



*Advocating for all Indiana  
Retired Educators*

# BULLETIN BOARD

SPRING 2020

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## From the President's Desk



Indiana weather brings many variations of anticipation.

Some of us anticipate great Winter adventures; sledding, sliding, snowball fights, and basketball. Others of us wait in

great anticipation for Spring with its signs of new life, new color,

and warmer temperatures. Others can't wait for Summer with golf, swimming, hiking, softball, baseball. Then comes fall with its beautiful colors and football and settling into school routine.

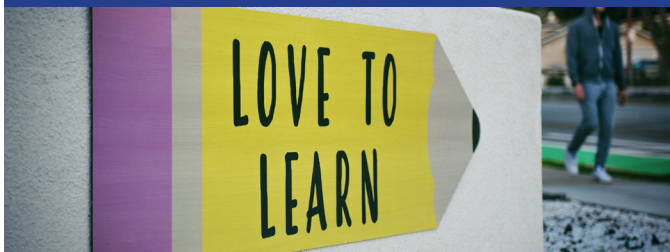
The same is true with IRTA.

As we move through the fiscal year, we experience different periods of anticipation. The Representative Assembly voted to change our fiscal year to July 1 – June 30. We anticipate no problems with the transition. We are adapting.

IRTA has made many transitions during this present fiscal year. Our previous Executive Director retired, we hired a new Executive Director, revised and amended our Articles of Incorporation, established the Foundation's Endowment with a matching fund. We are continuing to make changes that will make IRTA a more vibrant organization for our members.

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*"I am very excited about what the future holds for IRTA. Our number one priority is still you, our member."*



# From the President’s Desk *continued*

We have a new website that is more user-friendly and easier to navigate. See the full article in this newsletter. IRTA and the Indiana Public Retirement System (INPRS) are collaborating on a presentation for new educators regarding the changes in the Teacher’s Retirement Fund (TRF) pension plan selection process. New educators have sixty days to decide which pension style they want for the duration of their education careers. New teachers need objective and intelligible information to make informed decisions regarding their future,

whether they choose the defined benefit or defined contribution plan. IRTA is in the best position to educate our educators on this important topic. We urge each of you to heed the information and directives of the CDC and your state and local health agencies regarding protecting yourself and your loved ones. Most of us in IRTA are in an elevated risk category. On behalf of our members, a letter was sent to Governor Holcomb thanking him for his decisive action in issuing Executive Orders that give

guidance for “social distance” conduct in public and essential workplaces. A copy of the letter is in this issue of the Bulletin Board. I am very excited about what the future holds for IRTA. Our number one priority is still you, our member. WE ARE THE LARGEST ORGANIZATION IN INDIANA WHOSE SOLE PURPOSE IS TO ADVOCATE FOR INDIANA’S RETIRED EDUCATORS RETIREMENT INCOME. Expanding our horizons, Barry D. Conrad, *President*

## NEW Executive Director



Trish Whitcomb is IRTA’s new Executive Director. A graduate of Butler University’s College of Education, Trish taught in public school for three years before attending graduate school at the University of Wyoming on a teaching

assistantship while pursuing a Masters of Public Administration in economics and finance. A member of the Dean’s Advisory Council for the School of Education at Butler, Trish works with faculty and students in pursuit of high-quality teacher preparation and resources for undergraduates and graduates. In May 2019, she received a graduate certificate in Applied Neuroscience in Education. Before joining IRTA, Trish was an investment banker and financial advisor to schools and communities throughout Indiana. From 2013 to 2015, she served as Special Advisor to Superintendent of Public Instruction, Glenda Ritz where she led development of the Hoosier Family of Readers statewide initiative,

the School Improvement and Math Delivery Summits for public school educators, and the Unified Campaign to Combat Sex Abuse of School Age Children. Trish was the campaign manager for Superintendent Ritz’s successful 2012 campaign. A graduate of Seymour High School, Trish continues to enjoy the friendships of her classmates, many of whom pursued careers in education. She is a member of the Indiana Coalition for Public Education, Indianapolis NAACP, and North United Methodist Church. In her spare time, she and her husband, Russ Sipes enjoy travel and political activism. Trish has a grown son and three generations of relatives by marriage. She is the daughter of former Governor and First Lady, Ed and Pat Whitcomb.

### NEW IRTA Website

It’s time to take a look at our new website!

We have the same web address: [www.retiredteachers.org](http://www.retiredteachers.org) but a new look and user-friendlier navigation. We feel with this new look and user-friendly navigation, our members will be able to quickly find the information they need. Please call the office if you want technical assistance reaching the new website. Does your local chapter have a website? Our new IRTA website will soon have a place for links to chapter websites.

