FALL 2026
VOL. 67 · NO. 3

ASEA NEWS

Official Newsletter of the Arkansas State Employees Association









President's Report

By Holli Smith
Board President



I started with the state in 1995, and I've been blessed to work at different agencies both in Little Rock and throughout the state. I was most recently sworn in as ASEA President at the Annual Business Meeting on August 15th. and am now looking forward to serving on the board and representing all employees.

The board is currently preparing for the 2027 legislative session. We will be focusing on specific areas, as voted on at the annual meeting. I am looking forward to working with Chasity, Toniesha and the rest of the board to better support being a state employee.

The ASEA Board and I are here to represent state employees and to ensure your concerns and needs as employees are addressed. If you want to contact me with an idea or a concern, I would love to hear from you. You can email me via the board page of the ASEA website.

We have just launched the first phase of the new My ASEA member portal. You are now able to set your own password and update your contact information, funeral assistance beneficiaries, and communication preferences with ASEA.

Happy Fall - I look forward to working with you all in the upcoming years.

Holli Smith

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Director's Report

By John Bridges
Executive Director



Congratulations to Holli Smith, Chasity Lucas, and Toniesha Sargent on being sworn in as board officers for 2026 - 2028. I would also like to thank Dona Bowry for her service to ASEA as president for the past two years.

The board also voted to accept Jewel de Almeida, Kelli Dixon, Melanie Garner, and Gregory Robie as regional directors. Congratulations!

You can see the current makeup of the full board by region on page 4.

Let's get to it. Association members joined the annual meeting on August 15th via Zoom to discuss the resolutions submitted for consideration. Every submitted resolution was read and discussed, with participants voting to pass, fail, or hold. Resolutions that were passed were then ranked in order of priority for 2026 - 2027.

First, the resolutions that did not advance at this time.

The expansion of health coverage to include GLP/GIP medications did not pass. Multiple members have asked us to advocate for this benefit, which could be life-changing for many. The Employee Benefits Division has addressed this request, stating that much more research is needed to see how it could be responsibly introduced. You can view a clip from EBD explaining this with the QR code at left.

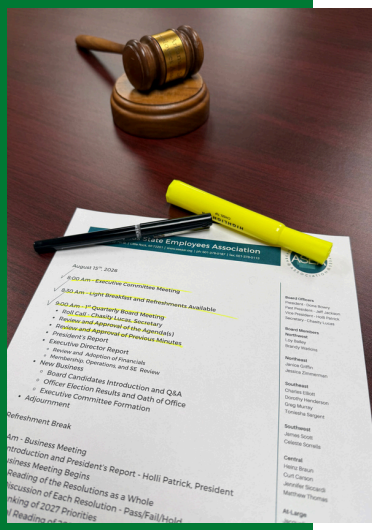
Scan or Click

The request for a Christmas bonus did not pass as submitted. See Inflation-Based COLA.

The resolution to reevaluate internal vs. external certifications was put on hold. The board needed more information to determine the rationale for the request and whether or not this is something that ASEA can address.

The only retiree resolution that did not pass was to address pre-65 annuities. After some discussion with APERS, we now know that this is governed by federal law as it relates to the alignment of benefits (pensions and Social Security).

Now for a summary of the resolutions that passed.



Career Service Payment Modification
We would like to see a new category for those who reach five years. We would also like to see the payments increased overall.

Sick Leave Payout Upon Retirement
By our estimation, the $7500 cap has not increased in approximately 20 years. This is a carryover from our 2025 meeting and remains a priority for ASEA.

Mileage Reimbursement
ASEA submitted a request to the administration this past spring. As gas prices continue to increase, we will continue to reach out with our request for relief.

HSA Administration Change
ASEA has spoken with the Employee Benefits Division about the HSA administrator. They have already taken steps to address employee concerns, and the service seems to be improving. ASEA will continue to monitor this.

Director's Report, continued

Remote Work Policy Modification
This resolution was submitted by a member with a specific concern. ASEA agrees that individual agencies should have the flexibility to address remote work policies on a case-by-case basis.

Inflation-Based COLA
After discussing this resolution, the board feels that state employees would be better-served by a periodic review and incremental adjustment of the employee pay plan. We believe this will result in more fair and consistent pay increases over time.

Bereavement Leave Policy Modification
Employees are telling us that in some cases it is better to use sick and annual leave. Based on this feedback, ASEA would like to see the policy modified to be an additional benefit for employees.

