

REAL SCOOP



President's Message:

Greetings to all REA members, families and friends as we move forward into this new year 2019. New events and changes will be coming for the new year. I hope this finds everyone in good health and enjoying their retirement.

Here are some of the events to look forward to with the REA for the coming year:

Quarterly membership meetings are at the Mary Singleton Senior Center, 150 E. First Street, on Thursdays, March 21st, June 20th and September 19th for this year. Please try to attend these meetings so that you can be informed on changes and kept up to date on things that are happening in our city.

At the March 21st quarterly membership meeting, we will have someone from the General Employees Pension Fund office and the Police and Fire Pension Fund office. This will be to keep us up to date on what's going on. Tell your friends that have retired or may be thinking about it to come and check us out. There will be time to ask questions, get answers and maybe win a little cash.

On April 14th, we will be having the Annual Barbeque. This year it will be catered by the owner of Woody's BBQ in Green Cove Springs. It will be held again at the Firefighter Hall located at 618 Stockton Street. Please make your reservation as soon as possible so we can get a head count and plan for this event. (See page 7) This is a very nice event to enjoy good food and visit with friends you have worked with through the years.

In October, we will have the Annual Fish Fry and a tentative date for the Christmas Party is December 1st and both will also be held at the Firefighter Hall. Look for details in the September – October and November – December Real Scoops.

The REA Board of Directors meet monthly on the third Thursday of each month (that is not a scheduled quarterly meeting at the Singleton Center) at the City and Police Credit Union located at 4830 Waller Street. If you have something to share with the Board, you can let the office know at 904-353-2400. We will make time for you to speak, or we will share your concern with the Board members for you.

Also, if anyone would like to contribute to the newsletter with a funny story, a history of the department that you worked in, a family story, or anything interesting where you have traveled, please send to the REA office at: klooney@reajax.com.

As a reminder to all the REA members, our staff and Board are here to help with your City of Jacksonville retirement questions. Feel free to contact us at the REA office.

God Bless You All! Pete Ison





LAW TALK by Eric Smith, General Counsel and Past President

Just when I think I've seen it all, along comes a new wrinkle. In this case from one of our distraught members it involves pit bulls. She lives next door to a thoughtless man who could care less about being a bad neighbor and seems oblivious to the risk of these four pit bulls attacking and seriously injuring a child. Moreover, there is a continuing stench in the neighborhood from the neighbor hosing down the animal waste. These pit bulls have even been known to leap this lady's fence invading her yard.

City Animal Control has been less than helpful. The police say they cannot be of help. Sadly, it would seem that only a vicious attack will cause government entities to take action.

Accordingly, our REA member calls upon your general counsel to craft a solution before something terrible happens in her neighborhood. Without detailing the actions I will suggest (or attempt to handle for her) some options. Of course, a lawsuit can be filed if a dog attacks and injures (or kills) a person, but if the attack can be avoided it is very much preferable.

So, my friends, wish me success and stay tuned.

In these times of economic uncertainty, it is essential that people have a sense of security for the future. The forecast for long-term care costs is ugly. The national average (on the low side) for long-term care for a year is \$73,000, (\$225,570 for 3 years) In 10 years it's \$98,100. There are solutions. An attorney can help you plan. Other professionals can help you explore long-term care insurance or new kinds of life insurance structured so that money is there for long-term care. There are many sources of ideas, but it is most important to get the right information to make an informed decision.

The REA is fortunate to have a number of attorneys who work with me to help you. Consultations are free. If there is a fee, I make sure it is very reasonable. In many cases such as personal injury, wrongful death, medical malpractice and more there is no fee unless there is a recovery. Here are some Attorneys who have helped our members: Shawn DeVries, Curtis Falgatter, Julie Hodges, Cindy Denker, Eliot Safer, Tad Delegal, and Barry Bobeck. Be sure to thank them if you see them.

