AASRA NEWSLETTER

Affiliated with NRTA, a division of AARP

April, 2025

President's Message



Hello AASRA members,
This newsletter is full of lots of information. Please read it through to the end.

These past couple of months I have been traveling the state of Arizona to visit AASRA units – Pinal County, Pima County, San Pedro and Kingman. My goodness these units are active. They follow what the legislators are doing at the capital and the bills coming up for a vote. They contact their legislators with their concerns. Their programs are amazing. Their volunteerism within their communities is outstanding. They should be so very proud of what they have done this past year. Are you a member of one of these units? If so, "Thank You" for all you do within the unit. Keep up the great work and continue your support of your local unit.

April showers bring May flowers according to the old saying; but did you know it also brings about local unit elections and volunteer chairman for committees? Have you stepped up to put your name forward to be an officer or a chair for a committee? You say you don't feel you know enough about AASRA. You're too new to the organization. Now is the time to learn more. Don't have time to commit to AASRA. You would be amazed how you can find the time. Feel more comfortable with your local unit and how supportive everyone is. Now is your time to say "yes "and step forward. We welcome you to our world. Your state officers welcome you and support you. You will be glad you said "Yes".

As we come to 2025 Convention time, I would encourage you to spend the day, **Tuesday, June 3rd** with your fellow AASRA members; hear John Moody speak on our legislature; Paul Matson from ASRS and our next Legislator of the Year, David Livingston (hopefully, depending on the Legislature breaks). Our location is easy to reach with lots of parking. **Registration is once again $40!** Registration form within. Great time to meet and visit with others in AASRA from throughout the state. I hope to see you all in a matter of weeks.

Mary Henderson, AASRA President

AASRA Convention June 3, 2025

JOIN US FOR A DAY OF FUN AND FELLOWSHIP

The Convention Committee is excited to invite you to the All Arizona School Retirees Association's 2025 State Convention and Annual Meeting. Mark your calendars for Tuesday, June 3rd, and plan to join us at **the Church of the Beatitudes, 555 W. Glendale Ave., Phoenix, AZ**. We will meet in the beautiful Nelson Hall where you will spend the day with AASRA friends from around the state. The grounds of the church are inviting and accommodating—all on one level with ample parking and a short walk to the hall. There will be signs showing you the way and

friends to greet you in the hall. Our theme this year is **"Facing the Future Together".**

Check-in begins at 9:00 a.m. Collect your Convention materials at the registration table and enjoy the luscious Continental breakfast. Visit our vendor tables and meet representatives from UnitedHealthcare, Cigna Dental, Delta Dental, AMBA, AARP, and the Corporation Commission. We will also have a table for the AASRA Scholarship Foundation raffle and 50/50 drawing and our membership table where AASRA shirts will be for sale.

The morning business meeting will begin at **10:00 a.m**. We will be voting on a Constitution & Bylaws package and listening to informative speakers including ASRS Executive Director, Paul Matson, our Legislative Consultant, John Moody and the presentation of the Legislator of the Year award. Attendees consistently rate these speakers as their favorite part of the meeting.

The Memorial Committee has been working for months on the beautiful tribute they give to our members who have passed during the previous year. The Committee does a wonderful job in honoring them and their contributions to AASRA.

From **12:00-1:00** we will enjoy a delicious box lunch, mingle with friends and visit with the vendors who will be happy to answer your questions. **The business meeting will resume at 1:00 and continue until 3:30.**

Our Scholarship Foundation is providing a $1,250 scholarship to **two education students** from each of the three public universities. Six scholarships! To do this, it is having a fundraiser. Members and friends making a donation will be entered into a gift card raffle. Names will be drawn throughout the day and you do not need to be present to win. This an important fundraising event and your donations are greatly appreciated.
We could not do this convention without our sponsors. We want to thank them for their support.

AARP is once again providing our lunch; UnitedHealthcare is sponsoring our venue; and AMBA provides support to AASRA throughout the year.
We are very grateful for the partnership we have with these organizations and thank them immensely for their contributions to the success of our Convention.

The Convention Committee wants to make this an enjoyable and memorable event for our members. We're asking you to attend and support the efforts of the committee and the leaders who work so hard for you.

A registration form can be found with this newsletter, on the website at https://www.aasra.org/index.php or from your Unit President. **The registration deadline is May 24th.** We hope to see you at the Convention and ask you to help us face the future together.