Adoption and Foster Leave Policy Modification
ASEA would like the policy expanded to include children up to age 18.

Retired employee resolutions were considered separately.

The resolution to protect the 3% COLA and health insurance benefits passed, of course, as did the resolution to host more retiree lunches.

Other resolutions that passed were the removal or reduction of the state income tax on retirees' APERS benefit and the possibility of having ASEA dues deducted by the retirement system.

ASEA will update members on each of these priorities as we have news to report or as we prepare for the legislative session. If you have input or questions about any of these resolutions, or suggestions for the future please reach out to me at jbridges@aseaar.org or 501-378-0187.

The best way to stay informed of ASEA actions at all times is to subscribe to receive texts and emails. You can do this via the member portal, My ASEA.

For instructions on accessing the portal if you have not done this before, please see page 5.

Thank you for being a member of ASEA!



Active Employees Resolutions

- ☑ **Career Service Payment - Modification**
- ☑ **Sick Leave Payout Upon Retirement - Increase**
- ☑ **Mileage Reimbursement Rate - Increase**
- ☑ **HSA Administration Change (Beneliance)**
- ☑ **Remote Work Policy Modification**
- ☑ **Expanding Coverage to Include GLP/GIP Medications**
- ☑ **Adoption and Foster Leave Policy - Modification**
- ☑ **Christmas Bonus**
- ☑ **Inflation-Based COLA**
- ☑ **Bereavement Leave Policy - Modification**
- ☑ **Internal vs. External Certification - Reevaluation**

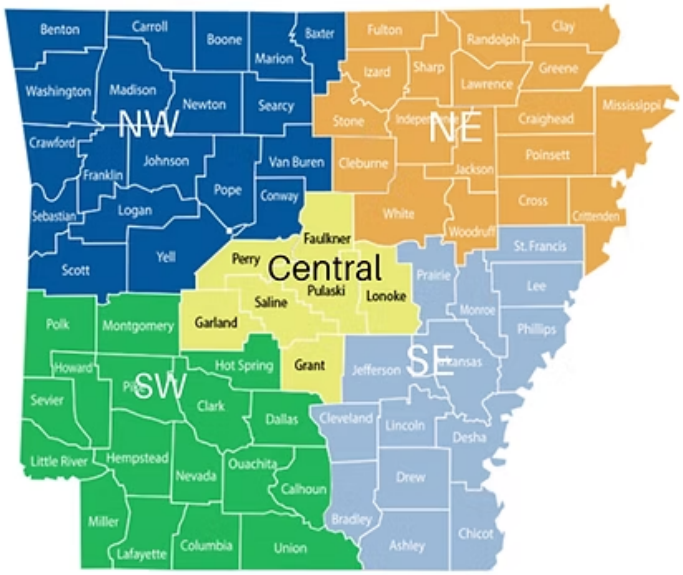
Retired Employees Resolutions

- ☑ **Remove or reduce state tax on APERS benefit**
- ☑ **Continue protection of 3% COLA and health insurance benefits**
- ☑ **Retiree Lunch Meetings - Continue**
- ☑ **Membership Dues - Deducted by Retirement Systems**
- ☒ **Pre-65 Temporary Annuities**

Officers and Board

2026-2028 Officers

Holli Smith, President
Chasity Lucas, Vice President
Toniesha Sargent, Secretary
Dona Bowry, Past President



Northwest
Jewel de Almeida
Melanie Garner
Brandy Watkins

Northeast
Janice Griffin
Jeff Jackson
Jessica Zimmerman

Southeast
Dorothy Henderson
Greg Murray

Southwest
Charles Elliott
James Scott
Celeste Sorrells

Central
Heinz Braun
Curt Carson
Jennifer Siccardi
Matthew Thomas

At-Large
Jacqueline Carradine
Kelli Dixon
Gregory Robie

Retiree At-Large
Judy Beatty
Jerry Jones
Mary McGehee
Bob McQuade
Clayton Rogers
Gary Wallace