If your chapter wants to have a web presence, we can help you build a website. A local website is a great place to post information on local meetings and fun events. Photos of members, leadership and chapter “happenings” can also be posted. Many thanks to IRTA staff and Vilocity, for their hard work in creating our new website. We look forward to your feedback about our new website design.



## You Can Help Students Now!

The current health crisis of Covid 19 forces students and educators into a new, strange world of remote learning for the balance of the school year. Of Indiana’s 1.1 million students in grades K-12, over two-thirds cannot access eLearning or instruction on the Internet. Each school corporation is distributing some form of paper and pencil assignments, and classroom teachers all over Indiana are reaching out to students every hour, every day.

Unlike in classrooms, where educators can see a raised hand, or can sense that a student needs help, remote learning situations create barriers to learning for many students. IRTA, in collaboration with the Indiana Department of Education and the Indiana Public Schools Superintendents Association are launching a telephone hotline to help students without eLearning or computer access. **The Teacher Help Hotline** will be available to all students and their parents or caregivers on April 20th. An initial email blast to members who have emails on file with IRTA generated an enthusiastic and positive response. These early responders have helped shape the program with their ideas about how to effectively engage students. ISTA and AFT retirees are joining in this effort, and we thank them. For more information about volunteering for the Teacher Help Hotline, send an email to [teacherhelp@retiredteachers.org](mailto:teacherhelp@retiredteachers.org) or call Linnie Harris at 317.637.7481.

## Help Students, Enhance Your Retirement Income

**Do you miss working with students?**  
**Could your pocketbook use a boost?**

IRTA is investigating opportunities for members to do both. The first opportunity comes from BrainWare Learning Company Learning, an organization that delivers online cognitive development programs. A little bit about BrainWare Learning Company and cognitive skill development. Educational research shows that learning happens best when all brain functions work together smoothly. Some of the functions are visual memory, auditory memory, sequencing, and pattern recognition. As educators, we recognize students have different learning styles. Cognitive skills research identifies at least 43 separate brain functions that come into play as a student tackles new material. This is the neuroscience of education. In 2018, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. Jennifer McCormick, named BrainWare Learning Company a Technical Assistance Partner to meet Title 1 guidelines in the Every Student Succeeds Act. A team from DOE evaluated the software and found it to be effective, easy to use, and compliant with federal guidelines. **Opportunities for Our Members.** BrainWare Learning Company is looking for retired and active classroom educators to become coaches for online students.



Cognitive Training Coaches work online with clients of varying ages, using BrainWare SAFARI®, the world’s most researched, comprehensive, integrated cognitive skills training program delivered online. By building students’ capacity for learning, we can help them better prepare for academic and life success. As a BrainWare Learning Company Certified Cognitive Training Coach, you can be part of providing this experience for students who desperately need it. And you can do this online, from your computer at home. Coaches do not need prior experience with cognitive skills development curriculum. The role is truly that of a coach, supporting and encouraging a student while they work in the program. BrainWare Learning Company provides required training. It can be a lot of fun and so rewarding to work with students to transform their ability to learn – a gift that gives for a lifetime. For more information, please visit [myBrainWare.com/cognitive-training-coaches](http://myBrainWare.com/cognitive-training-coaches)





## 2020 General Assembly in Review – Looking Forward to 2021

The 121st session of the Indiana General Assembly convened in January for a short session and adjourned in March. This was not a budget year and there were no major pieces of legislation impacting our pensions, COLA or stipend, known as the 13th Check. One bill passed that impacts pre-retirement educators, by allowing withdrawals from Annuity Savings Account (ASA) at age 59 1/2, and eliminating the 30-day waiting period to access ASA funds. Legislation allowing school districts to voluntarily share money from referendums with charter schools failed. Our lobbyist, Steve Bebee, and executive director, Trish Whitcomb, met with key legislators throughout the session. Steve has represented IRTA at the General Assembly since 2003 and is well respected on both sides of the aisle. Conversations with legislators focused on preserving retirement income for educators,

reinforcement of the Supplemental Reserve Account that funds our pension enhancements and extending the current window of 60 days to choose a permanent retirement plan. Legislators were introduced to IRTA's work with INPRS to give new classroom educators vital information about the retirement options of Defined Benefit vs Defined Contribution. The 2021 legislative session begins in January and it is a long session that will adopt a budget for 2022 and 2023 fiscal years. Budget revenue projections are difficult anytime, but the challenges next year will be huge given current conditions. Nancy Tolson, state chair of the Legislative Committee, Steve Bebee and Trish Whitcomb are developing a communication plan for implementation during the summer months. Whether in-person or via video conferencing, IRTA members will be able to meet key legislators to discuss preserving our pensions and maintaining current enhancements.