Elections are just around the corner. Be sure to vote. Some elections have been decided by one vote. Yours counts! Here's another reason to vote in this election: Your JEA is at risk. Some of those running would be in favor of selling your electric, water & sewer. Find out the Mayor's stance, and his opponents and council candidates.

Happy New Year and may 2019 be a wonderful year for you and your loved ones. Maybe win at least a piece of the lottery, enjoy good health and not have need for a lawyer but have one at the ready if you do.

Don't forget this – maybe tape to your fridge:

You won't see me on a billboard advertisement getting cozy with a Jaguar, or on a television commercial frolicking with my cats or sporting an expensive Hart, Shafner and Marx suit, but here's a friendly reminder that if you have a legal question or problems feel free to call me 24/7, or email: eric@govinc.net. My law office – 596-5707, cell phone: 635-2973, home: 251-3014 (if you are really nice to Gloria, she'll try to find me.) If your problem is important to you it's important to me.

See you at the Barbeque.

God Bless. *Eric*

Fraud prevention by Greg Radlinski, First Vice President (reprinted from Jan. - Feb. 2019)

Retirees are a con artists favorite demographic. We're too trusting. So, it's never tiresome to repeat the reminder to be cautious (on the computer, the phone or through the mail) because career criminals are continually creating new schemes.

First rule, knowing the exact scam is not as important as understanding that fraudsters rely on persuasion tactics designed to take assets from victims.

Second, if it sounds too good to be true (like winning the Irish Lottery or the Spanish El Gordo when you didn't buy a ticket), its false.

Third, if you get a call in the night from someone who says s/he is your grandchild arrested/kidnapped in somewhere in the world and you can secure their release if you just buy \$5,000 worth of WalMart gift cards and overnight them to the caller, confirm the truth before you act. Call your grandchild and your relatives to find out where s/he is, then the police.

Fourth, to defend against the fraudulent creation of lines of credit in your name, **freeze** your credit. Putting a freeze on your accounts at the credit reporting agencies will make it difficult for fraudsters to open credit lines in your name. Depending on your age, the cost to freeze/unfreeze your credit is free or a nominal fee. Certainly, if you aren't looking for a mortgage, a new credit card, or to finance a major purchase (like a car), you don't need to keep your credit account continually accessible to lenders.

If you think you might be or have been scammed, consult the REA General Counsel, Eric Smith. Mr. Smith has a wealth of knowledge that he's willing to share. A ten-minute **free** telephone consultation can save you a lot of grief. Make the right call.



May your blessings
outnumber
The shamrocks that
grow,
And may trouble avoid
you
Wherever you go.

Irish Blessing

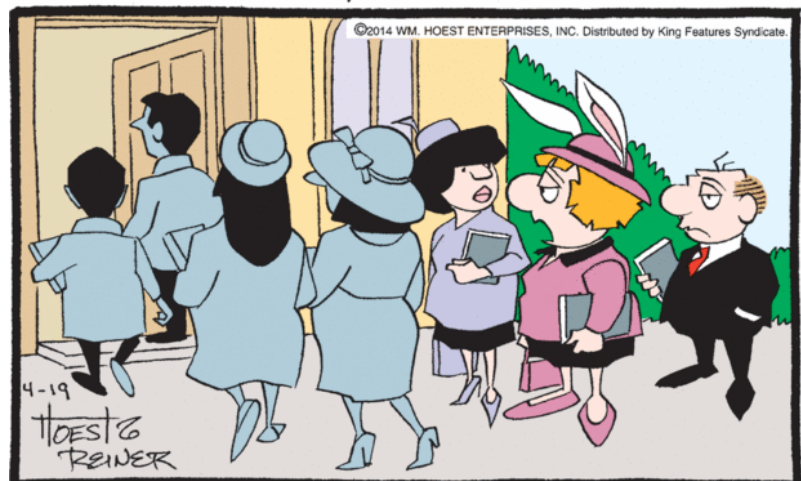
You're Going To Bite My
Ears off First, Aren't you?



