



# AASRA NEWSLETTER

Affiliated with NRTA, a division of AARP  
February, 2025



**LEGISLATIVE AWARENESS DAY 2025**  
**March 7, 2025 9 am to 12 noon on Zoom**



**SAVE THE DATE!** On Friday, March 7th, AASRA will once again co-sponsor our annual Legislative Awareness Day with Delta Kappa Gamma Arizona. This event will be on **Zoom** and the **registration information will be sent to all AASRA and DKG members approximately 7 days before the event.** Be sure to **check your email inbox regularly and RSVP when you receive the invitation.**

### *Our Speakers this Year!*

◆ This year there are more than 20 new legislators who have begun their first term of office. We hope to hear from two of them about their experiences during their first 48 days in office. We have also invited two veteran legislators to share their impressions about the current legislative session and any advice they might offer to their new colleagues.

◆ **Michelle Udall, Associate Superintendent, Arizona Department of Education,** will tell us about her current position and discuss some of the responsibilities of the Department. Ms. Udall is a former Arizona State Representative and the 2019 recipient of the AASRA Legislator of the Year, will be our keynote speaker.

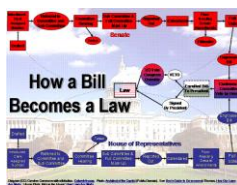
◆ **John Moody, AASRA Legislative Consultant** will bring us an overview of the current legislative session, including critical issues facing legislators, current happenings at the Capitol, and his insights based on 30+ years as a lobbyist in Arizona.

◆ **Daniella Smith, ARSC Coordinator** and lobbyist with over 20 years' experience, will share information about the Arizona Retirement Security Coalition's ongoing work to protect the ASRS and preserve our defined benefit pension system.

A special Thank You to **April Coleman, DKG Legislative Awareness Chair,** for her help with organizing this event.

**We look forward to seeing you on March 7th!**

*Joe Carter, AASRA Legislative Liaison*



## AASRA LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

2024-2025

Adopted by the AASRA Board of Directors,  
November 13, 2024

1. Work to protect and strengthen the Arizona State Retirement System (ASRS); increase its funded status and improve current and future retiree benefits.

2. Oppose legislative or other efforts to weaken the ASRS or other public pension systems. Support the efforts of the Arizona Retirement Security Coalition (ARSC) and other organizations to protect our defined benefit pension plan.

3. Work to increase sustainable, statutorily secure funding for public education, support efforts to improve the salaries of all public school employees and work for issues that will improve the integrity and image of public education, including K-12, community colleges and public universities.

4. Work to limit the expansion of Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESA's) and advocate for increased oversight of ESA's. Support legislation and/or ballot measures that reduce or eliminate allocation of public monies to private schools.

5. Support legislation and/or initiatives that increase the oversight and transparency of funding for charter schools, as well as their accountability to the public.

6. Promote restoration of funding and budget increases for human services such as caregiving funds, healthcare and social services for children, seniors and families.

7. Actively encourage and support legislation and funding sources that directly and comprehensively address school safety and security needs, including, but not limited to, the following programs and initiatives:

- School Preparedness Plan, *Arizona Department of Education*

- Framework for Safe and Successful Schools, *National Association of Elementary School Principals*
- School Health & Safety, *National Education Association*
- School Safety Resolution, *National Sheriff's Association*
- Community Oriented Policing Services Grants, *U.S. Department of Justice*

## HOW TO CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATORS And Why You Should

In a separate article I discuss the Request To Speak (RTS) system wherein Arizona voters can voice our opinions at the state Capitol. While the RTS system is an excellent tool to officially record your support or opposition to a particular bill, it does have some limitations.

- RTS is useful only during the committee hearing process each legislative session. Once that process has concluded, usually by the end of March, legislators typically do not refer to RTS comments.
- RTS comments are limited to 250 characters, including spaces and punctuation. This allows very little comment about the pros and cons of a bill or how it may affect you.