### Vote Like Your Life Depends On It

Indiana consistently ranks in the bottom 10 of states for voting and civic literacy. This means many Hoosiers aren't voting or accessing information about candidates and issues.

The Indiana Citizen [www.IndianaCitizen.org](http://www.IndianaCitizen.org) is a non-partisan, non-profit platform dedicated to increasing the number of informed, engaged Hoosier voters. The goal is to take Indiana from the bottom 10 to the top 10 states in turnout this year.

Fifty years ago, the 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, authored by Indiana Senator Birch Bayh giving 18-year old citizens the right to vote was ratified. As educators we know that traditional curricula focused on social studies, U.S. History and citizenship receive far less attention in the classroom than in previous decades. Except for the 2008 general election, youth voting consistently under-represents the strength that young people have in shaping their futures.

Indiana Citizen provides a professionally developed, objective source for information about candidates, news and commentary. Whether you know a friend or neighbor who would appreciate what Indiana Citizen.org has to offer, or you are looking for ways to engage former students who might need your guidance to become electorally engaged, this site could be what you are seeking.



### State Leaders Earn Praise

IRTA and the Legislative Committee recognized the importance of Governor Holcomb's recent Executive Orders to battle the COVID19. Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. Jennifer McCormick also deserves credit for working with school districts and county health departments to protect our students and close nearly all schools prior to the Executive Order. IRTA is emailing all active classroom teachers when schools reconvene, thanking Dr. McCormick for her leadership and praising educators for their continued commitment to education.

March 25, 2020

The Honorable Eric J. Holcomb  
Statehouse, Room 206  
200 West Washington Street, Suite 206  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Dear Governor Holcomb:

Our members, retired educators throughout the state, are generally in the group of Hoosiers most at-risk as victims of COVID19. Many have expressed to us their concerns about this public health emergency.

On behalf of the Indiana Retired Teachers Association's over 22,000 members, we wish to thank you for taking the wise, decisive, and bold actions outlined in the Executive Orders you issued this week. Your message was very clear, and it assured our members that a strong leader is at the helm of Indiana's response to this crisis.

We offer our sincere appreciation for your actions, and support for ensuring that Indiana will take all steps possible to protect its citizens from this pandemic. Our organization and members are following your direction to protect ourselves, our loved ones and our neighbors. With your leadership, we will get through this crisis.

Please let us know if we can assist you as we face this challenge together.

Sincerely,

Trish Whitcomb <i>Executive Director</i>	Barry Conrad <i>Board President</i>	Nancy Tolson <i>Legislative Chair</i>
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## Editor's Note

**The Bulletin Board has a new look!** Many thanks to Stephanie Freeman at Momme Design for creating an engaging format for our publication. Please send your comments to Trish Whitcomb at [twhitcomb@retiredteachers.org](mailto:twhitcomb@retiredteachers.org) or call 317.637.7481.





## Communication = Companionship

Social distancing is a new term that we all needed to learn and practice very quickly. The “new normal” requires working from home instead of the office, streaming church services instead of attending our congregations and perhaps most painful, staying away from family and friends. Here are three technology-based ways to stay in touch.

### Facetime

FaceTime is a function available on iPhones. It allows you to see the person you are calling if that person has an iPhone. There is no additional cost to using FaceTime. It is treated like a regular call on your phone plan.

If you have an Android there are alternatives to FaceTime. If you have a Facebook page that is accessible on your cell phone, Facebook Messenger provides one-to-one video conferencing. For other options for Android users go to: [androidauthority.com/best-alternatives-to-face-time-on-android-653682/](https://androidauthority.com/best-alternatives-to-face-time-on-android-653682/)

Remember, IRTA members get discounts from Verizon and AT&T, so be sure to take advantage of those money-saving benefits that come with your membership.

### Skype

Skype is a free video chat application that you can use on your phone or computer. Go to [www.skype.com](https://www.skype.com) for more information and access to apps.

### Zoom

Zoom is another free video conferencing application. It is different from Skype because it allows up to 10 people to video chat at once for up to 45 minutes on the free software [www.zoom.us](https://www.zoom.us)

*If all else fails and you can walk to the end of your neighbor's driveway. That way you get some fresh air and friendship without your phone or computer.*

## Giving, Helping, Serving - IRTF



A special thanks to nearly five hundred individuals and groups who have made contributions to the IRTF Endowment Fund. Additional contributions are always welcome and appreciated. When we resume local meetings, please consider passing the hat. Your \$50 or greater contribution

is doubled with a matching contribution from IRTA until December 31, 2020.

