



Serving Retirees Since 1956
Membership Statewide

WINTER 2025

The Reporter

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Denise Schwartz



By now, everyone is aware of all of the changes happening in our tiny state and our country. Everyone is entitled to their own opinions about what is taking place, so I don't want to be "political," I just want you to be aware of these things, as all of this will definitely impact our lives.

I'm so thankful for Rep. Paul Baumbach's achievements and how he worked with both sides of the aisle to ensure our healthcare plan. Paul has retired but his legacy is strong. Over the past few months, we have thanked him for all that he has done for us. At our January board meeting, we thanked him and his wife, Pam, and honored them by contributing to their scholarship fund. We donated funds to Delaware State, Delaware Tech, and the University of Delaware as a way of saying "thanks." Then we gave him a peace plant to take along in their camper as they have been traveling the southern states for a bit of R and R. We wish him and his family all the best and hopefully, it won't be the last we'll see of Paul.

On another note, our Executive Director is leaving on July 1, so we must find a replacement. We did hold an interview

with a very qualified candidate but he decided not to take the position. I'm asking you to join us in our search. The position does come with a stipend so please let me know if you have a name you'd like to pass on to the board. Thanks in advance for your help with this matter.

Finally, I just want to thank everyone for contacting their legislators over the past few months. Your support made a difference in our state. Sending emails and texts, writing notes and letters, and even calling them was very helpful and definitely was worth the time and effort. Thanks again for your help. We could not have done this without your assistance.

So, in closing, thanks for your support as we begin another journey with our new Governor, Matt Meyer. Hopefully I'll be meeting with him very soon to share our thoughts and ideas so that he will be informed about what we need and want. I'm looking forward to this and will keep you posted!

Happy spring,

Denise Schwartz

Denise Schwartz

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**Delaware Retired School
Personnel Association**
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Wilmington, DE 19803
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Newark

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Executive Director

Legislative Report

Legislative Report

One of our goals, is to raise the death benefit for state retirees from \$7,000.00 to help to defray the increasing cost of funeral expenses. There are two bills to increase the death benefit. One is HB 2 with HA 1 sponsored by Representative Bill Carson with 7 co-sponsors. This Bill is currently in the House Appropriations Committee. The Bill raises the benefit from \$7,000 to \$8,000. The second Bill, SB 31, is sponsored by Senator Darius Brown with 11 co-sponsors This Bill raises the benefit from \$7,000 to \$10,000. SB 31 is currently in the Senate Executive Committee.

At the January meeting of the Pension Advisory Committee, the co-chair presented our wishes to the Joint Finance Committee. We asked the Legislature to:

1. Maintain the health benefits at the current level,
2. Increase the death benefit and
3. Increase the pension to help with the continued increase in inflation.

Legislative advisor Terry Spence's efforts are centering on getting an appointment for DRSPA president Denise Schwartz and a board member or two to meet with the new governor, Matt Meyer, for a discussion of our agenda and how it dovetails with the new administration's goals. This meeting will also be important in learning more about the new administration, and how to approach dealing with that group in reaching our goals.

Terry Spence and David Taylor contributed to this report.



Denise Schwartz addresses the Joint Finance Committee

Job Vacancy: Executive Director - Delaware Retired School Personnel Association

Qualifications:

- Demonstrates effective leadership skills.
- Knowledge of Delaware legislative process.
- Ability to communicate effectively by email, in person and through written communication.
- Ability to manage complex tasks and to assign subtasks to others.
- Able to attend meetings and legislative activities throughout Delaware.

General Requirements: The Executive Director:

- Serves as the chief operating officer of the Association, at the pleasure of the Executive Board.
- Is compensated quarterly, at a stipend determined by the Executive Board.
- Is evaluated annually by a committee chosen by the President.

Duties:**1. Advise the officers and the Executive Board of DRSPA.**

- Help plan and attend up to 4 Executive Board meetings per year.
- Consult with the DRSPA President and other officials.
- Consult with the paid lobbyist, particularly January 1 to June 30
- Perform tasks and fulfill responsibilities assigned by the Executive Board.

2. Represent DRSPA before government agencies and the public.

- Be responsible for developing annual legislative goals and strategic plan.
- Testify at legislative hearings.
- Generate emails or letters to legislators.
- Oversee the publication of 3 to 4 newsletters.

