

PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

Larry D. Ridgeway, AURA President, 2017-2018

Our 22nd annual meeting on May 19 at Saugahatchee Country Club was an enjoyable event to close out our year. Joe Borg, director of the Alabama Securities Commission, was

presented the Wilford S. Bailey Award in recognition of his work to protect senior citizens from financial exploitation. Many of us were not aware of the amazing success his commission has had, both in Alabama and nationally, in helping to protect us from unscrupulous agents. We are hoping to sponsor a workshop by Borg's staff after the first of the year for our members.

We were pleased to have as our special guest, Mildred Switzer, District 10 director of the Alabama Education Retirees Association (AERA). As our higher education representative on the AERA Board, Mildred outlined her role and encouraged our involvement by providing her advice and counsel that will enable her to represent our interests. While she has big shoes to fill, following our own Gerald Johnson, I am confident she will serve us well.

Janice Charlesworth, executive director of AERA, provided an update on bills of interest in the final days of the legislative session. See Gerald Johnson's article for more information. Janice announced that she will be retiring in early 2018 and that a search will be conducted to identify her successor. Janice has been a strong and effective leader for AERA and all education retirees in Alabama, and she will certainly be missed.

I am pleased to report that Kevin Loden, who retired last year from his position as senior editor in the Office of Communications and Marketing, has agreed to become our newsletter editor. Please join me in welcoming Kevin and providing him ideas for future

newsletter material.

In addition, although Sandy Johnson rotated off the board in the spring after her three-year term, she has graciously agreed to stay on this year as our treasurer and Membership chair. Please express your appreciation when you see her.

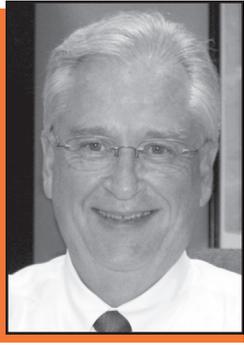
While historically AURA presidents have served one-year terms followed by a year as past president, last year our board proposed that I serve a second year as your president, and I agreed. Subsequently, our board elected Kim Trupp to serve this year as vice president/president-elect, after which she will serve a two-year term as president beginning next May. Kim does an outstanding job as our Program/Social Chair and will be a terrific leader for our organization.

Our fall dinner meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, November 2, at the Auburn University Alumni Center. Chef Billy Lee with Terra Cotta Catering is planning a wonderful meal for our members. We are pleased that Dr. David Bronner, CEO of the Retirement Systems of Alabama, will join us as our keynote speaker.

Dr. Bronner was the first recipient of the Wilford S. Bailey award in 2004. Please see the RSVP instructions elsewhere in this newsletter and encourage your AURA friends and colleagues to attend. It promises to be a special evening, and I hope you will join us.

I look forward to seeing many of you on November 2. ♦

Tell us what you think of your PEEHIP healthcare plan by completing and returning the enclosed survey by October 31, 2017.



REPORT OF AURA LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

AURA Prepared for 2018 Legislature

Gerald W. Johnson, Ch., AURA Legislative Affairs Committee

In an election year, the Alabama Legislature convenes early to allow for the beginning of the campaign season. Thus, the 2018 regular session will begin on Tuesday, January 9, and end in mid-April. The primary election for all statewide offices and all members of the Legislature follows on June 5. Conventional wisdom holds that election year sessions of the Legislature are the best for constituent interests, including AURA. We will see. AURA is, again, prepared for the session.

The 2018 Legislature will face the ongoing problems of balancing the state’s two major budgets with insufficient revenues. This session, however, has a different look and a different set of players. There is a new governor, former Lt. Governor Kay Ivey, an AU alumna. The lieutenant governor’s position in the Senate will be filled by Senate Majority Leader, Senator Dell Marsh, an AU alumnus.

The Legislature will have the same options as in past sessions – (1) increase revenue through increased taxes (gasoline), additional fees or a lottery or (2) cut programs and attempt to balance the GF budget by raiding the ETF or “reforming” retiree health and retirement programs.

Election-year dynamics will tend to inhibit any major changes in programs that would hurt a constituent group and any increases in revenues

(taxes) that would be unpopular, leaving the door open for a lottery proposal or even an increase in gasoline taxes for road and bridge building and maintenance.