Anyone making a contribution of \$250 or more will be celebrated with an apple on our Giving Tree in the IRTA office. Soon our website will show the Giving Tree and your contribution will be shared on social media. Thank you!

It is time to select winners of our \$2000 scholarship. Current sophomores and juniors enrolled in an Indiana college or university's education program are eligible.

The deadline for these applications has been extended to May 15, 2020 to accommodate the challenges colleges, universities and students face at this time.

Applications for “A Hand UP” a one-time \$1,000 grant are accepted year-round. These grants have helped IRTA members purchase hearing aids, pay property taxes and medical bills, and help pay for end of life expenses for a spouse. “

A Hand UP” helped an IRTA member with school expenses for the two grandchildren she was raising while her husband was in a nursing home and a member whose entire home was flooded and needed to replace all flooring, wallboard and some furniture. Being able to help is what we are about!

Applications are available from your local Foundation rep or president or at [www.retiredteachers.org](https://www.retiredteachers.org).

Stay safe and healthy!

Linda Morris

President, Indiana Retired Teachers Foundation

## Mid-Year Financial Report

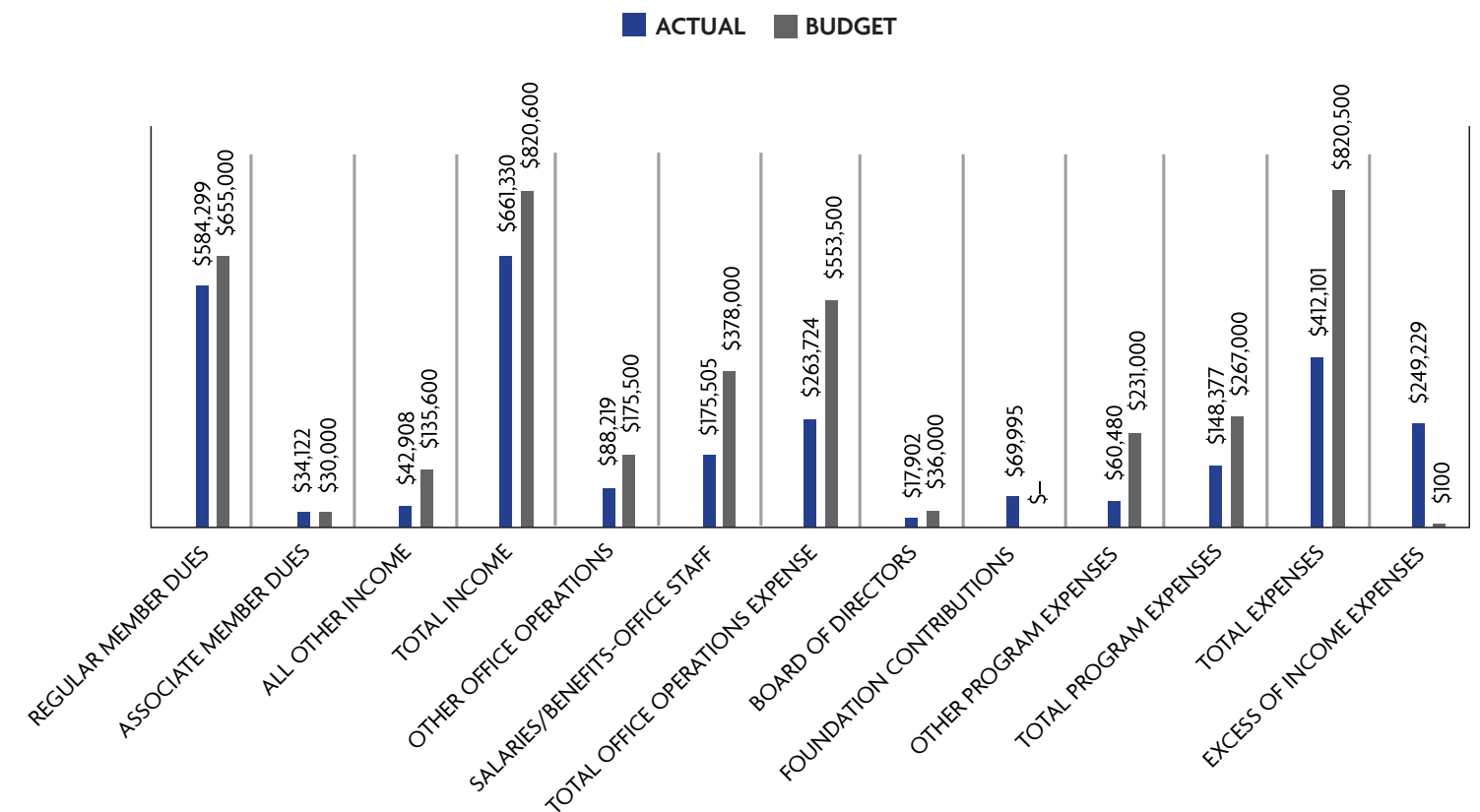
The 2019 Representative Assembly voted to change IRTA's fiscal year to begin on July 1 of each year, ending on June 30th. The financial information on the graph reports the variance between what IRTA has budgeted and the actual revenue and expenditures for the period.

