

# Teachers' Retirement System



## Member Handbook

*A member on or after  
January 1, 2013*

## TIER 2





## Contact TRS

**Phone** 877.517.0020 • 334.517.7000

**Fax** 877.517.0021 • 334.517.7001

**Email** [trsinfo@rsa-al.gov](mailto:trsinfo@rsa-al.gov)

*Because email submissions are unsecured, do not include confidential information like your Social Security number. Please include your full name, employer, home mailing address, and daytime phone number.*

**Mail** The Teachers' Retirement System of Alabama  
P.O. Box 302150  
Montgomery, AL 36130-2150

**Website** [www.rsa-al.gov](http://www.rsa-al.gov)

## Member Online Services

*Change your address and view your account statement online*  
<https://mso.rsa-al.gov>

## Building Location

201 South Union Street  
Montgomery, Alabama

## Business Hours

8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
Monday - Friday

*Please provide your full name and Social Security number on all faxes and letters.*

# TRS Tier 2 Member Handbook

*(Member on or after January 1, 2013)*

## Introduction

The Retirement Systems of Alabama (RSA) is pleased to provide you with the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) Tier 2 Member Handbook. This handbook is an important part of our commitment to provide members with valuable information about their benefits and retirement. Please read this handbook thoroughly and keep it with your other benefit materials. Your member handbook is a very useful tool when you have questions about your TRS benefits and retirement. If you need further information, please visit the RSA website at [www.rsa-al.gov](http://www.rsa-al.gov) or contact the TRS with any questions you may have about your retirement benefit.

*The information in this handbook is based on the Code of Alabama 1975, Title 16, Chapter 25 for TRS and Chapter 25A for Public Education Employees' Health Insurance Plan (PEEHIP). This handbook is not intended as a substitute for the laws of Alabama governing the TRS nor will its interpretation prevail should a conflict arise between its contents and Chapters 25 and 25A. Furthermore, the laws summarized here are subject to change by the Alabama Legislature. Do not rely solely upon the information provided in this handbook to make any decision regarding your retirement, but contact the TRS with any questions you may have about your benefits and retirement.*

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## About TRS

### Our Mission

The mission of the Retirement Systems of Alabama is to serve the interests of our members by preserving the excellent benefits and soundness of the Systems at the least expense to the state of Alabama and all Alabama taxpayers.

### TRS Board of Control

Responsibility for the management and administration of the TRS is vested in a 15-member Board of Control. The board consists of the following members:

- ◆ State Superintendent of Education, Ex Officio
- ◆ State Treasurer, Ex Officio
- ◆ Director of Finance, Ex Officio
- ◆ Twelve members of the TRS, all elected by the TRS membership
  - ◇ Two retired members
  - ◇ One city or county superintendent
  - ◇ One principal
  - ◇ One from postsecondary education
  - ◇ Three active teachers in grades K-12
  - ◇ Two education support personnel
  - ◇ Two higher education employees

The Board of Control has full power to invest and reinvest the retirement funds through the Secretary-Treasurer. The Board elects the Secretary-Treasurer, who serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the RSA and is responsible for the day-to-day management of the RSA.

### Visit the RSA Website ([www.rsa-al.gov](http://www.rsa-al.gov))

The TRS strongly encourages its members and member agencies to browse this user-friendly site because of the tremendous amount of useful information and interactive tools available.

What you can find:

- ◆ Retirement Benefit Calculator
- ◆ The best ways of contacting the RSA
- ◆ View account statement online
- ◆ Publications and forms
- ◆ Change address online
- ◆ Rates of return for RSA-1
- ◆ Investment performance
- ◆ Legislation affecting the RSA
- ◆ PEEHIP information
- ◆ Agency information
- ◆ Retirement planning information
- ◆ Retiree information

### Map and Directions

#### From the West

Follow Highway 80 to I-65. Follow I-65 North to Montgomery. Approaching Montgomery, stay in the right-hand lane and exit onto I-85 North to Atlanta. Continue in the right-hand lane; then take the first exit, which is Court Street. Stay on the service road until you reach Union Street. Turn left on Union Street. Continue on Union Street through two traffic lights. The RSA Headquarters is on the right before Adams Avenue. Members may park for free in the Member Services parking lot in front of the parking deck.