3. Coordinate the administrative tasks necessary to efficiently run DRSPA.

- Knowledgeable and competent in computer applications necessary to run operations of the Association.
- Responsible for procuring office supplies and equipment for the operations of the Association.
- Responsible for the security and maintenance of the membership database.
- Register as a lobbyist with the Delaware Public Integrity Commission and files reports as required.
- Maintain the official files and records of the Association.
- Plan and carry out actions required to hold the Annual convention in October.
- Plan and carry out actions required to hold Executive Board meetings.

4. Coordinate the activities of the standing committees.

- Serve as ex-officio member of all committees; provide technical assistance and guidance.
- Assist in developing and implementing annual membership campaigns.
- Provide assistance for committee activities in conformity with DRSPA policy and practice.
- Assist county associations in planning and holding the New Castle and Kent/Sussex annual meetings.

Benefits:

- No day-to-day travel required. Do most of this job in your home.
- No set hours – carry out nearly all the tasks at times convenient to your schedule.
- Use your computer. If one is needed, DRSPA will provide it at no cost to you.
- Necessary training will be provided.
- Stipend provided commensurate with experience.

For more information: Contact Denise Schwartz, email DennySchwartz134@gmail.com.

Starting Date: June 1, 2025 (negotiable)

DRSPA Annual Meeting 2024

October 30, 2024

Over 100 members attended the Annual DRSPA Meeting at the Modern Maturity Center in Dover. After a continental breakfast and time spent greeting former co-workers, President Denise Schwartz called the meeting to order.

After the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, the slate of speakers began with Legislative Advisor and former Speaker of the House Terry Spence. Terry said that the original goal of increasing the death benefit from \$7000 to \$10,000 was modified to raising the death benefit to \$8,000. The change failed to be enacted by the legislature. He said that a raise in pension based on years of service was enacted at the end of the legislative session. Terry also said that we were also victorious in fighting against retirees being entered into a Medicare Advantage Plan. We will instead be keeping our current Medicare Supplement Plan. He said he looks forward to working with the legislature next session toward reaching our legislative goals.

The next speaker was former senator Karen Peterson, Legislative Liaison for RISE Delaware. Karen gave a brief history of RISE and of the work of Elisa Diller and former representative John Kowalko which led to the decision to sue the state. Since the open enrollment period was imminent, the state Superior Court issued a stay order blocking the implementation of the plan of the state to force retirees and others to accept the proposed Medicare Advantage Plan. Subsequently, the state Supreme Court overturned the stay order. RISE hired lawyers to manage the suit. Karen also commended the pro bono work of Mary Graham, who donated hundreds of legal hours to the cause. SB29 created the Retiree Healthcare Benefits Advisory Subcommittee. Rep. Paul Baumbach created 6 bills which resulted in current state workers and retirees having no Medicare Advantage Plans in their future.

Karen cited 3 issues that RISE will address further: 1. Retirees are in one big pool with active employees as the SEBC makes policy decisions on premium increases. Our group is being overcharged. 2. Retirees are overpaying on prescription costs. 3. The SEBC needs to allow employees to opt out of a plan with underwriting.

There are some Medigap plans identical to Medicfill. Nine states have already repealed underwriting. Karen concluded by thanking the DRSPA and individual members for their donations and support.

Next up was Joanna Adams, State Pension Administrator. Our pension fund has a balance of \$13.6 billion as of this past June 30. It is funded at 88%, had a 10.1% investment return for FY 2024, and is protected by state law. Joanna said there are 34,000 pensioners who receive \$73 million, and there are also 45,000 active employees. Half of the monthly pension payments are covered by employee contributions, and the rest are covered by investment earnings.

The following are interesting facts for pensioners:

- 6 pensioners are over 107 years old.
- 51 pensioners are over 100 years old.
- 62 pensioners are under age 22.
- 13 pensioners have 50 or more years of service, most of whom are educators.
- 586 pensioners have 40 or more years of service.
- 7979 pensioners have 30 or more years of service.

Joanna emphasized that our pension plan is not designed to pay any Post Retirement Increase (PRI) and that PRIs are competing with our healthcare benefits, which include medical, dental, and vision coverage. In addition, pensioners have a \$7,000.00 burial benefit. She added that we have a lot to be thankful for. Legislation this past session did grant pensioners a graduated post-retirement increase based on number of years retired, but HB 289, a bill to increase our burial benefit was not successful. There is a goal to eventually prefund our healthcare fund like the pension fund.

Our next speaker was Samantha Mountz from the State Benefits Office. She distributed a comprehensive handout, "Special Medicfill Open Enrollment Education Session," which she reviewed page by page and emphasized that there are no changes to the Special Medicfill benefits for 2025. She presented information on the parts of Medicare as well as examples of the special Medicfill

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Benefits of our plan under Highmark and referred us to the MyHighmark Member Portal, www.myhighmark.com, for additional information, such as ordering new ID cards, viewing benefits, and viewing recent claims.

