public education, including education retirees, the Legislature seems to be less disposed to further cut education or divert education funds for other uses. In the last general session of the Legislature a bill was considered in both houses to provide a COLA in the form of a 13th Check based on a formula of \$24 times years of service with a minimum. While that did not pass, the Chair of the Senate Finance and Taxation Committee both in Committee and on the Senate floor, stated that in

the next education budget, education retirees would have first priority.

The good news for education retirees is that the 2017 regular session of the Legislature will convene with what appears to be general recognition of the importance, need and willingness to include a retiree COLA in the ETF budget. While threats to education retirees' health and retirement programs will continue, the outlook is more positive than it has been for the last six years.

In frank and realistic terms, the progress education retirees have made is due in substantial part to the active participation of education retirees in the legislative process. That is how the democratic representative process works. Thus, AURA members, and all Auburn University retirees, again, have an important stake in the 2017 session of the Alabama Legislature. AURA is the only association that exists to support and protect the interests of AU retirees. AURA, in partnership with AERA and AEA and a coalition of education interests, can and does make a difference. Membership in AURA and your participation in the efforts and programs of AURA are essential for legislative success.

If you are interested in being a part of the AURA Legislative Affairs Committee to advocate for and protect education retiree interests, contact:

Gerald W. Johnson, Chair  
AURA Legislative Affairs Committee  
drj.polis@gmail.com  
334.728.1940 ♦

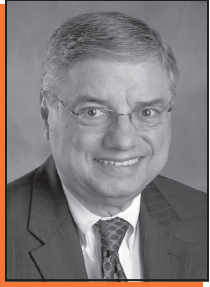
*Thank You, Monarch Estates!*

**Monarch Estates**, known for “**Gracious Retirement Living**,” located at 1550

E. University Drive in Auburn, has generously allowed the AURA Board of Directors to use its Eagles Nest Meeting Room for their monthly meetings for several years.

*We would like to acknowledge this donation from Monarch and encourage anyone considering moving from their home to visit Monarch for a tour.*

# Nomination Of Tom Vocino for AERA District 10 Director



At its August meeting, the AURA Board of Directors voted unanimously to nominate Dr. Tom Vocino as a candidate for the office of District 10 Director in the Alabama Education Retirees Association (AERA). The District 10 Director position which has a two-year term represents higher education retirees in AERA. Tom's nomination must be approved by the majority of members present at our dinner meeting on October 13.

Tom served as AURA's President for the past year and continues to lend his expertise to the AURA Board as Past President. He is Professor of Political Science and Public Administration and Department Head Emeritus at Auburn University at Montgomery. Tom currently serves part-time as executive director of Troy University's Center for Public Service in Montgomery.

Tom is seeking to replace Dr. Gerald Johnson who is in the second year of his term as District 10 Director. Gerald was elected to fill the initial District 10 Director position two years ago. ♦

# Volunteers Needed for 2016-17 AURA Committees

## Legislative Affairs Committee – Gerald Johnson

*Monitors legislative action that impacts RSA pension and health insurance programs and provides updates to the AURA Board and membership.*

## Nominating Committee – Tom Vocino

*Solicits and recommends candidates for members and officers of the AURA Board of Directors.*

## Membership Committee – Sandy Johnson

*Develops and implements strategies to increase AURA membership and participation with emphasis on recent retirees.*

## Awards and Recognition Committee – Larry Wit

*Solicits nominations and recommends recipients to the Board for the Wilford S. Bailey Award and arranges appropriate recognition for the outgoing President and AURA Board members.*

## Media and Communications Committee – Gene Akers

*Assists the AURA newsletter editor in preparing three newsletters annually, maintaining the AURA website, and preparing additional correspondence electronically and by mail, as needed.*

## Social and Program Committee – Kim Trupp

*Plans and executes social activities and programs of interest to the membership including the fall dinner and annual meeting in May.*

In order to volunteer to serve on one of the above committees, please contact Larry Ridgeway at [larryridgeway23@gmail.com](mailto:larryridgeway23@gmail.com) or 334-821-0600.

# AURA FALL DINNER MEETING

*Co-sponsored by the Auburn University Department of Athletics*

**WHEN:** Thursday, October 13, 2016

**WHERE:** Auburn Alumni Center, 317 South College Street  
*Park in the gravel lot in the rear of the building and come in the back door. To park in the paved lot, a vehicle must have an AU parking hangtag displayed.*

**SPEAKER:** Coach Clint Myers, AU Head Softball Coach

**TIME:** 5:30 p.m. Registration  
6:00 p.m. Catfish Dinner followed by Coach Myers' Address

**COST:** Free to AURA Members, Spouses, and Guests

In order to provide the caterer with the number of persons to prepare for, please let us know if you are coming and who will be in attendance by contacting:

Kim Trupp: [trupski@auburn.edu](mailto:trupski@auburn.edu) or 334-744-3452

**Deadline for reservations is Tuesday, 10/4  
or until all seats are filled.**

# For your dues status, check the newsletter address label!

If “p-2016” shows after your name, your dues have been paid through December, 2016.

If “p-2017” shows after your name, your dues have been paid through December, 2017.

*If you have not paid your AURA dues for 2016, you will find an “n” after your name. Please complete the form below and mail it with your 2016 dues payment:*

## AU-AUM Retiree AURA Membership Form

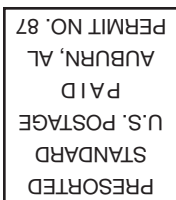
Name \_\_\_\_\_ AU \_\_\_\_\_ AUM \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

- |                                      |         |                                  |         |
|--------------------------------------|---------|----------------------------------|---------|
| _____ Single Retiree .....           | \$25.00 | _____ Surviving Spouse .....     | \$10.00 |
| _____ Retiree and Spouse .....       | \$25.00 | _____ Sponsor .....              | \$25.00 |
| _____ Retiree & Retiree Spouse ..... | \$25.00 | _____ Gift Contribution \$ _____ |         |

If you have any questions, please contact Sandy Johnson at [sandyjj130@gmail.com](mailto:sandyjj130@gmail.com)  
or Larry Ridgeway at [larryridgeway23@gmail.com](mailto:larryridgeway23@gmail.com).



AUBURN UNIVERSITY RETIREE ASSOCIATION  
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