Any serious effort to “reform” or dismantle the retiree health insurance and retirement programs is unlikely. Any proposal to substantially increase health insurance or retirement costs or to cut services is also unlikely. And, overall, there appears to be a continuing movement toward a more favorable climate for public education in general and education employees and retirees specifically.

As stated in our last report, we, AURA, AERA, and the education retiree community, are prepared for the 2018 legislative session. The session begins with a commitment that a modified retiree COLA will be included in the FY18 budget. Legislation to provide a COLA in the form of a 13th check, based on a formula of \$24 times years of service with a minimum, has already been introduced.

AURA and AERA will activate its Legislative Affairs Committee in a collaborative Local Advocacy Network to participate in the upcoming legislative session to support Sen. Tom Whatley, Sen. Gerald Dial, and Rep. Joe Lovvorn in their efforts to have this legislation enacted.

The active participation of AURA members, and all education retirees, in the upcoming legislative session is critical. Membership in AURA and your participation in the efforts of AURA to protect and advocate for retiree interests are essential for legislative success. ♦

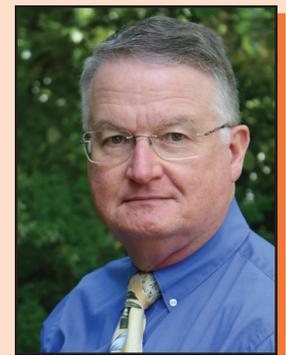
MEET *your new* EDITOR

— KEVIN LODEN —

Kevin Loden retired from Auburn University’s Office of Communications and Marketing in August 2016 after more than three decades of service.

As senior editor, he worked with AU’s schools, colleges, and Admissions Office on their magazines, newsletters and other assorted publications and projects. He served as writer/editor of in the university’s two photo books, *Neath the Sun-Kissed Sky* and *Echoes Strong and Clear*.

Before coming to Auburn, Kevin earned a bachelor’s degree in journalism from Auburn in 1980. He then worked for three daily newspapers: *The Troy Messenger*, *The Daily Mountain Eagle* (Jasper), and *The Opelika-Auburn News*.



Photos from Annual Meeting, May 19th



Past President Tom Vocino presents the Wilford S. Bailey award to Joe Borg, director of the Alabama Securities Commission.



Janice Charlesworth, executive director of AERA, provides an update on the status of legislation in the final days of the legislative session.



Newly-elected AERA District 10 Director Mildred Switzer outlines her plans for representing higher education retirees on the AERA Board.



President Larry Ridgeway thanks outgoing board members Gene Akers, D'Linell Finley, Sandy Johnson, Larry Wit, and Tom Vocino for their service.



New board members Dennis Wilson, Marcie Smith, Michael Fitzsimmons, and Lynne Hammond are welcomed by President Larry Ridgeway.



Group shot following the buffet luncheon at Saugahatchee Country Club.

AUBURN UNIVERSITY RETIREE ASSOCIATION (AURA) BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR 2017-18

P.O. BOX 1436, AUBURN, AL 36831-1436



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DR. DAVID G. BRONNER

Dr. David Bronner is the CEO of the Retirement Systems of Alabama, a public pension fund with assets in excess of \$37 billion providing benefits for more than 339,000 public employees and retirees. RSA is ranked 103rd of the top 300 private/public pension funds in the world, with the top three being sovereign wealth funds.

Dr. Bronner earned a Ph.D. and law degree from the University of Alabama, where he taught in the graduate schools of Business and Education and served as assistant dean and lecturer in the School of Law before coming to the RSA.

Dr. Bronner has been featured in *Time*, *Governing* magazine, *The Institutional Investor*, *The Money Manager*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Business Week*, *Forbes Magazine*, and *Pension & Investment Age* for his investment strategies and financial market decisions. In 2003, *PlanSponsor* magazine named the RSA “Plan Sponsor of the Year.”

High-profile investments to help Alabama thrive are a hallmark of Dr. Bronner, including office buildings in Montgomery, Mobile, and New York and the development of eight hotels and conference centers in Alabama. Other investments include Raycom Media, with 53 TV stations; and Community Newspaper Holdings, Inc., with more than 160 newspapers that provide free advertising for the state of Alabama.

