

# Advantage

SUMMER 2025 | VOLUME 2 | ISSUE 3



## From the Director

Summer is upon us, which means our Regional Meetings are right around the corner! We are so excited to bring this new opportunity for our members and future members to gather to learn about current issues, meet with exhibitors and sponsors, meet with local elected officials, and enjoy a social hour. Since these meetings are strategically placed for convenience and, best of all, free to attend, we are hopeful that every single one of you will

join us AND bring a friend. This is the perfect chance for you to invite a former coworker or that neighbor who is nearing retirement to learn about the benefits we can provide!

Also, if you are not currently contributing to the FOREPAC, NOW is the time to start. The 2025 and 2026 election cycles are well underway, with some highly contested offices on the ballot. The FOREPAC carefully weighs candidates for office to ensure that they support retirees and the benefits you all have worked so hard for over the years. The best way we can make sure candidates who support us are elected is through your contributions to the FOREPAC. For only \$2 a month, you can ensure that your voice is heard from city hall to the state house. Please join today!

As always, thank you for your continued support.

*Lindsey Ward*

# 14th Annual FOREPAC Fundraiser

..... **Win \$1,200 in CASH PRIZES!** .....

**ORDER NOW!**

The Friends of Retirees and Employees Political Action Committee (FOREPAC) will hold its 14th annual fundraiser during the ARSEA/APEAL Regional Meetings in September (see meeting details in this issue).

Proceeds will go toward electing public officials who support our issues and respect and understand the importance of our retirement benefits.

**\$1,200 in cash prizes** will be available for those who participate in the FOREPAC Raffle. One \$100 winner will be drawn at each of the seven Regional Meetings and one \$500 grand prize awarded at the final Regional Meeting in Tuscaloosa.

1. Tickets are \$5 each, or you may purchase a ticket package.
2. Pre-ordered tickets will be printed with your name and placed in the drawing to be held at the Regional Meeting you select. If you are not present, your tickets will be added to the drawing for the Regional Meeting held closest to you.
3. Winners do not have to be present, so if you do not attend, you may still participate and claim a prize. Winners not in attendance will be contacted by phone or email after the meeting.

### To purchase tickets:

- Complete and mail the Regional Meeting registration form indicating the number of tickets you would like with your payment to: FOREPAC, 450 South Union Street, Montgomery, AL 36104.
- Call our office at **334-834-9116** and complete a transaction over the phone; or email **retire@arsea.org** and request online ordering options.
- You may also purchase tickets at the meeting you attend.

**1 ticket \$5**

**5 tickets \$20**

**10 tickets \$35**

**20 tickets \$60**

**36 tickets \$99**

# ARSEA/APEAL Schedules Regional Meetings to Discuss Next Steps in Securing Retiree COLA

ARSEA/APEAL released its schedule of upcoming regional meetings that will allow us to share important information with our members and outline the next steps necessary to secure the first cost-of-living adjustment for state and local retirees in almost 20 years.

Traditionally, ARSEA/APEAL holds a two-day convention each year, but in order to boost attendance and save money, our leadership has decided to hold a biennial convention every other year, instead.

Because 2026 is a statewide election cycle, our convention will be held in Montgomery next year and feature appearances by candidates for statewide office.

In lieu of this year's convention, seven regional meetings will be held in every section of the state, and they are expected to attract more participation from members than our single, annual event.

Each regional gathering will feature a business meeting, a refreshment reception, giveaways from sponsors and exhibitors, door prizes, and a raffle drawing.

Most importantly, the meetings will provide us the opportunity to inform members about happenings in the Capitol and Alabama State House that directly affect their benefits.

Issues impacting our local government retiree members will be prime topics of discussion, as well.

Public officials and candidates for elected office will also be invited to attend each meeting and take questions from our members.

Scheduled to take place in the afternoon and early evening hours in order to maximize attendance, the meetings are designed to be informative, entertaining, and interactive for all who take part.

Dates and locations are provided below so you may go ahead and mark them on your calendar.

Registration instructions and additional information will be provided prior to each event for those who live in the region.

ARSEA/APEAL has always believed that an informed membership is a strong membership, so we hope to see you at the meeting in your area later this year.