#### From the East

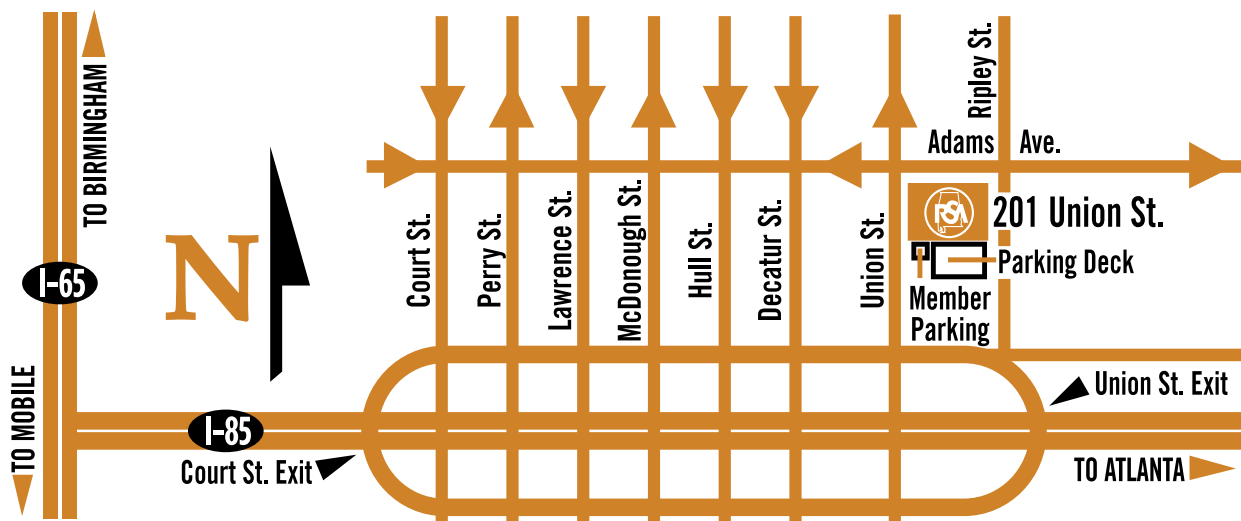
Follow I-85 South to downtown Montgomery and take the Union Street exit on the right. Take the first right on the service road onto Union Street. Continue on Union Street through one traffic light. The RSA Headquarters is on the right before Adams Avenue. Members may park for free in the Member Services parking lot in front of the parking deck.

### From the South

Follow I-65 North to Montgomery. Approaching Montgomery, stay in the right-hand lane and exit onto I-85 North to Atlanta. Continue in the right-hand lane; then take the first exit, which is Court Street. Stay on the service road until you reach Union Street. Turn left on Union Street. Continue on Union Street through two traffic lights. The RSA Headquarters is on the right before Adams Avenue. Members may park for free in the Member Services parking lot in front of the parking deck.

### From the North

Follow I-65 South into Montgomery. Take the I-85 North exit to the right to Atlanta. Stay in the right-hand lane and take the first exit on I-85, which is the Court Street exit. Stay on the service road until you reach Union Street. Turn left on Union Street. Continue on Union Street through two traffic lights. The RSA Headquarters is on the right before Adams Avenue. Members may park for free in the Member Services parking lot in front of the parking deck.



## Membership

### Defined Benefit Program

The TRS is a defined benefit plan qualified under Section 401(a) of the Internal Revenue Code. Since its inception in 1941, the plan has provided disability and service retirement benefits to members and survivor benefits to qualified beneficiaries.

