



Tennessee Retired Teachers' Association  
an NEA-Retired affiliate

# Bulletin

Issue 3 May 2024

Tennessee Retired Teachers Association "Advocates for Retired Educators and Education" Since 1957

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## TRTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## TRTA Staff

### Dr. Duran Williams

Executive Director  
Chief Lobbyist  
dwilliams@tnea.org

### Helen McMackin

Membership Associate  
hcmackin@tnea.org

### Galen Riggs

Finance Associate  
griggs@tnea.org

## Looking Forward and Way Back! Thoughts and Comments

Good day to the greatest people in the world – THE Retired Teachers of Tennessee! What an honor it is to work with and serve you. Each of you were, and still are, pillars of your community. I never knew until I began visiting local chapters this past August how much you still do for your communities across the great state of Tennessee. Literally from Memphis to Mountain City, you continue to go beyond the call of duty in support of your community and public schools.



TRTA recently conducted an Odyssey of regional meetings in each grand division. We wrote and received a grant from NEA-Retired for \$6,600. Your leadership team put the funding to effective use by conducting eight regional meetings across the state (plus one additional local meeting in Lexington). We had over 240 participants and fifty-one local chapters attend and participate in the regionals – yes, WOW! These numbers are a huge increase from last fall's regional meetings attendance. TRTA Leadership has made the commitment to hold nine more regional meetings next October to better accommodate each of our chapters in travel. We look forward to seeing you and your members at the fall 2024 regionals! Let us make **2024 "The Year of the Local Chapter."**

## Looking Way Back

My family came to what is now East Tennessee before it became a state. My distant ancestors received land grants "over the mountain" in Cocke and Sevier counties for their service as soldiers during the Revolutionary War. My family has a deep connection to what would later become the state of Tennessee. One of my close relatives, Mr. Eugene Bryant, recently reached out to me and we had lunch at Jonathan's (across third avenue from TEA headquarters). My mother and Gene (as we call him) grew up together. It was great to see and talk to Gene and share memories and history about our family. It was also interesting to talk with Gene about his past work at TEA. What a wealth of information his is and what stories he can share about the past 60 years of working for and supporting public education! Gene was the editor of



Continued on page 2

the TEA newsletter for almost three decades! The battles he saw TEA fight and the victories he helped our members enjoy are still revered! His printed words brought courage to our members and occasionally – fear to those who would bring harm to public education. On a personal note, Gene was the hero of our family. We all so much looked to him for moving to Nashville and working for the one organization that stood up for students and teachers every day. What a hero Gene was (is) for our family, but what a hero he still is for public education. Gene still posts on Facebook about issues on education. He still writes “Letters to the Editor” in support of our community schools and public education. Each day he scans the newspapers and the internet to see how he can still support and serve our community schools, our students, our teachers, and in a way – our Republic! Please join me in saying an incredibly special “Thank You” to Mr. Eugene Braynt for his past and continued service to our PUBLIC schools. Thank you, Gene; you will always be TEA’s hero!

### Looking Forward

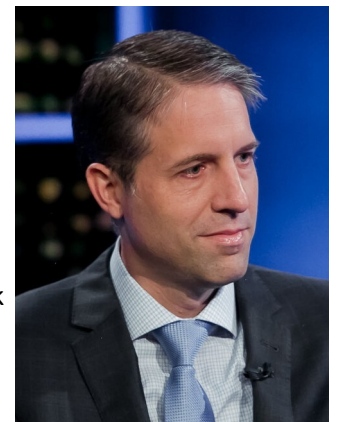
The 2024 TRTA Representative Assembly will take place on Tuesday, June 11<sup>th</sup> in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. You will not want to miss this RA. Dr. Derek Black will be our keynote speaker. Dr. Black is currently the best authority on exposing the attacks on public education. We will also elect your next president-elect from Middle Tennessee, discuss and approve the 2024-2025 budget, hear from your three presidents and TEA leadership. We need each of you there on June 11<sup>th</sup>!