The venture of which Dr. Bronner is most proud is Alabama’s Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail, a collection of 26 championship golf courses at 11 sites that has put Alabama at the top of the list of golf destinations worldwide and helped increase the state’s tourism industry from \$1.8 billion to \$13 billion annually. ♦

AURA FALL DINNER MEETING

Co-sponsored by the Auburn University Department of Athletics

When: Thursday, November 2, 2017

Where: Auburn Alumni Center, 317 South College Street
Park in the gravel lot behind the building and come in the back door. To park in the paved lot, a vehicle must have an AU parking hangtag displayed.

Speaker: Dr. David Bronner
CEO, Retirement Systems of Alabama

Time: 5:30 p.m. Registration
6:00 p.m. Dinner by Terra Cotta Catering followed by Dr. Bronner’s Address

Cost: Free to AURA Members and their Spouses or Guests

In order to provide the caterer with the number of persons to prepare for, please let us know if you will be attending and if you will be bringing your spouse or a guest by contacting:

Kim Trupp: trupski@auburn.edu or 334-744-3452

**Deadline for reservations is Wednesday, October 25, 2017
or until all seats are filled.**

HOW DIABETES SAVED MY LIFE

BY Richard Penaskovic

I was shocked when seventeen years ago, my primary physician, Dr. Byron, told me I had diabetes. This diagnosis hit me right between my eyes. How was this possible, I muttered to myself.

My fasting blood sugar level turned out to be 255.

Like many people, however, I was prediabetic years before my diagnosis. About one-third of Americans are pre-diabetic, but they don't have a clue that they are on their way to becoming diabetics. Prediabetes is one, small step away from becoming diabetic. It means one's blood sugar level is above normal but not high enough to be called diabetes.

Why was I so shocked? I probably didn't look like many folks who are diabetic. I was 5 feet, 9 inches tall, weighed 160 pounds, but had a 38-inch waist line. Moreover, I

was a slave to my work, spending hours preparing classes, serving on committees, and doing research. In a word, I was too sedentary, the model of a couch potato.

I never stopped to take a break or do any kind of exercise. I ate as much as I wanted, when I wanted. My portions were too large and I loaded up on foods like rice and noodles that contained too many carbohydrates.

I knew diabetes ran in my family but never dreamed that condition would affect me. Boy, was I in for a shock. The diagnosis of diabetes was a wake-up call to make some serious lifestyle changes. Otherwise, I might have wound up like a cousin, who had to have her leg amputated because of her diabetes. She ate a lot of deserts and thought she was fooling her doctor. In actuality, she was fooling herself.

I joined the Health Plus Fitness Center and starting pumping iron. I also alternated between running and walking on its indoor track. After my diagnosis, the doctor prescribed Metformin; however, after three months I was taken off any medicine for diabetes because I was doing so well. I also cut down on my portions and read the labels on foods, avoiding sugar and carbohydrates. I switched from eating white bread to wheat bread that was high in protein and low in carbs. I ate more fruit and vegetables and enjoyed them, much to my great surprise.

I also noticed that I had more energy and felt less tired. Diabetes is an insidious disease, and if you are not careful, it comes back and bites you. Today, I continue my regimen of exercise and eating smart. You see, diabetes, then, really did save my life. ♦



For your dues status, check the newsletter address label.

If "p-2017" shows after your name, your dues have been paid through December 2017.

If "p-2018" shows after your name, your dues have been paid through December 2018.

If you have not paid your AURA dues for 2017, you will find an "n" after your name. Please complete the form below and mail it with your 2017 dues payment:

AU-AUM Retiree AURA Membership Form

Name _____ AU _____ AUM _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------|------------------------------|---------|
| _____ Single Retiree | \$25.00 | _____ Surviving Spouse | \$10.00 |
| _____ Retiree and Spouse | \$25.00 | _____ Sponsor | \$25.00 |
| _____ Retiree & Retiree Spouse | \$25.00 | _____ Gift Contribution \$ | _____ |

If you have any questions, please contact Sandy Johnson at sandyjj130@gmail.com or Larry Ridgeway at larryridgeway23@gmail.com.

Make your check payable to AURA and mail to: AURA • P.O. Box 1436 • Auburn, AL 36831-1436