## Thank you to the organizations that have sponsored our 2025 Regional Meetings thus far:

Gold Sponsor:

**Humana**®

Silver Sponsors:



Bronze Sponsors:



Crystal Sponsors:



# New ARSEA/APEAL Officers and Board Members Sworn in During Quarterly Board Meeting in Montgomery

Thera Herring of Prattville, who retired as director of facility-based services for the Alabama Medicaid Agency and previously held roles at the Department of Pensions and Security, was sworn in as the 2025-2026 state president of ARSEA/APEAL during the quarterly board meeting held on Tuesday at the association's headquarters building in Montgomery.

In addition to her public career, Herring has worked in recent years with the nursing home industry to conduct educational seminars across the state and assist Alabama's elder population in navigating complex and complicated Medicaid eligibility guidelines.

Mike Sparks, the former director of the Alabama Department of Forensic Sciences who retired in 2018 with 39 years of service, took his oath of office as the president-elect of ARSEA/APEAL.

Sparks, who lives in Lineville, has held a seat on the ARSEA/APEAL board of directors for several years as the representative for District 14 and most recently served as Vice President North-Central.

Alabama Department of Public Health retiree Winkler Sims of Hoover was sworn in as the new Vice President North-Central and serves as the FOREPAC District Advisory Chair for District 13. He has held a seat as the District 13 representative on the ARSEA/APEAL Board since 2023.

Rebekah Cornelison of Monroeville, who retired from the Department of Labor in 2017, took her oath of office as Vice President South. She has served two full terms as the District 6 representative on the ARSEA/APEAL board after being previously appointed to fill an unexpired term.

Other officers sworn in at the meeting include District 1 representative Ralls Colston, District 8 representative Bubba Blue, District 6 representative Lawrence Weaver (not pictured), District 10 representative Susan Youngblood (not pictured), and District 12 representative Camilla Ratliff-Eatman.

Elected to office but unable to attend were District 2 representative Kyle Callaghan and District 20 representative Johnny Grant.

We appreciate all our members who serve their fellow public retirees as association officers.



*The newly installed officers began their service on July 1, 2025. Pictured left to right are: President-Elect Mike Sparks, District 12 Camilla Ratliff-Eatman, President Thera Herring, Vice President South Rebekah Cornelison (front), Vice President North Central Winkler Sims (back), District 1 Ralls Colston, District 8 Bubba Blue.*



# REGISTER FOR REGIONAL MEETINGS

Join us in September as we celebrate the successful passage of the **COLA Legislation** at our Regional Meetings.

This year, we will hold 7 Regional Meetings rather than a convention. Members can join us for a **FREE** event and **WIN PRIZES**, learn about benefits, meet candidates, and have fun.

### Wednesday, September 10

Lake Guntersville State Park Lodge  
1155 Lodge Drive, Guntersville

### Thursday, September 11

George's 217  
217 N Montgomery Avenue, Sheffield

### Wednesday, September 17

Mobile Museum of Art  
4850 Museum Drive, Mobile

### Thursday, September 18

Sterling Event Services  
2461 E Burdeshaw Street, Dothan

### Tuesday, September 23

RSA Plaza Terrace  
770 Washington Avenue, Montgomery

### Thursday, September 25

American Village  
3727 Hwy 119, Montevallo

### Friday, September 26

Embassy Suites  
2410 University Boulevard, Tuscaloosa

### 3:00 p.m.

Registration/Exhibitors/Refreshments

### 4:00-5:00 p.m.

Business Meeting

### 5:00-6:30 p.m.

Cocktail Reception  
Door Prizes  
Welcome  
Elected officials and recognition  
FOREPAC Drawings

Name \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Cell # \_\_\_\_\_

Guest/Spouse Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Please check the box for the meeting you would like to attend:**

- GUNTERSVILLE SEPT 10**
- SHEFFIELD SEPT 11**
- MOBILE SEPT 17**
- DOTHAN SEPT 18**
- MONTGOMERY SEPT 23**
- MONTEVALLO SEPT 25**
- TUSCALOOSA SEPT 26**



### Ways to register:

- Call 334-834-9116 or 800-844-7732
- Text 334-245-0755
- E-mail retire@arsea.org
- Scan the QR code and complete the form online
- Fill out this form and mail to:  
ARSEA/APEAL 450 S Union Street, Montgomery, AL 36104

I am enclosing a check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to purchase FOREPAC raffle tickets. ....