The 2025 Convention Committee

2025 AASRA Constitution & Bylaws Change

This Constitution and Bylaws package with rationale was approved by the AASRA Board to send to the convention for approval at the March 26, 2025 meeting. It deals in giving the Executive Director(s) the right to vote at AASRA Board meetings.

Proposed change:
AASRA Constitution, Article V Officers, Sec. 6 Appointive Officers, A, with addition 7. and Bylaws, Article III – Duties of Appointive Officers, with the addition of Sec. 7.

The changes in ***Bold Italics*** are additions.

Constitution
Article V - Officers

Sec. 6 Appointive Officers

A. Appointive Officers shall be:

1. The NEWSLETTER Editor
2. The Parliamentarian

3. The Historian
4. The Arizona State Retirement Board Liaison
5. The AARP Arizona Liaison
6. The Legislative Liaison
7. The Volunteer Executive Director or Co-Executive Directors

B. The Appointive Officers shall be appointed by the President and approved by the Board of Directors for a two year term. The duties of the Appointive Officers shall be fixed by the Association Bylaws.

Bylaws

Article III – Duties of Appointive Officers

Sec. 7 The Volunteer Executive Director or Co-Executive Directors:

A. Shall provide executive assistant duties for the President and the Board of Directors.
B. Shall attend the four (4) scheduled AASRA Board of Directors Meetings and the Annual Meeting (convention) as an active member and provides updates to the board.
C. Shall be a voting member at meetings.
D. If Co-Executive Directors, only one member may vote representing the position of Volunteer Executive Director.

Rationale: The Executive Director should have the right to vote. He/she is familiar with the culture, history, and operations of the organization.

Are these done?

Have you turned in your **Community Participation** hours and money donations? These units have: Pinal County, East Valley, Kingman Area, Pima County, Saguaro, and Westside. Remember the count is from Jan. 1 through Dec. 30, 2024. This information is **due April 30th**. Send this information to Doug Honacker at wdhonacker@cox.net or 480-200-5960.

There is time to notify Sandy Marshall of an AASRA member passing. Do it soon. Sandy's contact is azsandymarshall@gmail.com .

AASRA Legislator of the Year Chosen



On March 26, 2025 the AASRA Board of Directors approved the nomination of Representative David Livingston (R-LD28) as the Legislator of the Year for 2025. The recommendation was presented by Joe Carter, Legislative Liaison and was based on Mr. Livingston's many years of legislative work on behalf of the Arizona State Retirement System.

Quotes from the rationale section of the nomination form:
During his many years in both the Arizona House of Representatives and the Arizona Senate, David Livingston has become the "go-to" legislator for the Arizona State Retirement System…. Rep. Livingston is **the person** whom other legislators consult regarding public pensions, including ASRS, PSPRS and CORP. He has repeatedly demonstrated his ability to understand complex legislation and explain it in a manner that leads other legislators to vote for his bills.

As a member of the Republican caucus, Mr. Livingston has sponsored and supported legislation with which we do not agree. However, our first and second Legislative Priorities demonstrate how important the ASRS defined benefit pension is to our members. Mr. Livingston is a staunch defender of that system.

Excerpt from Rep. Livingston's campaign website:
"As the husband of a public school teacher, I understand all too well the incredible burdens placed on our educators by bureaucrats. I believe our public education system is top-heavy, with too many districts and too many administrators. We must treat our teachers as professionals and insist that at least 65% of all education dollars are used in the classroom."

Mr. Livingston has tentatively committed to being present at our Convention/Annual Meeting on June 3rd to accept this award. As the Chair of the

House Appropriations Committee, he is actively involved in budget negotiations with the Senate and Governor's office, which may prevent him from attending.

Our Future to Consider

Active or Non-Active

Are you an "Active" or a "Non-Active" member of All Arizona School Retirees? When was the last time you attended a local meeting? Do you know when your local unit meets, where they meet? What time they meet? If not, let me know and I'll find out for you so you can join in the fun and be a part of this great association. Get to know others within your community. Make a new friend(s).

Have you asked any of your former school friends who aren't currently members of AASRA to come with you to your local unit meetings? If not, why not? We all know someone. It's always more fun to attend with a friend. Have you shared anything about your local unit or state association with current school employees? How about sharing this newsletter? Our Facebook page? Have you posted any news on our Facebook page? If not, Do it now.