## GUEST SPEAKER AT JUNE REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY

### Dr. Dereck Black

Dr. Derek W. Black is a professor of law and one of the nation’s foremost experts in education law and policy. He focuses on school funding and equity for disadvantaged students. He has published over thirty articles in the nation’s top legal journals. His work reaches beyond the legal community. In an era of dwindling public school resources and ever-expanding inequality and privatization. He frequently appears in the media. His essays appear in *USA Today*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Newsweek*, and *Education Week*. He is also a frequent radio and television guest for national, regional, and local outlets. Black is currently Professor of Law at the University of South Carolina. He began his career at Howard University School of Law, where he founded and directed the Education Rights Center. Prior to teaching, he litigated education cases at the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

His recent book, *Schoolhouse Burning: Public Education and the Assault on American Democracy*, warns that current education represents a retreat from our nation’s foundational commitments to democracy and public education. The Tennessee Retired Teachers Association would like to welcome Dr. Derek Black back to Tennessee as our keynote speaker. His former high school teacher, President-Elect Dewayne Emert will introduce Dr. Black at the TRTA Representative Assembly on Tuesday, June 11 at the Embassy Suites in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. You will not want to miss his presentation and the RA!



### 23-24 TRTA MEMBERSHIP Elizabeth Burney, Chair

For three weeks in March, I had the opportunity to travel across the state and participate in the TRTA regional meetings. I met retired teachers from every region of the state. We shared the activities in which our associations participate. The commonalities are amazing. We volunteer and donate to a wide range of programs from food banks to collecting school supplies. We provide scholarships and mini grants to beginning teachers and those in the classroom. We

love to fellowship and share meals together. We plan programs that are entertaining and informative. Similarly, we share our support and advocacy for public schools. Membership also means understanding the significance of and the protection of our TCRS retirement benefits and COLA. What does membership mean to you? How will you “market” your association to prospective members? Put a membership form in your pocket and when you run into a fellow retired educator, tell them why being a member is important and ask them to join. Give it a try. It works!

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

## 2023-2024-What a Year!

By Bill Murray



Have you ever wondered, "What have I gotten myself into?" I sometimes felt that way this year, but I have really enjoyed my year as president. There were many new changes and new challenges this year. Because our TRTA staff obtained a grant this year from NEA, the Executive Committee and Director chose to use some of that money to increase the number of Regional Meetings allowing members to travel shorter distances to attend. Instead of the usual three March meetings in Jackson, Nashville, and Knoxville, we also held meetings in Dyersburg, Cookeville, Lawrenceburg, Chattanooga, and Johnson City. This was a rousing success. Not only did more locals attend, but there was a lot of excitement and more active participation in the meetings. In their evaluations, each group gave high approval ratings and were pleased to have the meetings closer to

them. As President, I was able to attend all of these, meet more members, visit new places, and become more aware of members' concerns. Hopefully, this will make it easier for locals to recruit new members and get their members actively involved. Our Membership Committee received many excellent recruitment ideas which were shared at all the meetings.

Dr. Williams has begun doing retirement seminars in various parts of the state for teachers looking ahead to retirement. He not only gives them important retirement information but also uses these seminars for recruitment purposes. What better way is there to make them aware of our association and how important it is for them to join?

Lest I overlook them, our Legislative Committee and our lobbyist, Dr. Williams, have done an outstanding job keeping all of us informed about the education bills being introduced and voted on by our legislators. We have also been called to action when necessary--a never-ending challenge for all professional educators.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**June 2024**

- 1 Local chapter treasurers begin sending 24-25 dues check payments to TRTA
- 11 TRTA Representative Assembly Embassy Suites, Murfreesboro, TN
- 30 Deadline for list of 24-25 Officers to TRTA
- 29-July 6 NEA & NEA-R Rep Assemblies, Philadelphia PA

**July 2024**

- 31 Deadline for TRTA to receive 2024-2025
  - Marked Membership Rosters
  - New Member forms
  - Drop List
  - Payments

**August 2024**

- 13 TRTA Committee Meetings, TEA Building
- 14 TRTA Board of Directors Meeting, TEA Building

**Your 2024-2025 President  
Dewayne Emert**

I had the pleasure of attending the NEA Retired Leadership Summit in Chicago where I met our NEA Retired President Anita Gibson and fellow retired teachers from all over the country. It motivated me, inspired me, and made me even



more determined to continue my mission to represent public education and to stand up for public education whenever and wherever I can. I am now more than ever convinced that it is the cornerstone of our democracy and teachers across this nation believe in public education. We need to drive home the fact that over 87% of this country graduates from our public schools. Most of these students can name their teachers and speak fondly of the teachers that inspired, motivated, loved them, and opened the doors for them to discover their passions and pursue their dreams. How can a nation attack, malign, and villainize the most important and noble of professions? If we support our public schools and our public-school teachers, our country can heal and grow and become less divisive. After traveling the state of Tennessee from Jackson, Dyersburg, Lawrenceburg, Nashville, Cookeville, Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Johnson City, meeting our teachers and building relationships and sharing stories, I am even more motivated, inspired, and more determined to continue my mission to represent public education and to stand up for public education whenever and wherever I can. As your president-elect, I'm going to be asking you to help me and to do the same.

