

THE MERS MESSENGER

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M U N I C I P A L E M P L O Y E E S R E T I R E M E N T S Y S T E M

LEGISLATIVE CHANGES ADOPTED DURING THE 2004 REGULAR SESSION

The 2004 regular session of the Louisiana Legislature made only one change to the retirement system's plan provisions that may have an affect on some municipalities.

The following is a description of that change:

ACT NO. 264 (House Bill No. 949 by Representative Fannin) amended the plan to allow certain persons to opt out of otherwise mandatory participation in the retirement system.

The provisions of this Act shall apply only to mayors who are in office on the effective date of this Act.

Any mayor who, at the time of his taking office in a position which would otherwise mandate his membership in the system, is receiving a retirement benefit from any source whatsoever other than this system and who is over the age of sixty-five shall not be required to participate in the system.

No employee contributions shall be made by a mayor who elects not to participate pursuant to this Act, nor shall his employer make employer contributions to the system.

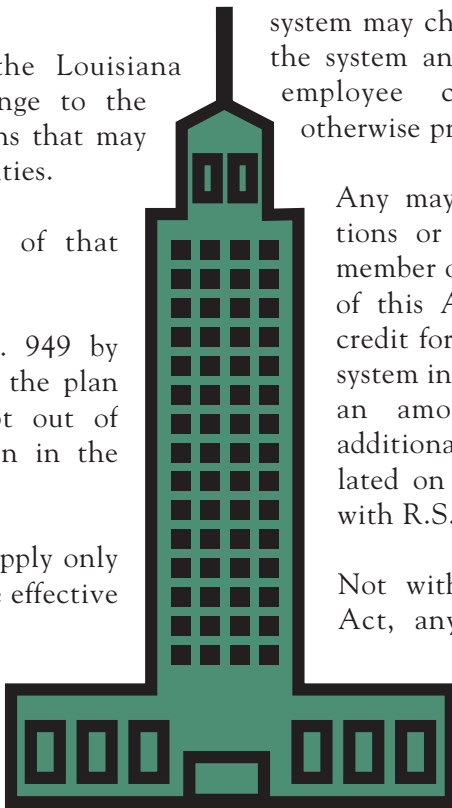
The election not to participate shall be made and communicated to the system within thirty days after the effective date of this Act.

Any mayor who is a member of the system on the effective date of this Act who has been paying employee contributions and who meets the criteria for electing not to participate in the system may choose to terminate membership in the system and may apply for a refund of his employee contributions immediately as otherwise provided for in this Act.

Any mayor who withdraws his contributions or who chooses not to become a member of the system under the provisions of this Act who later wishes to receive credit for such service in this or any other system in this Title shall pay to such system an amount sufficient to offset any additional liability to the system, calculated on an actuarial basis in accordance with R.S. 11:158(C).

Notwithstanding any provision of this Act, anyone, regardless of age who is receiving a retirement benefit from this system who again becomes employed in a position which would otherwise make him a mandatory participant, shall be subject to

the provisions in this Act relating to the re-employment of retirees.



DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that we have a website? Visit us at www.mersla.com and learn more about your retirement.

Memos, legislative updates, handbooks, forms and more are available online. We'd love for you to visit us online.

MR. ROBERT D. "BOBBY" HEBERT BECOMES CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

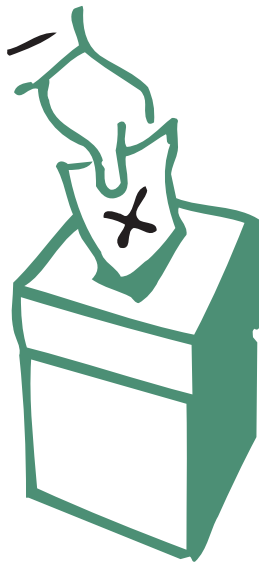


Mr. Robert D. "Bobby" Hebert, City Clerk of the City of Rayne, became Chairman of the retirement system's Board of Trustees on June 17, 2004.

Mr. Hebert was first elected to the Board in 1991, was re-elected in 1997 and 2003. He served as Chairman of the Board in 1998 and as Vice-Chairman from June 2003 until he became Chairman for the second time in June 2004.

Mr. Hebert holds the distinction of being the first Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the retirement system who was not also serving as the Mayor of a particular municipality. "I look forward to my year as Chairman and am excited about the direction and future of our system." said Mr. Hebert.

MS. CLAIRE G. SARRADET RE-ELECTED TO BOARD OF TRUSTEES



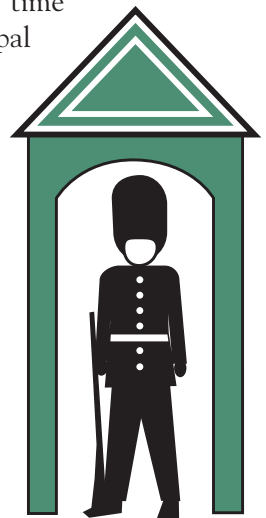
Ms. Claire G. Sarradet, Finance Director and City Clerk of the City of Port Allen, was recently re-elected to her third term as a member of the Board of Trustees.