The good news is that at the end of February 2020, the mid-point of the fiscal year, IRTA has excess income over

expenditures. The full picture shows that both revenue and expenditures are lower than projected, but the economics of operating are in control.

Anyone wishing to have a copy of the detailed variance report should contact David Scherer at [dscherer@retiredteachers.org](mailto:dscherer@retiredteachers.org) or call 317.637.7481.

## INDIANA RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION VARIANCE REPORT



## Florida Meetings

Meeting our members wintering or living in Florida is a longstanding IRTA tradition to keep in touch. President Barry Conrad and Executive Director Trish Whitcomb attended four luncheon meetings throughout central Florida in January. Many thanks to the hosts for their fantastic hospitality.

Every luncheon was an opportunity to meet old friends and new and to share information about IRTA and Indiana education retirement policy developments. Several

former officers and recently retired Executive Director Tom Mellish attended.

Barry delivered a review of IRTA happenings in 2019 and shared an overview of what to expect in the coming year. Trish introduced herself and talked about plans and directions for IRTA in 2020.

### Hosts and Locations

Anna Bach; Melbourne

Phyllis Wayco; Ft Myers

Dan Howe; Sarasota

Jim and Barb MacGregor; Leesburg



Postmaster:

Send address changes to:

Indiana Retired Teachers Association  
2629 Waterfront Pkwy East Dr., Ste. 105  
Indianapolis, IN 46214

## The Representative Assembly

Our tradition of meeting together in Indianapolis once a year has provided opportunities for communing with members from all over the state, recognizing outstanding achievements in community service and membership development and the forum for making decisions that impact IRTA as an organization. In an abundance of caution and mindful of guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and the Corona Virus Taskforce, the Board of IRTA voted to use mail-in ballots to decide these time sensitive matters:

The budget for the fiscal year beginning on July 1, 2020

Bylaw revisions

Representative Assembly rules revisions

Usual deadlines for committees to submit reports, for membership counts that determine the number of delegates to the RA and all other matters continue as planned. Coming together to celebrate is vital to the social health of our members and organization. IRTA leadership is busy strategizing how to gather after restrictions on assembly are lifted. If you have ideas about how IRTA could create events that would encourage in-person participation, please contact our Executive Director, Trish Whitcomb.

[twhitcomb@retiredteachers.org](mailto:twhitcomb@retiredteachers.org)

Toll-free at 888.454.9333

## IRTA Office Operations



The staff of IRTA are grateful that in advance of Governor Holcomb's Executive Order outlining restrictions on non-essential business travel, our Executive Committee agreed to a remote operation plan that would allow IRTA staff to work from home. The plan included technology that allows staff to connect directly to our office network, just the same as when working in the office.

IRTA staff has a routine for mail pick-up, invoice review and payment

and outgoing correspondence such as thank-you letters for foundation contributions. A big Thank You goes out to David Scherer, our Financial Analyst and Lance Stallcop, our IT consultant, for arranging the technology for accessing our phones and computer network. Deb Christie and Linnie Harris are doing great jobs, producing good work in this new world of remote operation.

We all remain healthy

Julie Green, our Office Manager, submitted her retirement letter on March 10, 2020. We wish Julie much happiness, knowing that her family and her beloved dogs are eager to spend more time with her. If you wish to send Julie a note, please "send it to our office and we will make sure she gets it."

The Bulletin Board (USPS 393-150) is the quarterly publication of the Indiana Retired Teachers Association. Subscription is available to members only and is included in membership dues at \$2 per subscription. Periodicals postage is paid at Indianapolis, Indiana.

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### POSTMASTER:

Send address changes to The Bulletin Board  
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