Thank You for Your Service



Dona Bowry
Immediate Past President

Welcome New Board Members



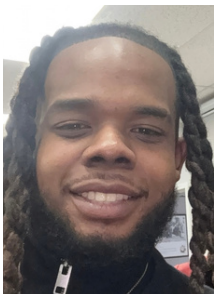
Kelli Dixon



Jewel de Almeida



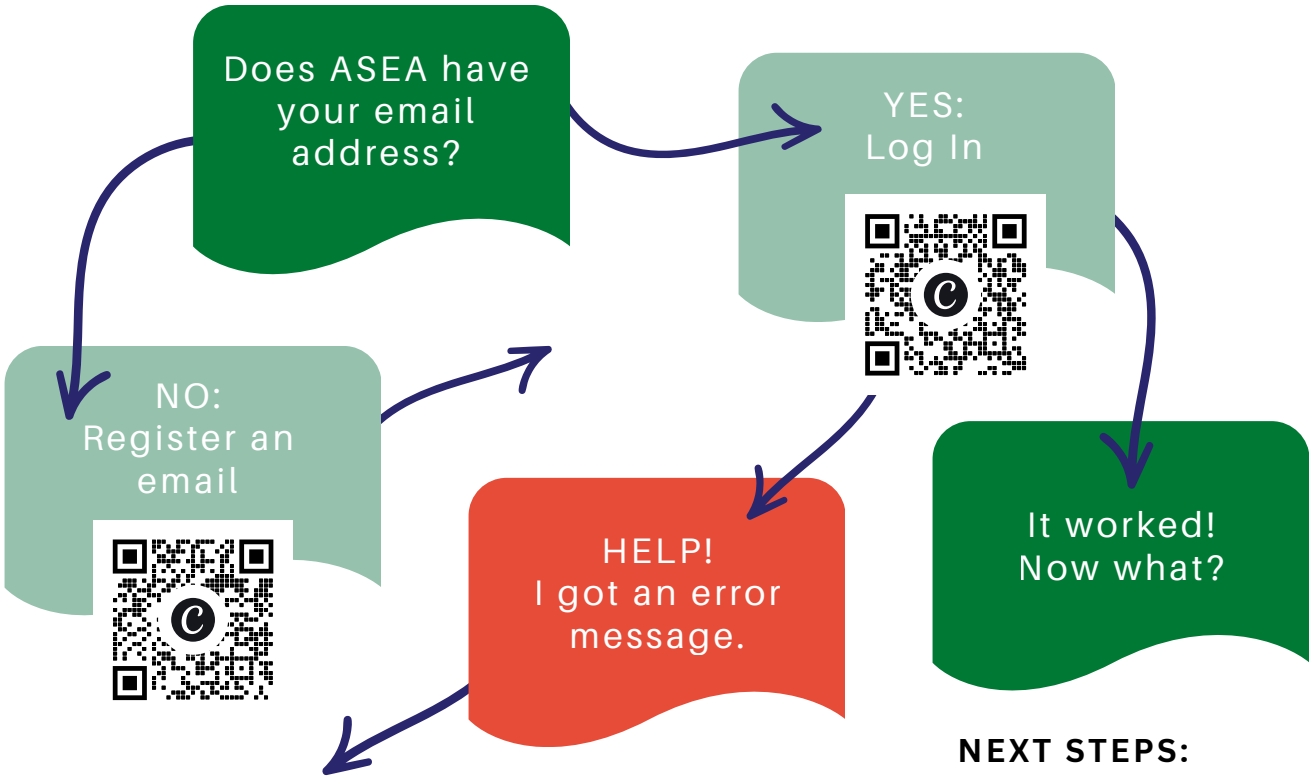
Melanie Garner



Gregory Robie

NEW LOG IN PROCESS at ASEAAR.org

The process for accessing the member "dashboard" has changed! You will still click on the **My ASEA** button, but the old passcode has been discontinued. Members will now access the members-only content using email and a unique password. To register your password and begin using the portal, please follow the steps outlined here -



TROUBLESHOOTING:

Common error messages are the result of the following:

- Our system does not recognize the email you used for some reason.
- Your membership is not currently active.

In most cases, you can simply send an email to **HELP@aseaar.org** to get the issue resolved.

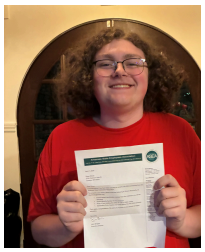
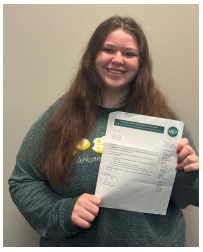
NEXT STEPS:

View and edit your profile, including your contact information and your funeral assistance beneficiaries!

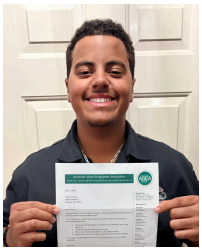
View the familiar dashboard and send us suggestions for improvement.