This past year we had three units within the state dissolve. One chose to merge with another unit in the area and the others chose to dissolve completely. What were their reasons? The reasons seem to fall back to the same for all three: members are not attending meetings; no one wants to be an officer; aging, health; no new members, no interest … .

What can we do the change this trend? Do you realize that if this continues there won't be an AASRA in the future? Is this why you joined AASRA? Is this what you want? Are we doing all we can do to keep our current members and add new members? Are you making guests to your meetings welcome? Are you having interesting programs? Are you adding to your unit? Lots of questions to be answered. **We need to work hard to solve this problem now.** Do you need help let our AASRA board know what they can do to help.

Are you helping your unit President & membership chair contact current and new members about events and meetings upcoming within your unit? If not, please step forward and volunteer to make those calls, send emails or text those members.
Facebook page – All Arizona School Retirees Association & **Website** – aasra.org

Mary Henderson, AASRA President,
testweight48@gmail.com

What is the Future of AASRA?

The theme of this 2025 AASRA Convention is: **Facing the Future Together**. Yes, together. We must not leave this to chance. Have we let complacence creep slowly into our units and the organization? We need members to take the risk of being a leader. No one can count on someone else doing it for you. Think what you can do. If things don't change, AASRA could just fade away. Do we limp along and fade away? Or are YOU ready to WORK to be an active member and find new members. Step up today!

These items are hurting AASRA

1. Leadership positions are open with no one stepping up
2. Too few volunteers at the state and local level
3. Lack of support from members at the state and local units
4. Low attendance at meetings
5. Lack of new members being invited to meetings and helping the unit even in small ways

***** AASRA may not continue, if these 5 items stay the same.

The Governing and Business Documents Committee has been given the charge to research a process for dissolving AASRA, if dissolution comes to us in our future. *We hope it doesn't*. It is up to each of us not the board or a committee**.** **ALL** of us must **WORK** to turn these five listed items around. **NOW!**

Members Working Together Is Our Strength

For the last five years I have had the great pleasure to serve the Westside and Northwest Units as the 3B District Vice-President. My duties consisted of attending the Unit meetings and assisting the Unit Presidents. I reported to the State Board with their questions and concerns. During this time, I enjoyed meeting members from the Units and feel that I have grown as a leader because of their help. As the incoming AASRA State President, I will no longer be able to continue my duties as their VP. There is a need for a new volunteer to work with these Units.

During this same time, I have also served as the Westside Unit President. As of our last meeting on April 2nd, Westside is without a President, Vice President, and Recording Secretary for next year. Our current Treasurer, Sandy Marshall, has graciously agreed to continue with that position, but she can't do it alone.

Northwest Unit, as of their meeting on March 13th, is also in need of officers. Marilyn Duerbeck has volunteered to stay on as Vice President, and while we are thrilled about that, she also can't do it alone. Northwest needs a President, Recording Secretary, and Treasurer. These positions are critical to the success of our organization.

I am writing this because I know that other local AASRA Units are facing similar challenges. **Our strength as an organization is, and always will be, our members.** I have met some of the finest people I know during my involvement with AASRA. **Please consider how you can help your local Unit.** As retirees we understand the importance of being with people, and that isolation is our enemy.

I ask **ALL members to "think outside the box"** to find ways to help our association grow, not just in membership, but in involvement. **We all have so much to offer— let's show what we can do TOGETHER!**

Barb Weber, 3B Dist. VP & Pres. Elect

Legislative Awareness Day 2025

On March 7th, AASRA and Delta Kappa Gamma members came together on Zoom to learn about this year's legislative session. We heard from Representative Kevin Volk (D) who is a first term legislator from southern Arizona. He talked about his experiences in his first session at the Capitol and some of his goals for this session.



Senator Mitzi Epstein (D) from the southeast Valley, spoke about the budget process and what she would like to achieve this session. Representative Matt Gress (R), from northeast Phoenix and Scottsdale, talked about his goals for increasing teachers' salaries and renewing Prop 123.





John Moody, AASRA legislative consultant, provided an overview of the current legislative session and provided some insights into what he believes this session will accomplish. Daniella Smith, lobbyist and coordinator for the Arizona Retirement Security Coalition, detailed the work of the Coalition to protect the Arizona State Retirement System and briefly discussed ways that our members can become involved in the legislative process.





Our keynote speaker, Michelle Udall, associate superintendent at the Arizona Department of Education and former AASRA Legislator of the Year in 2019, outlined the work of her department to help schools and districts improve their students' achievement.