Retired Employees Association Membership Meeting
10am - Thursday, March 21, 2019
Mary Singleton Senior Center Auditorium
150 E. First Street, near downtown

We will have updates from the Pension Funds, with questions and answers. Also committee reports from the Board of Directors.

At the close of the meeting, drawings for cash prizes.
Hope to see you there!



"THIS IS THE LAST TIME I LET LEROY BUY ME AN EASTER BONNET."

Retirees: Ways to cut your tax bill

Retirement is the time to enjoy the fruits of many years of laboring away at a job. However, if you aren't careful, Uncle Sam can reach in and pluck away your hard-earned savings bit by bit, year after year.

When the tax man cometh during your working years, it's annoying. But it is even worse during your golden years, when you no longer have a full-time income and every penny counts. Fortunately, you can take steps to keep the government at bay.

Convert to a Roth IRA – but do it carefully

Once you near the age of 70 ½, old Uncle Sam will come a-knockin' and demand that you start making annual withdrawals from most types of tax-advantaged retirement accounts, including 401(k) accounts and traditional individual retirement accounts (IRAs). And when you do so, you will pay taxes on those withdrawals, which are known as required minimum distributions (RMDs).

Long before you reach the age of 70, slowly convert portions of your traditional retirement funds over to a Roth IRA – which is not subject to RMDs. This strategy makes sense in certain situations, such as if you retire early and expect your income to be lower for several years.

For example, if you plan to live off savings that you have built up in a bank account – and if you will have few sources of regular income during that time – you might end up in a tax bracket as low as 10, 12, or 22 percent. Move money from tax-deferred accounts in a Roth IRA during such a period, and you will only have to pay taxes at that low rate. Consider talking to a qualified tax professional or financial advisor if you are unsure where to start.

Give to charity

The new tax law makes it less attractive to contribute to charity – at least in terms of getting a tax break. A tax break remains for retirees who want to donate to the charity of their choice. You can use the money you must withdraw for any required minimum distribution to an IRA or 401(k) and give it to a good cause.

Under the new Tax Cut and Jobs Act, there will be less people who benefit from donating to charity. Under legislation, an individual would need total itemized deductions to exceed \$12,000, the bill's new standard deduction for individual taxpayers, up from the old \$6,350. Married couples would need deductions exceeding \$24,000, up from \$12,700. Without itemized deductions, most people will lose all tax benefits associated with charitable giving.

Take advantage of favorable capital gains rates

You will not pay any capital gains taxes on investment gains held for more than one year if your income falls below certain levels. If your income is a little higher, you may pay a rate of 15 percent or 20 percent. So, it may make sense to sell stocks and other long-term investments when your income is lower. Weigh other factors and consider consulting a financial pro to get some advice.

Delay claiming Social Security

It hardly seems fair – after years of paying extra taxes that contribute to the Social Security benefits of your fellow citizens, it's possible you could be taxed on your own Social Security benefit if you earn too much income in retirement.

There are several ways to avoid this fate, but perhaps the easiest is to simply delay claiming your Social Security benefits. In fact, if you wait until you are 70, you can significantly boost the size of your monthly Social Security payment as well.



“But He knoweth the way that I take.” Job 23:10

A Prayer For Understanding

Are you in a situation you don't know how to handle? Are people giving you conflicting opinions and advice? Are you afraid you will make the wrong decision? If so, you're in the place where God can speak to you. Here is a prayer for you today; 'Lord Your word says that You are the only wise God and I am desperately in need of You at this time. I'm in a situation human wisdom can't explain and human ability can't fix. There's only one way out- that's thru You! Send the Spirit of wisdom and show me which way to go. Send the Spirit of revelation to help me understand what I can't figure out, for nobody but You can get me through this. Help me to faithfully obey all You will show me to do, and to remember that sometimes the wisdom of this world is foolishness to You. Help me to know the difference between human advice and god-

ly advice and to choose Your way. I submit this situation to You and commit myself to following You, knowing You've promised to direct my steps. Help me to walk this road with confidence in You; with the courage that comes from knowing I am Yours. Help me to cling to my convictions, yet still love those who misunderstand me. Keep me far from anger and close to your heart. And though it is an uphill climb, take my hand, light my way and help me to walk on, for in the end I know that all things will work together for my good and Your glory, in Christ name, Amen

Leona J. Spann
Chaplain

Tax season is the perfect time to start culling your paper and computer files and getting everything in order.