**TRTA President Elect Nominee  
Elouise Jones from Middle Tennessee**

After working for 15 years in federal employment, I began my second career as a Business/Information Technology teacher for 17 years at Spring Hill High School in Maury County, it was my job to prepare my students to become future professionals and leaders. I spoke to them about not missing out on an opportunity to join and serve in an organization. They were encouraged to join and run for local and state officer positions in Business Professionals of America and Future Business Leaders of America. Their state officer positions enabled them to meet with state legislators and discuss education issues. As their adviser, I served on the Executive Committee of these organizations and was chosen to represent Tennessee on the National Classroom Education Advisory Council for Business Professionals of America. I received the Tennessee Outstanding Local Adviser for FBLA in 2008 and 2013. I was the meeting coordinator for middle Tennessee FBLA regional meetings at MTSU for five years after retirement. I was a member of MCEA/TEA/NEA and TBEA.



Upon retirement, from the Maury County School System, I joined Maury County RTA in 2013. I served as Secretary for two years, president elect for two years, and president for four years. I attended all TRTA Representative Assemblies and spring and fall workshops since becoming a member. At present, I am past president of Maury County RTA and a member of the TRTA Legislative Committee.

It is an honor to be nominated for president elect of TRTA. If elected as the next president elect of TRTA, my vision is to promote the Defined Benefit Program of the TCRS and related retirement legislation; work for a strong membership and leadership; and support public education.

**Past President Judy Whitehill**

**Retirees Continue Their Commitment to Public Education**



Throughout the weeks of the TRTA spring workshops, I was thrilled to witness just how much our Tennessee retired teachers believe in the importance of public education. Although many of our members retired twenty or thirty years ago, their belief in and commitment to public schools and public school educators has not waned.

TRTA members continue to stay up to date on legislation – most of it very harmful to our public schools. They understand that vouchers will steal much needed funding from our public schools and transfer that money to the unproven scheme of supporting private schools. Our members are outraged that these same legislators who received an excellent public school education themselves, are in support of using public tax dollars to supplement private school tuition. These private schools will not be held to the same educational standards as our public schools nor will these private schools be transparent regarding who gets accepted.

There are so many unanswered questions when it comes to how private schools will handle the enrollment of students. Just who will private schools accept? Will these private schools hire qualified teachers who can modify instruction for special needs students or will the private schools simply tell the parents that their local public schools can best meet the needs of their children? Will they look first at the student’s ethnicity or the parents’ income? None of these questions have been addressed, yet the voucher bill has a budget cost close to \$400 million. Teachers understand how devastating it will be for our public schools should these funds be transferred to a voucher system.

I want to say how much I appreciate our TRTA members for their support of public schools. We all know that when we retired, we left our position in our public school but we didn’t leave the profession. My plea to retirees is that we continue to be the voice of reason. It is incumbent upon us to inform our fellow citizens that Public Education is one of the founding pillars of our society and offers every student an opportunity for equality.

**State of the TRTA Website**

**by TRTA Web Gal, Elizabeth Brown**

As word has gotten out about the updated TRTA website, traffic has really picked up! Not only are we averaging more than 1000 views per month, but our platform Go Daddy has given us a score of 90, measuring our online performance compared to other non-profit sites like ours. Not bad for a bunch of retirees!

Your chapter submissions and photos, and Dr. Williams’s timely updates and notifications have really brought energy to our site and are the impetus for its renaissance. As of the first of April, we had over 12,000 total views, and at the rate we are going, we will double that number over the coming year!

So, keep the happenings coming and keep checking out what chapters are doing across the state! This website is for you!

<https://tnretiredteachers.com>

**2024 ELECTED DELEGATES  
NEA-R AND NEA REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLIES  
PHILADELPHIA, PA**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>REGION</b>	<b>STATUS</b>
Bill Murray	WTN	1st Delegate
Barbara Gray	WTN	2nd Delegate
Linda McCrary	MTN	3rd Delegate
Anna Booher	ETN	4th Delegate
Ron Moss	ETN	5th Delegate
JoAnn Smith-Mashburn	ETN	6th Delegate
Daisy Cleaves	WTN	7th Delegate
Stephen Henry	MTN	8th Delegate
Erick Huth	MTN	1st Alternate

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**New Address:** COUNTY OF MEMBERSHIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Home Email \_\_\_\_\_