Samantha next reviewed our CVS SilverScript Plan benefits and design, adding that it is richer than individual Part D plans and stating that one does not have to go to a CVS pharmacy for coverage since we have access to a broad network of pharmacies. She referenced an update to a Medicare Part D provision wherein there will no longer be a Coverage Gap, also known as the Donut Hole. Delaware's plan does not have a deductible, meaning that you will pay your standard flat copays all year until you reach a \$2000.00 true out of pocket cost, whereby all drugs change to \$0 cost share, an enhancement from 2024 which was \$2,100.00. Additional information provided covered SilverScript Formularies and the Transform Diabetes Care plan.

Next on the program was a Zoom presentation with retiring Representative Paul Baumbach, a co-vice chair on the Retiree Healthcare Benefits Advisory Subcommittee (RHBAS) and the prime sponsor of a package of legislation that passed addressing the State's obligation to Delaware retirees as well as for current and future employees. These bills relate to the State's liability of \$8.9 billion in the Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) fund providing pensioner health care, and, among other provisions, restructured the SEBC by putting two State retirees on the Committee and removed Medicare Advantage as an option in the ongoing request for proposal cycle for retirees' health care. Representative Baumbach complimented the enormous contributions of our retired Executive Director, Wayne Emsley, on the RHBAS and called him an incredible team member who came prepared with binders of information and research. He remarked that this bipartisan subcommittee was not a show and that under the leadership of Lt. Governor Bethany Hall Long and others produced sound recommendations that were followed through with significant legislation. He stated that it was also the hard work and persistence of the many retirees and members of the public who spoke up at the meetings that resulted in a tremendous year of accomplishment for the State's retirees. He cited the successful override of the Governor's veto of HB 282 –the first in almost 50 years. Representative Baumbach concluded by saying he

is tying up all loose ends before his pending retirement and stated he couldn't think of a better time to retire.

Business Meeting

President Denise Schwartz called the business meeting to order and introduced the newly elected Secretary of the New Castle County Chapter, Christine Smith. She next thanked Steve Schwartz, who is stepping down as DRSPA Vice President.

Secretary's Report: DRSPA Secretary Becky Scarborough requested attendees to read over copies of the minutes of the 67th Meeting on October 26, 2023, as printed in the agenda packets. Mae Gaskins moved that they be approved as presented and Joan Yulduzian seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Denise introduced Treasurer Hugh Scott, calling him the Man of the Year for facilitating our first Zoom presentation. Hugh presented the proposed Budget for November 1, 2024 to October 31, 2025, a copy of which was in the agenda packet. With assets in cash and certificates of deposit at \$130,179.00, the proposed budget totals \$46,480.00. Becky Breasure moved and Mace Bloom seconded the motion to accept the proposed budget. Motion carried unanimously.

Hugh stated that annual dues remain at \$35.00 per year and Life Member dues remain at \$300.00. He reported that our finances are in great shape and our membership drive starts in November. Our Partners in Education Awards to classroom teachers will be awarded in November, also. Membership cards are on the tables and Hugh encouraged members to consider supporting our legislative activities, which have accomplished much this year and will help meet our future legislative goals, as well as supporting our classroom grants.

By-Laws: David Taylor reported that there are no proposed changes to our By-Laws.

Legislative Report: David Taylor stated that as a former Social Studies teacher, this past legislative session was a prime example of how a bill becomes a law, citing how the bills not signed by the Governor became law and the historic override of the Governor's veto. He reported that he chairs the Pension Advisory Committee, made up of

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the National Guard, the City of Wilmington, fire fighters, etc., and in that role makes presentations to the Joint Finance Committee on legislative goals. In addition to advocating for maintaining our health care benefits, this year the Committee also advocated for increasing our death benefit from \$7,000.00 to \$8,000.00, a proposal we didn't get. However, he noted that we did get a graduated pension increase based on years of retirement, an idea that originally came from DRSPA as we advocated for a larger increase for those who retired 20 years or more ago.

Denise then introduced a surprise visitor, Senator Eric Buckson, who found out at a polling place nearby that we were having our Convention. Senator Buckson commented that he serves on the Joint Finance Committee and is a retired teacher. He thanked us for our service as educators and stated how he supports us. He even called out some of the teachers he had who were in the audience. He was urged to join our organization and given a DRSPA membership card on his way out.