This time of year, it's important to keep track of the tax documents you're expecting to arrive and it's also a good idea to keep them well-organized. Getting your paperwork in order will reduce stress and make you more efficient.

Keep for less than a year. In this file, store your ATM, bank-deposit, and credit card receipts until you reconcile them with your monthly statements. Once you've done that, shred the paper documents or securely trash electronic files unless you need them to support your tax return. Keep insurance policies and investment statements until new ones arrive.

Keep for a year or longer. Hold on to loan documents until the loan is paid off. That will often be for more than a year. If you own a car, hold on to the title until you sell it. If you have investments in stocks, bonds, and mutual funds, for example, keep the purchase confirmations until you sell, so you can establish your cost basis and holding period. Keep receipts for medical expenses for one year, as your insurance company may request proof of a doctor visit or other verification of medical claims.

Keep for seven years. If you fail to report all your gross income on your tax returns, the government has six years to collect the tax or start legal proceedings. To be on the safe side, keep all tax records for at least seven years. If you plan to sell the house and you have made improvements to it, keep receipts for those improvements for seven years – you may need to lower the taxable gain on the house when you sell it.

Keep forever. Records such as birth and death certificates, marriage licenses, divorce decrees, Social Security cards, and military discharge papers should be kept indefinitely. Also, hold on to any defined-benefit plan documents, estate-planning documents, wills, adoption papers, life-insurance policies, and an inventory of what's inside your bank safe deposit box.

(Information from Consumer Reports)



From the City Pension Fund Administration Office and the Police and Fire Pension Fund

You can now login to JaxPensionPortal.coj.net and sign-up for getting online access to your pension payment information from your home computer or phone. Just carefully follow the First Time Login Instructions to establish your login and then you will have easy access to your information. Pensioners can perform the following activities:

- View Current Pay Notice
- Click on Printer Icon to create a Print-Friendly Pay Statement
- Review Prior Pay Notices by selecting the Year and Check Date from the drop-down Menus
- Review Pay Summary History to see payment history for an entire year. You can also view prior years from the drop-down menu.
- Export to Excel Pay Summary information
- Update your password and change security questions
- Access more pension information online through the Contact Us section

If you need assistance getting started, contact for Police & Fire Pension Plan: (904)255-7373 and for General Employees and Correction Officers Pension Plan: (904) 255-7280 during normal business hours. REA members can call Kathy or Jackie if you would like at 904-353-2400 (Tues., Wed., Thurs. 9-2pm). What a great way for pensioners to have pension information available anytime, right at your fingertips!

Here's how the Social Security Administration has summarized the history of COLA increases:

Most people are aware that there are annual increases in Social Security benefits to offset the corrosive effects of inflation on fixed incomes. These increases, now known as Cost of Living Allowances (COLAs), are such an accepted feature of the program that it is difficult to imagine a time when there were no COLAs.

But in fact, when Ida May Fuller received her first \$22.54 benefit payment in January of 1940, this would be the same amount she would receive each month for the next 10 years. For Ida May Fuller, and the millions of other Social Security beneficiaries like her, the amount of that first benefit check was the amount they could expect to receive for life.

It was not until the 1950 Amendments that Congress first legislated an increase in benefits. Current beneficiaries had their payments recomputed and Ida May Fuller, for example, saw her monthly check increase from \$22.54 to \$41.30.

These recomputations were effective for September 1950 and appeared for the first time in the October 1950 checks. A second increase was legislated for September 1952. Together these two increases almost doubled the value of Social Security benefits for existing beneficiaries. From that point on, benefits were increased only when Congress enacted special legislation for that purpose.