**One of the best ways of contacting your legislators is by sending them a handwritten**

**note.** In the age of computer generated communications, an original, handwritten letter gets their attention because it is so rare. Your letter should be in your own words, not “boilerplate” text generated by someone else, a bot or AI. Be sure to include how the proposed legislation affects you personally. Personal stories, spoken or in writing, can be a powerful message to legislators. Letters should be addressed as follows:

Senator (Representative) Smith  
Arizona State Senate (House)  
1700 W. Washington St.  
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Be sure to identify yourself as one of the legislator's constituents, provide your home address and the best way(s) of contacting you. If you don't know who your legislators are, visit the Arizona legislative website at <https://www.azleg.gov/>. Hover on the **Members** button and click on **Who Is My Legislator**. Follow the directions to identify your legislative district and your elected legislators.

Other effective means of communicating with your legislators are **emails** and **phone calls/voice**



**messages.** Their email addresses and phone numbers are available on the legislative website (see link above). Click on **Members > Member Roster**, then scroll through the list of legislators to find your legislator(s). Their legislative district, party affiliation, email link, office number and phone number are listed to the right of their name. To send an email, click on the email link and complete the required information.

Remember that ours is a representative form of government. Most legislators want to hear from their constituents and all recognize that responding to constituents is part of their responsibilities as a legislator. By communicating with them, you can influence their decisions that affect nearly every aspect of our lives.

*Joe Carter, AASRA Legislative Liaison*

## **How You Can Speak in Committee Hearings Without really speaking... or even going to the Capitol!**

**REQUEST TO SPEAK (RTS)** is a misleading term from the days before computers. If an individual wanted to record their concerns about a piece of legislation during the committee process, we had to go to the Capitol, fill out paper forms for bills we wished to speak about, submit them to a staff member, wait for the bill to be considered and our name

to be called. Then we had to go to the microphone and tell the committee members (legislators) why we thought this bill was either good or bad for the state. We might be asked questions or be rebuffed by legislators who disagreed with us.

Then came the early computer stations at the Capitol. Instead of completing a paper form, we recorded our positions on a computer; several were located in the hallways and lobbies of the House and Senate. During busy days, these terminals usually had lines of people waiting to register to speak.

As technology advanced, the current RTS system became available. Now you can do your "speaking" from the comfort of your living room by using your computer, tablet or smartphone...with one caveat. You **MUST** activate your RTS account **IN PERSON** at the Capitol or at a satellite office in Tucson. After it is activated, you can use the system from home or anywhere else WIFI is available.

***But wait...there's more!*** *Civic Engagement Beyond Voting (CEBV)*, a grassroots group, has made it extremely easy to activate an RTS account. Visit their website at <https://www.cebv.us/>, click on the appropriate buttons and provide the required information. Their volunteers will go to the Capitol and activate your account for you. In 2-5 days, you will receive an email with information about your activated RTS account. There is much

more information on the CEBV website, including online training in how to most effectively use the RTS system to make your voice heard at the Capitol.

I also recommend that you log onto the legislative website at <https://www.azleg.gov/>, click on the Request to Speak button on the homepage and explore the site. There is an especially helpful tool named **RTS Manual** that can be downloaded as a pdf and read as you have time.

*Joe Carter, AASRA Legislative Liaison*

## AASRA AT THE CAPITOL

### *Who We Are ~ What We Do ~ and Why*

AASRA has had volunteer lobbyists since 1999. We are required by statute to identify one Designated Lobbyist (DL) and one or more Authorized Lobbyists (AL). The Designated Lobbyist is the point of contact for required quarterly and annual filings with the Secretary of State's office.

AASRA Designated Lobbyists have been, Ron Murphy (1999-2003), Bev Cuthbertson (2003-2004), Sigrid Whitman (2005-2016), Joe Carter (2016-present). Current ALs are Mary Henderson, Barb Weber, Kristi Koziol and Marshall Militano.