Election of Officers: Election of officers followed;

President: David Taylor moved and Becky Scarborough seconded the motion that Denise Schwartz be elected as President. Motion carried unanimously.

Vice President: Christine Smith moved and Becky Breaure seconded the motion that Mae Gaskins be elected as Vice President. Motion carried unanimously.

Secretary: David Taylor moved and Mae Gaskins seconded the motion that Becky Scarborough be elected as Secretary. Motion carried unanimously.

Treasurer: David Taylor moved and Mace Bloom seconded the motion that Hugh Scott be elected as Treasurer. Motion carried unanimously.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned for lunch and the 50/50 drawing.

Thanks to Becky Scarborough for her minutes of the annual meeting.

Brief Bio of Dr. Mable “Mae” Gaskins, Vice-President of DRSPA



Dr. Mable (Mae) Gaskins received her BS degree from Boston University and her MS and Ed. D. from Oklahoma State University.

Mae has taught in Massachusetts, Virginia, Minnesota, Michigan and Oklahoma. She has, also, held administrative positions in Minnesota including Principal of Bethune Elementary School, Associate Superintendent of Operations and Associate Superintendent of Curriculum for the Minneapolis Public Schools District and Assistant Commissioner of Education for the state of Minnesota. Mae was also Superintendent of the public schools in Lawrence, Massachusetts.

Dr. Gaskins worked as senior vice president for Education Alternatives, a company focused on public/private partnerships with school districts in Florida, Arizona and Baltimore, MD.

Mae was a sales representative for Plato Learning Company, which introduced her to Delaware Public Schools. That introduction led her to working in the central office of the Christina School District in the office of curriculum and development, principal of Stubbs Elementary School in Wilmington, DE. and principal of Jennie Smith Elementary School in Newark, Delaware.

Mae retired her career in education in 2018. She started her career in 1963-----55 years of educational bliss!!!!!!

DRSPA 2025 Schedule of events and dates:

New Castle County DRSPA 8:30 AM. Embassy Suites, Newark	April 2, 2025
DRSPA Executive Board Meeting 12:00 PM. 9 East Taphouse, Dover	April 9, 2025
Kent/Sussex Counties DRSPA 8:30 AM. Virden Center, Lewes	May 8, 2025
DRSPA Executive Board Meeting 12:00 PM. 9 East Taphouse, Dover	August 13, 2025
DRSPA Annual Meeting 8:30 AM. Modern Maturity Center, Dover	October 22, 2025

Both meetings will feature updates on health care coverage and our pensions provided by State officials. Attendees will also be provided with a legislative update. Both meetings will be followed with a luncheon.

DRSPA members and guests, both those who live in Delaware, as well as those who live in other states, are invited to attend either meeting. Those members and guests who presently live or worked in New Castle County will be sent an invitation to attend the New Castle meeting in early March. Similarly, those who worked or presently live in Kent and Sussex County will be sent an invitation to the Kent/Sussex meeting in mid March.

Partners in Education Grants 2024

The DRSPA's annual Partners in Education Grants program yielded winners from around the state. The funds, capped at \$1,000.00 per project, are to be used to support the activities and curriculum in a particular classroom or specialty area in public and charter schools in Delaware.

Jennifer Graham's proposal, "PBIS Store for Student Success in High Needs Program" was funded for her work at Talley Middle School in the Brandywine District.
jennifer.graham@bsd.k12.de.us.

Victoria Sherlock's project, "SPIKES!" (LEGO robotic education kits) was accepted for use at Bayard School in the Christina District. victoria.sherlock@christina.k12.de.us.

Jennifer Wahl's project, "Mini Society STEM Project Creation," was funded to be implemented at Las Americas ASPIRA Academy Delaware Charter School.
jennifer.wahl@laaa.k12.de.us

"Earth's Place in the Universe," submitted by Mary Pierce-Cass was approved for Delmar Sr. High School in the Delmar District. mary.pierce-cass@delmar.k12.de.us.

Funding was approved for Jennifer Campbell's "Flying High in STEM" at East Millsboro Elementary School in the Indian River District. jennifer.campbell@irsd.k12.de.us.

Heather Patricco's entry, "Merge into Augmented Reality," was approved to be carried out at Cedar Lane Elementary School, Appoquinimink District
heather.patricco@appo.k12.de.us.

Each year, Partners in Education proposals are collected beginning on September 1 and ending on October 31. For details, go to our website, <http://www.drspa.org>.

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Personnel Association
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You may also contact us via our website
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