

TEACHERS RETIREMENT INFORMATION BULLETIN

Retiree Edition ■ Summer 2021



1931-2021: TRA observes anniversary

This year TRA hits a major milestone: We've been around for 90 years! We began serving teachers during the depths of the Great Depression, when one-room schoolhouses were still common in rural Minnesota. We remained a steady partner to educators through World War II, the post-war boom, the social turbulence of the 1960s, and the changes marking the decades since. See our inside pages for some of the news highlights through the years.

- ▶ President's Corner, page 2.
- ▶ National and local highlights from the early years, page 3.

TRA members elect four to the Board of Trustees

Retired TRA members re-elected Martha Lee Zins, a former Hopkins district media director and longtime board president, to fill the retiree seat on the board in the 2021 TRA Board of Trustees election.

The board also has three new active member board representatives after voters selected Moorhead math teacher Julie Reno, Burnsville Education Association President and math teacher Wendy Drugge Wuensch, and Anoka Technical College counselor Kevin Lindstrom to serve.

Turnout among active TRA members was 5.18 percent; turnout among retirees was 28.34 percent. The TRA board certified the results of the election on May 26. Terms of the elected members will begin on July 1, 2021.

TRA is managed by a board of eight trustees: five elected trustees (four active, one retired) and three statutory members representing the Minnesota School Boards Association, the Commissioner of Education and the Commissioner of Minnesota Management and Budget.

Thank you to everyone who voted.



Julie Reno



Wendy Drugge
Wuensch



Martha Lee Zins



Kevin Lindstrom

ACTIVE 4-YEAR TERM (2 seats)	VOTES
Julie Reno	2,265
Kevin Lindstrom	2,232
Yohannes Agegnehu	1,896
ACTIVE 2-YEAR TERM (1 seat)	VOTES
Wendy Drugge Wuensch	1,734
Mark Hagemeyer	1,108
Noel Raph	946
RETIREE 4-YEAR TERM (1 seat)	VOTES
Martha Lee Zins	13,248
Joel Larsen	5,239

President's

c o r n e r

Martha Lee Jones
TRA Board



A witness to education milestones

It's truly astounding to consider the education history witnessed by TRA since its founding during the Great Depression. Teacher pay in those early years was meager and benefits and job security were rare. Teachers began to rebel and join unions, and things had changed a bit by 1930. Their annual pay began to grow and some women rose into leadership roles, but times were tough. It's against this backdrop that TRA was founded.

Here are just a few of the educational milestones we've seen over 90 years:

1931 TRA was established on Aug. 1. Contributions initially were 5 percent of salary with a \$100 per year maximum. Investments were typically in bonds that paid very low interest. Stock investments were not permitted. TRA was a defined contribution plan, with an account balance consisting of employee contributions plus investment earnings. There were no matching state contributions until teachers re-

tired and purchased a quarterly annuity with their own savings.

1933 As a result of the Depression and the financial strain on smaller government units, the federal government assumed distribution of school lunch commodities. Schools in rural areas often had long distances to travel to retrieve food from county courthouses.

1947 In Minnesota in the early years of the 20th century, there were more than 7,000 school districts (today there are 604) and about 2,000 one-room schoolhouses. The year 1947 saw a major consolidation push at the state capitol.

The Truman Commission Report recommended doubling college enrollment and establishing community colleges to expand free public education.

1954 In *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, the Supreme Court outlawed racial segregation in public schools. The battle for bringing together white and black students and fighting discrimination across the country began.

1957 The "Little Rock Nine," a group of African-American students, tried to enroll at Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. An angry white mob and the Arkansas National Guard tried to stop them, and the army had to step in.

1964 The Association for Children with Learning Disabilities (now the Learning Disabilities Association of America) was formed, choosing the term "learning disability" instead of offensive terms used previously. Legislation making education free for special-needs students followed.

1965 Minnesota lawmakers finally got the number of school districts down below 1,800.

President Johnson's war against poverty led to the creation of Head Start, which helped meet the needs of preschool children from low-income families.

1972 Title IX Amendments prohibited discrimination based on sex in all aspects of education.

1993 Jones International University became the world's first entirely online school.

And so we arrive at recent history, with presidents seeking to make a mark on education, including President Clinton in 1994 boosting funding for bilingual and immigrant education and allowing public charter schools. President George W. Bush signed the controversial No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, which implemented federal student testing standards and penalized schools that didn't hit achievement quotas. In 2009, President Obama announced Race To The Top, a grant to incentivize innovation and reform in K-12 education.

Educators have been through a lot in recent years, from school shootings to a pandemic that turned our teaching methods upside-down. TRA has been here for you through it all. We're proud of how we've evolved over time to better serve generations of educators. Here's to another 90-plus years of serving you.

H.E. White, executive secretary of TRA during the Depression years.



1931



ONE-ROOM SCHOOL
Spencer Brook School, Isanti County



F.B. OLSON
Minnesota governor, 1931-1936



DAISY BROWN
TRA board member in 1931,
first female director in 1940

STILLWATER LIFT BRIDGE

Span over the St. Croix River
completed 1931



TRA: A LIFELINE DURING

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

- In 1931, food riots break out in Minneapolis and elsewhere in the United States.
- The unemployment rate surpasses 70 percent on the Iron Range.
- Farmers face huge drops in crop values while city workers see declining wages continue.
- Teacher salaries and programs are affected as communities cut education budgets.
- The Chicago Board of Education tries to pay teachers with IOUs or no pay at all.
- Membership in teachers' unions such as the American Federation of Teachers increases.
- FDR proposes a New Deal to end the Depression and vows to repeal Prohibition.
- The *Star Spangled Banner* is adopted as the national anthem of the United States
- *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* movies premiere.

	<u>T H E N</u>	<u>N O W</u>
TRA assets	\$43,882	\$27.07 billion
Annual teacher salaries	\$2,077	\$63,195
Annual tuition U of M	\$81	\$28,942
Annual cost of living	\$1,272	\$58,800
Average cost of a house	\$4,297	\$285,690
Average cost of new car	\$430	\$38,961



SPAM DEBUTS

At a Hormel party in 1937, a guest won \$100 for naming a new canned meat

2021



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TRA news briefs

Welcome, new retirees!

Once you and your employer provide TRA with the required forms and supporting information, you should receive your first pension check within 30 to 60 days of your effective date of retirement. Due to the large number of educators who retire in June, summer retirement applications may take longer to process. If your effective date of retirement is in June or July, you can expect to receive your first retirement check during the first week of July, August or September and no later than the first week of October depending upon the timely receipt of your required documents.

Reporting major life events to TRA

Whether it's divorce, death of a member, spouse, or benefit recipient, major life events happen. All of these events should be reported to TRA because they might affect a benefit payment. It

is also important for family members or personal representatives to report a member's death to prevent overpayment of benefits. Contact our Member Service Center at 1-800-657-3669 or 651-296-2409.

About post-retirement work

TRA retirees may return to work with a TRA-covered employer and earn up to the \$46,000 earnings limit without deferring the receipt of a portion of their TRA pension benefit. The earnings limitation is applied on a fiscal year basis (July 1 to June 30). The Minnesota State earnings limit is \$62,000. If you are under Social Security's normal retirement age and retired for only part of the year, the earnings limitation amount will be prorated. The earnings limitation does not apply once you reach Social Security's normal retirement age or return to work in a position not covered by TRA.

Teachers Retirement Association

Jay Stoffel, Executive Director

The TRIB is published three times a year. If differences develop between the information provided and the laws governing TRA, the laws prevail.

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Dr. Heather Mueller, Commissioner
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