We represent your interests at the Capitol and in conversations with legislators and other elected officials. Since we are representing people other than ourselves, we are registered as lobbyists with the Secretary of State's office (see below). We base our lobbying efforts on two documents: 1) the AASRA Constitution, Article II, Section 1, which lists the purposes of the Association, and 2) the AASRA Legislative Priorities, which are reviewed and adopted by the Board of Directors each year, usually at their September meeting. The current list of priorities may be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

Why do we do this? **Because we care ...** about our profession, our public education system, our defined benefit pension system and all of the long list of reasons why each of us chose a career in public service. We want to do whatever we can to ensure that our members and the educators who come after us will still have what we have had throughout our careers in education.

Arizona law defines lobbying as the following:

• **Attempting to influence the passage or defeat of any legislation by directly communicating with any legislator;** (*AZSOS Lobbyist Handbook, emphasis mine*)

Arizona law also defines the term "lobbyist: as follows: **Under A.R.S. § 41-1231(12), "lobbyist" means any person who is employed by,**

**retained by, or representing a person other than themselves, with or without compensation, for the purpose of lobbying and who is listed as a lobbyist by the Principal in its registration pursuant to A.R.S. § 41-1232. (emphasis mine)**

*Joe Carter, AASRA Legislative Liaison*

## President's Message

Hello All Arizona School Retirees,



Our new legislative year is off to a very busy start with many bills being introduced in both the Senate and House. Yes, we need to be aware of what they are doing at the Capitol. You will be receiving periodic "mail chimp" emails from our Legislative

Liaison Joe Carter with information. Upcoming which is featured in this newsletter is the information about the **AASRA/DKG Legislative Day at the Capitol on March 7th, 9 a.m. to noon.** There will be so much information passed on to you that day. **Please register for the zoom.** Have a zoom party and invite some friends to join you. I plan to.

I would like to **welcome all our new members** this past year. Please take this opportunity to become involved within a local unit. If you aren't sure whether there is a unit near you, please send me an email or give me a call, and I'll find someone for you. ([testweight48@gmail.com](mailto:testweight48@gmail.com) or 602-615-7280).

In a few short months we will be celebrating our annual convention – June, 2025. We are starting to plan for this event. It will be held in the same location, Church of the Beatitudes Hall, on 7<sup>th</sup> Ave & Glendale Ave. We will be having our annual elections. We will be electing a new President Elect, Treasurer, and District 3B Vice President. We are in need of candidates for these positions. We currently have candidates for Secretary – Joanna Haspels and District 6 Vice President – Cindy Mort.

I hope to see you all soon.

**Mary Henderson, AASRA President**

## Things to Check On

Did you record your 2024 volunteer hours and monetary donations for your unit? If not, contact **Doug Honaker**, Community Participation chair, at **480-200-5960**, or [wdhonaker@cox.net](mailto:wahonaker@cox.net) . Please turn in your information as soon as possible.

Did you or your unit send its minutes to AASRA Historian, **Sandy Marshall** or notify her of a member's death & sent an obituary? If not, you can contact Sandy at [azsandy123@cox.net](mailto:azsandy123@cox.net) .

Mark your calendar for the upcoming **AASRA Convention** on **Tuesday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>**. It will be at the **Church of the Beatitudes – Nelson Hall 555 W. Glendale Ave., Phoenix, Arizona 85021.**

## 2025 Convention Planning Underway

The Convention Committee is busy planning for the AASRA State Convention to be held on June 3, 2025 at the Church of the Beatitudes, 555 W. Glendale Ave., Phoenix, 85021. The **theme** for this year's Convention is, **"Facing the Future Together"**. There will be interesting and informative speakers, a beautiful Memorial program to honor our members who passed during the year, a Scholarship Foundation raffle, a tasty lunch, vendor tables, and much more! Please mark your calendar and plan to attend. It's a great opportunity to meet fellow AASRA members from around the state and have a fun day! We look forward to seeing you.

