



## PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVES

*Tom Vocino, AURA President, 2015-2016*

Annually, AURA presents an Award named after past Auburn University president Wilford Bailey that recognizes outstanding service to education and retirees in the state of Alabama. Past recipients include Dr. David Bronner, Dr. Paul Hubbert, Dr. Gerald Johnson, Janice Charlesworth and many others that have advanced interests and programs near and dear to us.

When we next meet at our Spring luncheon on May 13, we'll have the opportunity to honor with the Bailey Award former representative Pete Turnham who made a large difference in an over 50-year career in the Alabama Legislature ensuring that Auburn University as well as education as a whole received its due consideration in state budgets. It is not an understatement, I believe, to argue that the state appropriations for both campuses of Auburn University would not be what they are today without Mr. Turnham being the effective legislator he was for so many years. Thus, I hope that you will be able to join us on May 13 to honor this gentleman who played such an important role in advancing public education in Alabama.

At this same luncheon meeting, we'll also hear reports from Janice Charlesworth, executive director of the Alabama Education Retirees Association(AERA), and Dr. Gerald Johnson, AERA and AURA board member, who will brief us on the effort that is being made to improve our TRS benefit levels. As you know, education retirees have not seen a COLA approved for them since the 2006 legislative session. The benefits under consideration are very modest by any standards, but what is positive is that our concerns and needs are beginning to be heard by the Republican supermajority that has been deaf to our advocacy since they assumed control of the Legislature in 2010.

Finally, I want to thank you for the honor and privilege of serving as AURA president this past year. Serving with a dedicated board of directors who willingly accept all the tasks that allow a volunteer organization to function effectively has made serving as your president my great pleasure. I look forward to seeing you on May 13. ♦

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR

AUBURN UNIVERSITY RETIREE ASSOCIATION (AURA)

## 21st ANNUAL MEETING

FRIDAY, MAY 13, 2016 • SAUGAHATCHEE COUNTRY CLUB

*Begin gathering at 11:30 a.m. with buffet starting at noon • Cost is \$10.00 per person, payable at the door*

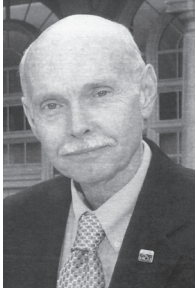
### THE PROGRAM INCLUDES:

- Presentation of Wilford Bailey Award to former state representative Pete Turnham
- Announcement of New Board Members
- Legislative Update by Janice Charlesworth, Executive Director of AERA

*In order to provide Saugahatchee with an anticipated number for the Buffet, please call or email Larry Ridgeway by MONDAY, MAY 2 and let him know you will be coming and how many will be in attendance:*

Larry Ridgeway • ridg1292@bellsouth.net • 334-821-0600

# Nominees for Board of Directors

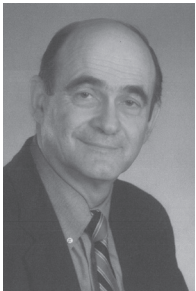


## *Larry Benefield*

Larry retired in 2012 as Dean of the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering after more than three decades at Auburn University. He earned his bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Auburn and spent four years as a civil engineering officer in the U.S. Air Force where he was awarded a Bronze Star for service in Vietnam. As dean, Larry led the College of Engineering to significant advances attracting the attention of peer institutions and propelling Auburn engineering to the highest rankings in its history. He was a member of the Alabama Engineering Hall of Fame board of directors and board member and vice chair of the National Center for Asphalt Technology. ♦

## *Dennis Drake*

Dennis, AU Counselor Emeritus in Student Affairs, retired in 1995 after some 35 years of service. He also earned his undergraduate degree and two graduate degrees from Auburn University. Since retiring he has been active in AU's Osher Life Long Learning Institute (OLLI) where he has taught classes, served on the Board, and is currently serving on the curriculum committee. In addition, he is an active member of the Auburn Beautification Council and the Friends of Lee County Master Gardeners. ♦



## *Richard Penaskovic*

Richard is an emeritus professor at Auburn University where he taught religious studies for thirty years. With more than 100 publications, he has served as president of the Auburn Ministerial Association, the local AAUP chapter, and the Lee County Democratic Club. In addition, he served as chair of the AU Faculty and University Senate and is a Fellow of the Phi Beta Delta Honor Society for International Scholars. He was co-organizer of an International Conference on Peacebuilding at the Morehouse College International Chapel and is now co-editor of the conference proceedings. Currently, he serves on the executive committee of the Karl Rahner Society and edits the "Rahner Papers" for *Philosophy & Theology: Marquette University Journal*. ♦

## *Kim Trupp*

Kim received her Bachelor's degree in Marketing from Auburn University in 1979 and, after graduating, immediately began (in the former "Magnolia Dorn" complex) what would become a 34-year career at Auburn with the University's Department of Housing and Residence Life (HRL). She received her Master's in Higher Education Administration from Auburn in 1989 and "moved up the ladder" in HRL. Kim served in various leadership roles both on campus and in state and regional student housing professional associations. Approximately 2,100 new beds were added to the campus student housing inventory during her tenure as Director of Housing, and she retired from that position in February of 2014. ♦



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## Nominees for the AURA Board of Directors for a three-year term beginning May, 2016.