To purchase with a card, please call Regina at 334-834-9116.

I would like my tickets placed in the drawing held in [Circle your selection(s)]:  
Guntersville Sheffield Mobile Dothan Montgomery Montevallo Tuscaloosa

Your tickets will also be placed in the final Grand Prize Drawing held on September 26th in Tuscaloosa.

**1 ticket ..... \$5**  
**5 tickets .... \$20**  
**10 tickets .. \$35**  
**20 tickets .. \$60**  
**36 tickets .. \$99**

# Azar Chosen to Head SEIB Medicare Drug Coverage Change Coming

Recently, the Alabama State Employees' Insurance Board (SEIB) interviewed three candidates to take on the role of CEO upon the retirement of the current CEO, William Ashmore.

The search committee held interviews on Monday, June 16, and ultimately recommended Stephanie Azar, the current Commissioner of the Alabama Medicaid Agency, for the position.

Subsequently, the full Board met and approved this recommendation. Azar brings a wealth of healthcare knowledge to this position, as she is the longest consecutively serving commissioner in Alabama Medicaid's history.

This transition comes a time when some Board members, including ARSEA/APEAL's Board representative Bob Childree, have expressed concern about the financial viability of the program. The SEIB provides health insurance and benefits to around 90,000 active and retired state employees and their dependents.

Last year, federal policy changes created a potential budget shortfall for the SEIB. Additionally, while the Alabama legislature approved a slight increase in funding for the program, it was not quite the 5% increase the SEIB requested.

Azar, talking the Alabama Daily News, stated that she was confident in facing these budget challenges. "There are always challenges with health care's rising costs; I'm accustomed to those issues, so I'm looking forward to tackling that with the board," she said.

Childree told the Alabama Daily News that he is happy to see Azar take over this post amid these challenges. "It's a matter of funding, and you realize that the cost of medical care is going to skyrocket, and so the level of funding that's necessary to do that is always a concern," he told ADN. "There are many options for how to deal with that, but that's a job for Stephanie to look at and see where we go from here."

In addition to hiring Azar, the SEIB voted to make a change regarding Medicare Advantage plans. By decoupling the medical plan from the prescription plan for these insured members, the SEIB forecasts saving an estimated \$9 million. Both plans will remain with Humana, and these members will receive a separate insurance card for the prescription drug plan.

## Medicare 101: Frequently Asked Questions

There's a lot to learn about Medicare. United Healthcare is here to help you understand the Medicare basics.

### What is Medicare?

Medicare is a federal health insurance program for eligible U.S. citizens and legal residents. It is funded in part by taxes you pay while working.

### Who can get Medicare?

U.S. citizens and legal residents that have lived in the U.S. for at least 5 years in a row, including the 5 years just before applying for Medicare. You must also be 65 or older, younger than 65 with a qualifying disability, or any age with a diagnosis of end-stage renal disease or ALS.

### What do I need to know about Medicare?

There are 4 basic parts of Medicare: A, B, C and D. Medicare Part A and Part B together make up what's known as Original Medicare. You get this from the federal government. Part C (Medicare Advantage) and Part D (prescription drug coverage) are private Medicare plan options offered by Medicare-approved private insurance companies. Different parts of Medicare cover different health care services, and each has costs you may have to pay. Your Medicare costs will depend on the coverage you choose and what health care services you use.

To learn more about the UnitedHealthcare® Group Medicare Advantage (PPO) plan offered through LGHIB, please visit [retiree.uhc.com/lghib](https://retiree.uhc.com/lghib) or call **1-866-950-6558**, TTY **711, 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. local time, Monday through Friday.**





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**[myambabenefits.info/arsea](http://myambabenefits.info/arsea)**

Alabama Retired State Employees' Association/Alabama Public Employees' Advocacy



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