



## Kentucky Retired Teachers Association

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### DELEGATE ASSEMBLY APRIL 20, 2021 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Covid-19 has brought challenges to all our lives during the past year, but it also presented us with opportunities that will improve the effectiveness of our association in the years to come. While we all missed in-person KRTA meetings, an opportunity for fellowship with our colleagues, we were forced to expand our online presence. The positive outcome is that we were able to engage with more retired teachers who were unable to attend in-person meetings prior to the pandemic.

For example, I heard from Willis Haws, who is unable to attend our meetings because he is confined to a nursing home in Martin County. He said he was thrilled to participate in the Fall Workshops virtually, and it felt like old times. As we move into a "new normal" and can resume meetings, it will be important to leverage our online and virtual "pivot" this year to continue increasing our outreach to those unable to attend in-person meetings.

TRS saw a 17-year low in the number of retirements during the past year, and teacher retirements impact the membership growth of KRTA. For the first time in many years, our membership growth has slowed, but our membership remains strong with more than 32,000 members. However, we expect in 2021 to see a vast increase in the number of teachers entering the retirement ranks. This will be an excellent opportunity to grow KRTA to even great heights in the coming year. Thanks to our devoted members who work tirelessly to keep our membership on a positive trajectory, we look forward to working with you throughout the coming year to make KRTA even stronger.

The KRTA staff is second to none. Betty, Brenda, Charlotte, Emily, Janie and Jan care deeply for the association membership and have continue to provide exceptional service to our members while working largely from home during the past year. This year also brought changes to KRTA business partners, but saw an increase in members utilizing our many benefits (maybe give few examples?). For the past 12 months, our staff successfully managed pivoting to virtual/online for state meetings, Fall Workshops, and now the State Convention. We were thrilled to have record engagement during those events. We continue to send numerous mass emails to more than 18,000 members, maintained the [teachfrankfort.org](http://teachfrankfort.org) website, increased our social media presence while continuing to enroll members in our texting service.

KRTA continues to give back to the Commonwealth. Our members give both time and money as they share their civic mindedness in their respective communities. KRTA members volunteered \_\_\_ hours valued at \$\_\_\_\_\_ in their communities. KRTA donations made possible N.O. Kimbler scholarships valued at \$1,650 to each of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System sites across the state. Our association continues to grow our

benevolence program through the Bourgard Foundation. Retired teachers helping retired teachers, that is what KRTA is all about.

The advocacy shown by our membership continues to be both respectful and based on facts, using real numbers and staying away from rhetoric. The knowledge of our membership and civility used when engaging on retirement issues continues to garner respect from legislators in Frankfort. Because of your voice, the retirement security of retired teachers is safe for now. But our presence and voice must persevere as the fight to protect retiree benefits continues. The 2021 General Assembly was difficult for our association and the many dedicated volunteers who advocate on your behalf. With the ability of our volunteers to be present at the State Capitol limited due to Covid protocols, we relied on Zoom, email and telephone conversations.

While we are unhappy that the 2021 General Assembly did not live up to its commitment to meet the statutory funding levels of the Shared Responsibility Agreement passed in 2010, especially because many of you worked so very hard 11 years ago to get this legislation passed. KRTA will continue to explain to our elected leaders what Shared Responsibility means to us and the Commonwealth and help them understand the sacrifices we agreed to make in return.

As we move forward, it will be imperative that we continue to advocate for: 1) Full Statutory funding for the medical insurance fund at TRS; 2) Maintaining the financial and administrative independence of TRS; and 3) Keeping a defined benefit pension plan for current and future teachers.

I want to remind you that when we say KRTA is “political but not partisan,” we mean we will advocate in the political world on issues that impact our members such as TRS full funding and Social Security fairness. We will focus on Frankfort for state issues and Washington, D.C. for federal issues.

Politicians at the federal, state and local levels control our economic environment. This is an incontrovertible fact. We cannot expect others to expend the time and energy to do the hard work of keeping our state representatives and senators educated on our issues. We must do it. You must continue to do it! Therefore, each of us must resolve to continue to engage our legislators in fact-based conversations about the importance our pension and health care benefits to our financial security during our senior years.

The success of KRTA belongs to the many dedicated volunteer leaders we have at the local, district and state levels. I wish I could thank each of you personally. Since I cannot, please accept my written, “**Thank you!**” I say it everywhere I go, Kentucky’s retired teachers are undoubtedly the best people in the world.