*AASRA Convention Committee*

## Duane Nelson Passed Away in 2024

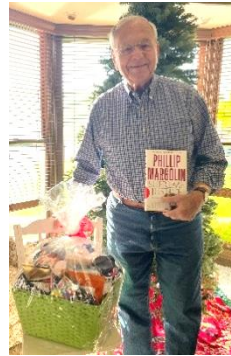


Duane Nelson was elected AASRA President-Elect in 2013. He became AASRA President when President Mary Ann Vath passed away. He served as AASRA President 2014 – 2017. He was a member of the Kingman Area Unit. After being AASRA President, Duane moved to Bucharest, Romania. We are not sure of the date or where he resided at his time of death.

In his last newsletter article of 2017, he stated: "It has been a privilege to be the President for the last three years of Arizona's oldest group of school retiree employees. **Of all my duties I think I have enjoyed visiting local units around the state the most. I enjoy meeting members and spreading the AASRA message to everyone.** Since I live in Kingman all the travel has been difficult for me and my car has many more miles since I began four years ago as President-Elect."

## Around the State

**East Valley Unit** had a successful Holiday Basket Raffle. The winners were Harry Mitchell, Tempe High 28 years and Sonja Fletcher, 30 years Tempe Dist. 3.



Next is the "Hugs and Kisses Bookmark" raffle. The prize is a \$100.00 bill as your bookmark. Watch for the march raffle mailing. The drawing will be May 1, 2025. Contact Sherry Sharp, EVSRA president, at 480-966-9932 for information. Thank you for supporting the EVSRA Scholarship fund. Our goal: is one or two \$1000 scholarships to ASU each year.

**Northwest Unit:** The November program speakers were Pearl Moffet, Devon Kennedy, and Bonniejean King from **AMBA** about benefits only available through your AASRA membership. Some of the most popular are various insurance plans for life, long term care and ambulance service.



*Photo: Pearl, Devon, Lori Good NW president & Bonniejean.*

*Photo by Joe Carter*

Pearl focused on Home Care Plus and Recovery Care plans. These plans cover such things as recovery at home after a hospital stay or care in a nursing or assisted living facility (not covered by Medicare). Pearl urged us to call her for a free in-home benefit review to determine gaps or needs in coverage you may have and availability of plans that might benefit you.



In December the members enjoyed the meeting, playing a holiday bingo game and singing Christmas carols.

*Photo by Lori Good*

The January program was Liz Byrne, Vice President of the Boys and Girls Club followed by the business meeting.

**Pima County Unit:** January Presentation: Raul Bueno, who spoke on Alzheimer's and dementia, is a psychologist from Mexico, currently working for the Alzheimer's Association, Desert Southwest Chapter in the position of Southern Arizona Community Engagement Coordinator.

November's presentation was on the Cradle to Career Partnership (C2C) anchored at United Way of Tucson has joined forces with the University of Arizona to power workforce programs in semiconductor manufacturing, boosting Arizona's economy and creating high-paying jobs. This collaboration is dedicated to preparing and empowering young people for success while fostering a thriving community.

**Gaslight Tickets for Scholarship** - Each year we donate a \$2000 or \$3000 scholarship to a University of Arizona, College of Education to a junior or senior. Our Gaslight Theatre fundraiser for this year is "Beach Blanket Be-Bop." It will be Sunday, April 6<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm. Another fundraiser will be a yard sale in March.

**The Murderess** by Laurie Notaro was the Book Club's January discussion item. This novel features Winnie Ruth Judd, Arizona's famous murderess. What unfolds in this gripping work of true-crime

fiction is a collision of jealousy, drug addiction, insanity, rage, and inescapable choices. At its heart, a condemned and tragic mystery woman whose trial—and it's shocking twists—will make history.