Ms. Sarradet became a member of the retirement system in 1977, was first elected to the board in 1992, and was re-elected in 1998. She served as Chairman of the Board in 1999 and is currently serving as Vice-Chairman. Ms. Sarradet said that she is proud to represent Louisiana municipalities and their employees and remains enthusiastic about the future of the retirement system.

The retirement system's Board of Trustees consists of nine members. Six of the Board members are elected by the members of the system; the President of the Louisiana Municipal Association and the Chairman of the Retirement Committees of the Louisiana House of Representatives and Senate are the other three members of the Board. Ms. Sarradet is one of the six members of the Board elected by the memberships of the system.

A CHANGING OF THE GUARD

During 2003, two long time employees of the Municipal Employees' Retirement System did what they have been counseling others about for years, they retired. Ms. Shirley Callender, who worked as a Retirement Analyst for MERS for twenty-six years decided to begin her retirement in October of 2003. Many of you have probably spoken with Ms. Callender over the years as she processed retirement applications and answered members' questions about benefits, DROP, etc.



Virginia Freshwater served as Assistant Director of the retirement system for thirteen years until 2003 when she became Interim Director following the retirement of Bill Toadvin, the system's Administrative Director and Legal Counsel. Ms. Freshwater retired on December 31, 2003.

We will miss both of these experienced and talented people and wish them well in their retirement.

To replace these individuals, MERS added Ms. Joanna Jacob and Ms. Joycelyn Gunby. Ms. Jacob came to MERS from the Firefighter's Retirement System, where for seven years, she oversaw the general operation of the system in addition to her Administrative Assistant duties of calculating retirement and DROP benefits, refunds, etc. as well as visiting with system members to explain their benefits and options.

Joycelyn Gunby worked as a Benefits Analyst for the Louisiana Sheriffs' Pension & Relief Fund in Baton Rouge for five years, where she prepared and processed applications for retirement benefits, DROP and disability. Prior to joining the Sheriffs' Fund, Joycelyn worked in the employee benefit area of the Trust Departments of two area banks.

Joanna and Joycelyn bring to MERS a wealth of knowledge and public retirement system experience in addition to their outstanding communication skills. Both are Retirement Analysts with MERS and are available to talk with you concerning your retirement system questions.

A LETTER FROM "THE NEW GUY"

Dear Members and Retirees,

I would like to introduce myself to all of you and tell you how excited I am to be the Administrative Director and a member of the Municipal Employees' Retirement System of Louisiana. My name is Bob Rust and I began my tenure as Director on November 17, 2003 following the retirement of Bill Toadvin.



Bill served as Administrative Director and Legal Counsel of the system for fifteen years and I thank him for his years of service and for being a good friend to me and my family for over eighteen years. I know you all join me in wishing him the best with his retirement.

Prior to joining MERS, I spent thirty-three years as an investment manager with several banks, including Hibernia where I was Chief Investment Officer in the Trust Department and more recently was a co-founder and Managing Director of Orleans Capital Management in New Orleans. Orleans Capital specializes in the investment of assets for public and private pension plans,

endowments, foundations, insurance companies and individuals.

Before joining MERS as Director, I was associated with the system for fifteen years as a money manager with Hibernia and Orleans Capital. During that time, I enjoyed a close working relationship with the Board and staff of the retirement system. In my thirty-three years of money management, I have worked with many boards, public and private, but none with more dedication and integrity than yours. As members of the retirement system, you are to be congratulated for having elected such capable and focused people.

I have also found the same focus and dedication with the MERS staff as well. Their support and patient tutoring has been most helpful in my first few months on the job. A special thank you to Virginia Freshwater, who served as Assistant Director and then Interim Director, until her retirement in December of 2003. Her experience, knowledge and encouragement was most appreciated in those busy first few weeks.

My focus now is to insure that the retirement system continues to operate efficiently and is responsive to our members and retirees. We will evaluate everything we do and look for better ways to do it. My goal and that of the Board and staff is to insure the financial integrity of the system and to provide the highest level of service to our members.

In that effort, I invite your questions and input. We would love to hear from you. If you have a question about benefits, about the retirement system in general or if you have some idea of how we can make things work better, please give me a call. Even better, if you are in Baton Rouge, stop by for a visit. We've always got on a pot of coffee or have a cold beverage waiting and we'd love to see you.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Robert L. Rust". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R".

Robert L. Rust
Administrative Director

Is there a topic you would like to see discussed in a future retirement newsletter? If so, please take a moment to jot it down in the space below and send it to our office. Our address is 7937 Office Park Boulevard, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70809 and our facsimile number is **225-925-4816**. As always, feel free to give us a call at **225-925-4810** if you have a question about the retirement system or we may be of other assistance.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES (2004-2005)

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Ms. Claire Sarradet, Vice Chairman

Mr. William Mulkey

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Mayor Gerald Johnson

Mayor Dudley R. Dixon

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Senator Lambert Boissiere

Representative M. P. "Pete" Schneider, III

All of the above may be contacted through the office of the
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7937 Office Park Boulevard Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70809
Phone 225-925-4810 or 800-820-1137
Fax 225-925-4816

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