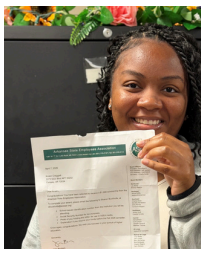
2026 Scholarships

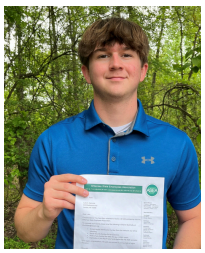
1. Bogard, Shalon
   U of A - Little Rock
2. Brock, Ethan
   University of Arkansas
3. Cauthen, Maven
   Arkansas Tech University
4. Christensen, Reed
   University of Central Arkansas
5. Cockran, Betty
   Southern NH University
6. Collins, Braden
   University of Central Arkansas
7. Conley, Adrian
   University of Arkansas
8. Craig, Mckyna
   Arkansas State University
9. Creggett, Kristin
   University of Central Arkansas
10. Ferrell, Kaebriuna
    Arkansas State University
11. Fulks, Anna
    Connors State College
12. Gammel, Luke
    University of Central Arkansas
13. Garrett, Evan
    U of A - Little Rock
14. Garringer, Sophia
    University of Central Arkansas
15. Gill, Talia
    Pulaski Technical College
16. Harmon, Alexander
    MA Institute of Technology
17. Henry, Issac
    University of Arkansas
18. Hobby, Allie
    Pulaski Technical College
19. Johnson, Elizabeth
    U of A - Rich Mountain
20. Johnson, Malaysia
    Southern Arkansas University
21. Jordan, Lainey
    Southern Arkansas University
22. Juhl, Lauren
    Arkansas Tech University
23. Kazery, Alyssa
    University of Arkansas
24. Kindall, Allie
    University of Central Arkansas
25. Kirkpatrick, Jata
    Southern Arkansas University
26. Kirtley, Jack
    University of Arkansas
27. Lanehart, Charles III
    Mississippi State University
28. Lawson, Evin
    University of Arkansas
29. Lawson, Jada
    Arkansas State University
30. Lee, Alden
    University of Mississippi





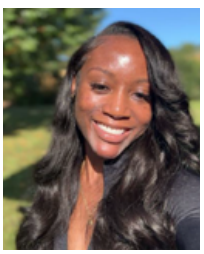




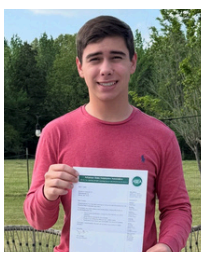
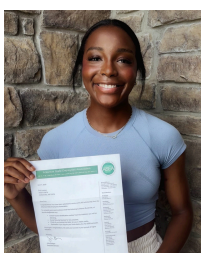
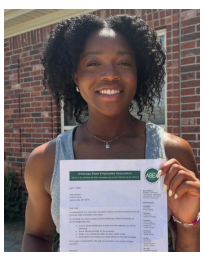




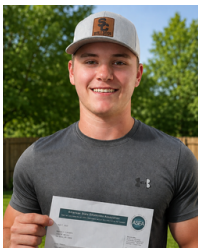
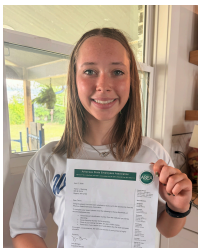




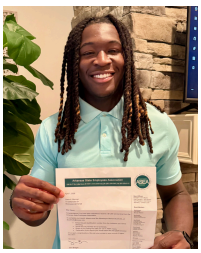
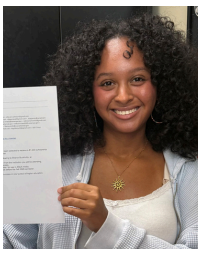


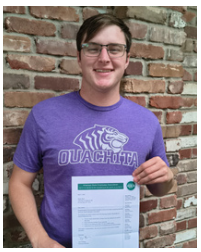


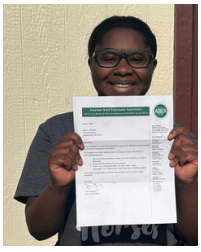
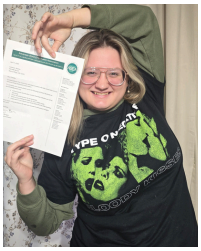
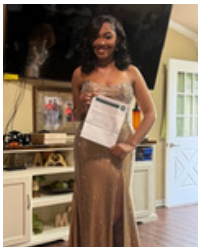
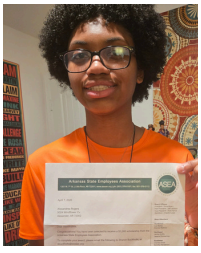
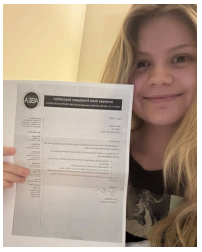