**Westside Unit** - Members of the Westside Unit received valuable information concerning age-related macular degeneration at their February 5th meeting. Member **Maggie**

**Webb** arranged for our speaker and even drove him down from Prescott to present to the group. **Tom Perski**, an expert on macular degeneration, shared his personal story of dealing with it and how he now helps



others navigate the challenges of macular degeneration. He shared some of the new technology available to assist patients and how it can make a difference in their lives. He answered questions and had materials for members who wanted additional information. This was definitely a topic of interest to the Westside members who appreciated the opportunity to learn more from Tom.

### AASRA Items for Sale

A supply of the older version of cotton polo shirts are still in stock that AASRA is selling for \$5 each plus shipping [approximately \$10.00].

For more information regarding sizes, please contact **Marshall Militano at 602-882-3260 or email at [mmilitano1@gmail.com](mailto:mmilitano1@gmail.com)** .

I also have 4x6 oval AASRA car window decals for \$5 each. and Name Tags for \$15 each.



The Spring Convention Newsletter will be coming out early May. Please **send articles in Word** and your **pictures in JPG format**. Send **your newsletter in your Word draft so your pictures can be used**. Your PDF newsletter pictures can not be used as the editor does not have PDF editing capabilities. Send your articles, pictures and newsletters to **[azredsunset1915@gmail.com](mailto:azredsunset1915@gmail.com)**. Thank you.

## Who We Are: AMBA

AMBA is more than just our products and services. Since 1981, AMBA has helped our associations and members come together. We work to ensure you have access to the top-of-the-line benefits and high-quality service you need. **Contact us at: 887-556-4582 or [myambabenefits.info/aasra](http://myambabenefits.info/aasra)**



### SUPPLEMENTAL INSURANCE

- Medicare supplement plans
- Cancer, heart attack & stroke insurance
- Long-term care
- Home health care
- Life insurance
- Accident insurance
- Dental plans
- Vision plans
- Hearing solutions
- And more



### TRAVEL & ENTERTAINMENT OFFERS

- Extended Stay America
- Direct TV
- Westin
- Walt Disney World
- AMC Theatres
- NFL, NBA, NHL & MLB
- And many others



### SHOPPING DISCOUNTS

- Apple
- Dell
- T-Mobile
- Samsung
- Target.com
- Kohl's
- FedEx Office
- Walgreens
- Costco Wholesale
- And More

## ASRS News

### Remember:

***ASRS IS AN EARNED BENEFIT!***

It is important to talk about ASRS as an Earned Benefit. We paid for it while we were working. Your membership is important. It helps to protect our benefits.

**ASRS Website: [azasrs.gov](http://azasrs.gov)**

ASRS has an excellent website. It gives news, tracks legislation, and furnishes information about the investments and benefits. ASRS is also on Facebook.

**2024 Financial Report is on website under “About Us”, then tap Annual Reports. Information taken from the latest report.** The ASRS was named one of the “Top Places to Work” by the Best Companies Group. In a recent survey by CEM, the ASRS was shown to be a top-tier provider of services, while maintaining a lower-tier cost structure. The ASRS scored 91 out of a possible 100 in service, compared to the peer average of 79 and the universe average of 77.

**Facts:** Members about 667,000 current and former public employees, June 30, 2024. There were 557 employer units participating in the ASRS, including school districts, charter schools, state colleges and universities, and local, county and state gov’t agencies. ASRS currently has over \$55.7 billion in assets. The rate of return for 2024 was 9%. Twenty years ago, it was 7.6%.

From the ASRS’ June 30, 2023, actuarial valuation: 180,220 retired members and beneficiaries receiving benefits. The 168,760 retired members: Average years of service – 19.3, Avg. monthly annuity - \$1,776 and Avg. age – 72.5.



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](http://www.aasra.org)**

**Facebook – All Arizona School Retirees Association**