Be sure to mark your calendars for next year's Legislative Awareness Day. If you have not signed up to receive our informational emails, you can do so by emailing our Executive Director Kristi Koziol at kkoziol22@yahoo.com .

Joe Carter, Legislative Liaison

You Make a Difference!

The AASRA Scholarship Foundation has received positive comments on the scholarships given to future educators.

ASU Dean and Professor Carole Basile wrote after the 2024 donation, "The generosity of people like you empowers and inspires the next generation of educators." ASU student Eugena Natoni stated, "I want to give back to my community and assist children in learning to make the future brighter."

NAU Cierra Foster, an Elementary Education major shared, "Creating a safe and supportive classroom environment is also really important to me. Kids today face so many challenges, and I want them to feel they have someone in their corner,"

U of A student, Lenci Bartok reports, "I have struggled with the ability to work full-time and go to school, which is why I find myself still in college at the age of forty-four. I cannot wait to begin my journey as a teacher and co-learner with my first group of little world changers."

From 2002-2024, AASRA members have generously donated $106,000 toward university scholarships. We have reason to feel proud of our efforts.

Alice Reule, AASRA Scholarship Foundation President

Around the State



Saguaro Unit - Robin Telle from the Homeless Youth Connection spoke on the services and programs to help homeless and at-risk teens.



President Mary Henderson traveled to Tucson and visited with Bonnie Burleson and delivered Presidential Award certificates for both Bonnie & Lou for their service to AASRA and **San Pedro Unit**. Bonnie headed the Lois Snyder Fund until health problems caught up with her. Lou and Bonnie had to give up living in their Cochise County home and are now at a care center in Tucson.



The **Northwest Unit** in March had Diane Bykowski and Mia of Pets on Wheels. Diane spoke on the therapy they bring to lonely seniors for companionship at hospitals, rehab, and hospice. Pictured: Barb Weber, Diane & Mia, and Lori Good.

Barbara Sundust, President of the **Pinal County Unit**, will be featured in AARP AZ May newsletter for her volunteer work as a tutor for AARP. Barbara continues to tutor this year after the program with AARP ended in March. Barbara tutors at the same school where her son teaches. This is a great honor for her dedication to her tutorial students.



President Mary recently visited the **Kingman Area Unit**. The unit has solved the no president and no program with two different members each meeting. One is in charge of the meeting and the other is responsible for the program. At this meeting, Barbara Faris - treasurer, Joanna Haspels - person in charge that day and Nancce Black - secretary.

East Valley Unit is having an EVSRA Bookmark Scholarship Raffle to raise money for its ASU scholarship. The prize is a $100 bill bookmark. The drawing is May 1. You can contact Sherry Sharp for more information at sefsharp@centurylink.net .

Pima County Unit newsletter for April was filled with tips, stories, planning and other information. Articles included how in an emergency the fire department can get into your home. Real life identity theft and short stories on classroom incidents that were comical or unusual. The unit is busy planning 2025 – 2026 year programs and a scholarship fundraiser for Oct. 19th at the Gaslight Theater.

AASRA Items for Sale





AASRA Polo Shirts with embroidered logo **$40**

6.6-ounce-Snag-proof-100% polyester-Rental Friendly-Tag-free label-Flat knit collar-3-button placket with dyed-to-match buttons-Open hem sleeves-Side vents.
Men's and Women's sizes XS - 3XL



Name Tags are available for $15.00.

Contact: Marshall Militano
E-mail: mmilitano1@gmail.com
Phone: 602-882-3260
Order by May 9 for Convention.

Together we are stronger
Together we are unbroken
Together we can do anything.



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All Arizona School Retirees' Association

AMBA

An organization is more than belonging to something; it's about doing something together that makes belonging matter.

Alone we can do little; together is progress. *Helen Keller*

An organization that is engaged and working together is a powerful force.

The AASRA Newsletter is published three times a year. AASRA, 7250 North 16th Street Suite 302, Phoenix, AZ 85020-5279., President - Mary Henderson, President Elect - Barb Weber, Secretary - Joanna Haspels, Treasurer - Katie Elgar, Executive Director- Kristi Koziol, Newsletter Editor- AnnJi Craig-Wooten.

www.aasra.org

Facebook – All Arizona School Retirees Association

The Convention Registration Form is on a separate sheet.
Email – may have its own click on button