- **Larry Benefield**
- **Dennis Drake**
- **Richard Penaskovic**
- **Kim Trupp**

Clip and mail your response by May 2 to  
**AURA**  
P.O. Box 1436  
Auburn, AL 36831-1436

*I support the nomination of the individuals named above to serve on the AURA Board of Directors.*

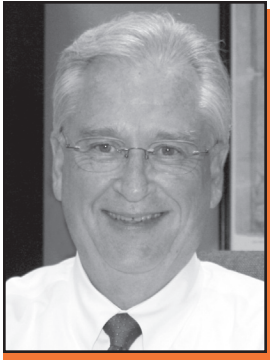
Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Report of AURA Legislative Affairs Committee

## *“Legislature Half-Way through with No Budgets and No COLA”*

*Gerald W. Johnson*, AU Emeritus Professor of Political Science



**A**s of the time this report is being written, the Legislature has completed 15 legislative days of its 30 day allocation and 40 days of the 105 calendar days allowed. The work remaining to be done in this time frame, including passage of both the General Fund (GF) and the Education Trust Fund (ETF)

budgets, will be difficult. The Governor has already raised the possibility of a Special Session following the regular session.

While the ETF has growth revenue sufficient to make a positive difference, the GF does not, and therein is the major challenge. The ETF budget has passed the House with a teacher pay raise but no COLA for retirees. The GF budget needs \$100 million to protect Medicaid and the Legislature, to date, has been unwilling to provide this level of funding because other state agencies would have to be further cut to produce a balanced budget.

Lurking in the background are multiple proposals designed to address the revenue shortfall including: a lottery, bogged down by competition between the ETF and the GF over which would get the money; accepting federal funding for Medicaid; combining the GF and ETF budgets; ZERO Based Budgeting, and a variety of tax proposals and proposals to cut funding and programs for public service employees and retirees, including education retiree and health insurance programs.

The Interim Legislative Pension Oversight Committee will give its final report to the Legislature at its halfway mark. Over the past several months the Retirement Systems of Alabama (RSA) has had productive meetings with the Interim Committee and the report is not expected to propose drastic changes such as changing the

public education retirement program from a pension plan with defined benefits to a market employee investment plan with defined contributions.

However, in the search for additional revenue and with adamant opposition to any new taxes, the Legislature will continue to struggle with ways and means to provide balanced budgets.

All options remain on the board and, as Sen. Jim McClendon recently stated, “The budget crisis remains in place.”

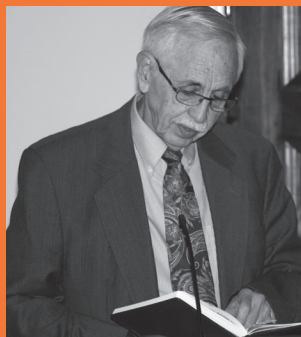
Some good news is the House passed ETF budget fully funds the amount requested by RSA for PEEHIP, the public employee and retiree health insurance program.

At the beginning of this legislative session the AERA Board of Directors adopted three legislative agenda items: request a COLA for 2016; pending legislative action on a COLA, request a 13th Check for education retirees based on the formula used to provide a similar payment to state employees (\$24 times years of service with a minimum); and third, propose legislation creating a COLA Trust Fund to provide COLAs in future years.

Since education retirees have not received a COLA of any kind since 2007, there appears to be a general recognition of the importance and need for this limited kind COLA and a willingness to include it in the ETF budget for FY17. While the ETF budget adopted was sent to the Senate without the 13th check, there is support in the House for such and support to include the 13th check in the Senate ETF budget.

AURA members, in partnership with AERA, AEA, and a coalition of all education interests, can help make this happen by contacting your local State Senator and request and encourage support of the 13th Check for education retirees. Your membership in AURA and your participation in the efforts and programs of AURA are essential for success. ♦

### **Pictures from the AURA Fall Dinner meeting in October featuring guest speaker, Dr. Wayne Flynt, AU Emeritus Professor of History. Compliments of Dr. Larry Wit.**



## Dues Reminder to all AU-AUM Retirees

If you have paid your 2016 AURA membership dues, you will find a "p-2016" after your name on the address label of this newsletter. If you have not paid your 2016 dues, you will find an "n."

### Auburn University (AURA) Membership Form for 2016 Calendar Year

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

AU \_\_\_\_\_ AUM \_\_\_\_\_ 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 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make your check payable to AURA and mail to: AURA, P.O. Box 1436, Auburn, AL 36831-1436.**

If you have any questions, please contact Sandy Johnson at [sandyjl30@gmail.com](mailto:sandyjl30@gmail.com) or Tom Vocino at [tvocino1@gmail.com](mailto:tvocino1@gmail.com).

*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.*

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