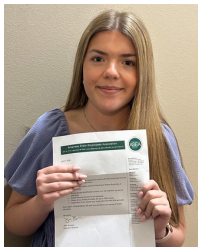


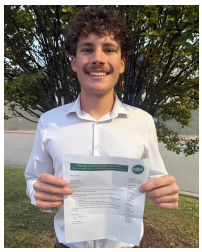
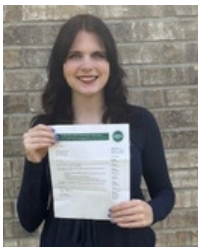
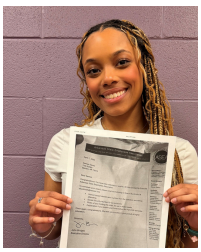




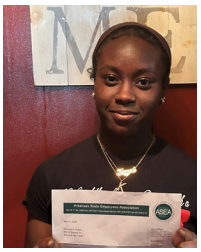
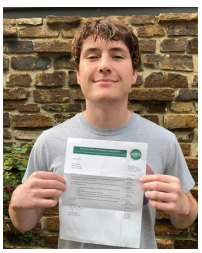


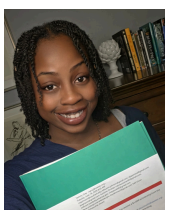











31. Leopard, Madison
    U of A - Monticello
32. Leopard, Morgan
    U of A - Monticello
33. Manning, Taylor
    University of Arkansas
34. Martin, Madeline
    NW Mississippi Comm College
35. Michna, Brook
    Arkansas Tech University
36. Milam, Claire
    University of Arkansas
37. Moix, Madelyn
    University of Central Arkansas
38. Morman, Gavin
    South Ark Community College
39. Ornelas, Asa Grace
    Tuskegee University
40. Osler, Shanice
    University of Arkansas
41. Rainey, Marlee
    University of Arkansas
42. Ratcliff, Kaydence
    University of Central Arkansas
43. Reeder, Briley
    University of Central Arkansas
44. Reid, Dalton
    Ouachita Baptist University
45. Reid, Dakota
    Southern Arkansas University
46. Richard, Kirria
    ASU - Beebe
47. Robins, Calista
    University of Arkansas
48. Robinson, Amari
    SE Arkansas College
49. Rogers, Alexandrea
    Pulaski Technical College
50. Rogers, Remy
    University of Arkansas
51. Ross, Avery
    University of Arkansas
52. Scoggins, Ashlyn
    University of Central Arkansas
53. Seaton, Sophie
    ASU - Newport
54. Smith, Noah
    University of Central Arkansas
55. Sprick, Taylor Nicole
    Dallas Inst of Funeral Science
56. Starks, Saniya
    University of Central Arkansas
57. Stephenson, Colby
    Arkansas Tech University
58. Stepps, Kelton
    Jackson State University
59. Taylor, Kennedi
    Arkansas State University
60. Wells, Eric
    University of Arkansas
61. Wilkins, Josie
    Arkansas Tech University
62. Williams, Kaylah
    U of - Pine Bluff
63. Wood, Campbell
    Ouachita Baptist University
64. Wood, Walker
    Ouachita Baptist University
65. Yager, Jordan
    U of A - Little Rock
66. Young, Mastin
    University of Arkansas

Retiree Health Insurance News

Retiree Open Enrollment is November 1 - 30

Retirees can change plans, or makes changes to current plans, during this time.
Rates for all ASE Retiree plans are available on the EBD website at www.arbenefits.org.
If you are not making changes, no action is nessasary.

United Healthcare MAPD Meetings

United Healthcare has scheduled both in-person and virtual meetings for retirees who would like more information about the UHC MAPD (Medicare) Plan. Retirees will receive an invitation to these meetings from UHC in mid-October.