In 1972 legislation the law was changed to provide, beginning in 1975, for automatic annual cost-of-living allowances (i.e., COLAs) based on the annual increase in consumer prices. No longer do beneficiaries have to await a special act of Congress to receive a benefit increase and no longer does inflation drain value from Social Security benefits.

Congress has no say over COLAs – that body cannot decide whether or not to “allow” COLAs, nor can it preempt COLAs by spending the money that would have been used to pay for them on something else.

The latest increase will **affect** 62 million Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients and started in January 2019 was 2.8%. It's the **largest** increase since 2012, when beneficiaries saw a 3.6%.

Retired Employees Association
Barbeque for Members
\$5.00 per person

Sunday, April 14, 2019
1:00pm till 2:30pm

Located at the Firefighter Hall
618 Stockton Street

Catered by Woody's Barbeque - Green Cove Springs

Menu: BBQ Ribs & Chicken, Baked Beans, Cole Slaw,
Rolls, Banana Pudding, Unsweet and Sweet Tea.

Reservations must be received in the office by no
later than Tuesday, April 9th, which will be open
from 9 - 2pm. We are closed on Mondays & Fridays.

After we give the count to the caterer, no more will
be accepted. Also no walk-ins without a reservation.

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM WITH CHECK MADE
PAYABLE TO : RETIRED EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION &
MAIL TO: 4830 WALLER STREET, JACKSONVILLE, FL
32254.

Number of tickets @ \$5.00 each: _____
(member & 1 guest)

Amount Enclosed: _____

Member Name: _____

Guest Name: _____

Phone No.: _____

E-Mail: _____

Jacksonville's Unitary Elections by Harry Reagan, REA Historian and Real Scoop Editorial Editor

A lot of folks are focusing on the 2019 city elections, so it's a good time to talk about our unitary election system.

It started with a proposal for nonpartisan elections. Lots of local governments have nonpartisan elections. But we couldn't get that. Too much opposition, mostly from the political parties. So, we took a step in that direction with unitary elections, which seems to have been a step in the right direction.

As many of you will remember, we used to have three elections – a party primary, (a runoff when no candidate got a majority in the first election) and a general election. Among other things, that deprived some voters of the opportunity to participate...if their party had no candidate in the race.

Now we have unitary elections. We have two elections. All candidates go on the ballot (with party affiliation after their names) in the first election. If no one gets a majority, there's a second election with the two top candidates. The idea was submitted to voters on the November 1992 election ballot. It passed overwhelmingly with 73 percent of the vote.

Voters did two other things in that election – established residence areas for the five at-large council members and extended the two-term limit to members of the school board and constitutional offices. Both also passed overwhelmingly.

Voters made decisions in 1992 that politicians were unable/unwilling to make. We can't put every decision on the ballot, but sometimes it's the best way to do something. Perhaps you have some thoughts on some of those changes or others you would like to see.

Let me hear from you: harry.reagan@comcast.net. *Harry*



Retired Employees of the Consolidated City of Jacksonville

Located in the City & Police Credit Union
4830 Waller Street
Jacksonville, FL 32254

Office Hours are Tuesday, Wednesday and
Thursday from 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

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E-mail: klooney@reajax.com

Website: www.reajax.com

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Bring in a new member and help us reinforce our efforts to take care of our retirees.
Update your E-mail address and contact info. Send it to klooney@reajax.com.



Are you making the most
of your **retirement**
savings?

You can still make 2018 contributions to your IRA.* If you haven't reached your contribution limit for last year, consider maximizing your contributions today!

Don't have an IRA set up? Contact David Rice, Financial Advisor, to get help with all your IRA investment needs.



David Rice, Financial Advisor
904.510.4188 | Drice@swbc.com
Contact David today, or learn more at CityFCU.com.

City & Police
FEDERAL CREDIT UNION
CityFCU.com | (904) 353.2240



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