In-person Meetings

Date	Central Time	Meeting Location	Street Address	City	Zip
10/27/26	10-12p	Fort Smith Convention Center	55 S 7th St	Fort Smith	72901
10/28/26	10-12p	Embassy Suites NW Arkansas	3303 Pinnacle Hills Pkwy	Rogers	72758
11/02/26	1-3p	Fairfield Marriott	258 Red Hill Road	Arkadelphia	71923
11/04/26	10-12p	DoubleTree by Hilton Hot Springs	4813 Central Ave	Hot Springs	71913
11/04/26	2-4p	Delta Hotels Little Rock	201 S. Shakelford Road	Little Rock	72211
11/10/26	10-12p	Veterans Park Event Center	508 N Lincoln St	Cabot	72023
11/11/26	10-12p	Embassy Suites Jonesboro Red Wolf Convention Center	223 Red Wolf Blvd	Jonesboro	72405
11/12/26	10-12p	Delta Hotels Little Rock	201 S. Shakelford Road	Little Rock	72211
11/12/26	2-4p	Hilton Garden Inn Conway	805 Amity Road	Conway	72032

Virtual and Telephonic Meetings

Virtual Meetings	Central Time
Thursday, October 29, 2026	1-3p
Friday, October 30, 2026	10-12p
Thursday, November 5, 2026	1-3p
Friday, November 13, 2026	10-12p
Tuesday, November 17, 2026	1-3p

You can also view the printable schedule with registration instructions using the QR code or at https://tinyurl.com/2jj2ctde.

Blue Cross Blue Shield CHI St. Vincent

No additional negotiations between CHI St. Vincent and Blue Cross Blue Shield have been reported.

Members who use a CHI/St. Vincent provider or care site should visit commonspirit.org/stvincent-alerts or call (800) 258-5075, (Monday-Friday 10am-10pm and Saturday-Sunday 10am-6pm) for assistance with already-scheduled appointments and continuity of care.

Emergency Medical Transportation

Coverage for emergency medical transportation is now available for retirees. View the ad on page 9 for more information about this valuable new benefit for ASEA members.

masa

masa

Ambulance bill protection with ARSEBA preferred rates

Now available for retirees



Each year, 1 in 15 U.S. families calls for an ambulance.[1]
And for many, that life-saving ride leads to a costly surprise.
In fact, more than half of privately insured ground ambulance rides result in out-of-network bills.[2]

Emergencies don't wait and neither should you. Enroll in MASA today and get ambulance bill protection for critical moments in rural life, plus benefits designed with you in mind.

Living and working in Arkansas, you know how far the nearest hospital can be. A long ground ambulance ride or even an air ambulance might be the only way to get care fast. But those rides can come with hefty out-of-pocket costs.* MASA protects you from those unexpected emergency medical transport bills, so you can focus on your health, not the ambulance bill.

Don't let a medical emergency turn into a financial crisis. MASA helps you stay protected wherever life takes you.

- **Protection from emergency ground and air ambulance transport bills**
- **Specialized return transport solutions available**
- **All EMS providers are included, widely across the U.S.**
- **Support for post-emergency care coordination**

Visit **arseba.com** or call 888-224-5233 to learn more and enroll today!

Retiree code: SOAR

* Based upon theenactment of certain legalprotectionsregarding surprise medical billing, actual member liability may be less than the provider's charges.

1: MASA 2024 analysis; private database of U.S. claims data from 2022 | 2: Jama Network, 2024

The benefits listed, and the descriptions thereof, do not represent the full terms and conditions. For additional information and disclosures about MASA plans, click or visit https://info.masaglobal.com/disclaimers

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The Wrap

Legislative Preview

ASEA is already preparing for the 2027 legislative session. We'll keep you informed of any action on our priorities as reported here, as well as any legislation that affects active or retired state employees.

Important Dates

November 16
Pre-filing Bills & Resolutions
January 11
Regular Session Convenes
January 25
Deadline to file Retirement or State Employees Health Insurance Legislation



APERS Reports Record Returns

APERS, the Arkansas Public Employees Retirment System, earned an audited 18% investment return in FY 2026. Their investment portfolio grew by $1.8 billion, surpassing $14 billion for the first time.

Retiring at the End of the Year?

Active members who pay dues through payroll deduction will need to rejoin as retired or life members upon retirement. You can join online at www.aseaar.org as a renewing member, or by mailing your dues to ASEA.



ASEA awarded a record $66,000 in scholarships in 2026. We look forward to continuing these awards, which support the education goals of our members and their eligible dependents, in 2027.

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