A defined benefit plan provides the employee with a specific benefit at retirement by calculating the retirement benefit based on a formula. Benefits are payable monthly for the lifetime of the member, possibly continuing for the lifetime of his or her beneficiary. The *Code of Alabama 1975*, Section 16-25 contains the actual language governing the plan.

### Mandatory Participation

Participation in the TRS is mandatory if a person is employed in a position eligible for coverage in a **non-temporary capacity on at least a one-half time basis earning at least the federal minimum wage**. Once enrolled, the member must continue participation until employment is terminated. Active members of the Employees' Retirement System (ERS) and student employees are not eligible for TRS participation.

Temporary employees with a specific termination date not exceeding one year are ineligible. However, temporary employees employed longer than one year must begin participation in the TRS at the beginning of the second consecutive year of employment. The member will be given the opportunity to purchase the first year of temporary employment.

### Tier 1 and Tier 2

**Tier 1 plan member:** Any member of the Retirement Systems who had service for which he or she received credit in the Employees' Retirement System or in the Teachers' Retirement System prior to January 1, 2013.

**Tier 2 plan member:** Any member of the Retirement System who first began eligible employment with an Employees' Retirement System or a Teachers' Retirement System participating employer on or after January 1, 2013, and who had no eligible service in the Employees' Retirement System or the Teachers' Retirement System prior to January 1, 2013.

### Contributions

#### Member Contributions

Member contributions are based on percentages of earnable compensation, but earnable compensation cannot exceed 125% of base pay. Member compensation rates are determined by statute and subject to change by the Alabama Legislature.

Regular Employees	6.0%
Full-time, Certified State Firefighters Correctional Officers Law Enforcement Officers	7.0%

#### Employer Contributions

The employer's contribution rate is established after each annual actuarial valuation of participating agencies.

### Member Online Services (<https://mso.rsa-al.gov>)

The RSA Member Online Services website offers members a quick way to view their TRS statement, RSA-1 statement, and have the ability to change your address online. PEEHIP members can view current coverages, update contact information, and enroll, change or cancel coverage during Open Enrollment. New members can enroll in PEEHIP within the first 30 days of employment. You will need to register by creating a User ID and Password.



## Annual Statement of Account

Your personal Annual Statement of Account is mailed to your home address each August with the exception of UAB employees who receive statements in January. You may view your account statement online at our website. The purpose of the annual statement is to provide you with information pertaining to your beneficiary, member contributions, accumulated interest, creditable service and earnings. This also provides you with the opportunity to verify your records and use the information for retirement planning.

The statement includes a Personal section where your beneficiary is indicated. Please check to make sure that this information is current. If not, contact the TRS and supply us with the updated information. The next section is Member Contributions. This section lists your previously taxed contributions, non-taxed member contributions, total interest and the balance as of the end of the fiscal year, which is June 30.

The Creditable Service by Category section breaks down the member's service credit by membership, prior, purchased, and transfer service. This section also indicates if the member is vested in the system or not. The Ten Year Service History section shows your calculated earnings based on actual contributions received for the period beginning July 1 and ending June 30 and will not necessarily agree with your contract salary or the salary reported on your W-2 form. Your contributions and service credit are also shown and are provided by your employer. **All statement information is subject to later audit and correction.**

The statement also contains a brief explanation of vesting, refunds, death benefits, disability retirement and maximum monthly retirement benefits.

## Designation of Beneficiary

It is very important for members to keep their beneficiary designations current. Failure to do so can result in possible loss of valuable benefits to your survivors. If you wish to change your beneficiary or in the event of marriage, divorce, or the beneficiary's death, file a new beneficiary designation with the TRS.

The RSA 100-C CHANGE OF BENEFICIARY - PRIOR TO RETIREMENT form is available on our website or you may contact the TRS. You may name more than one beneficiary and designate them as contingent or co-beneficiaries. If at the member's death, there is no beneficiary; the member's estate will be paid the appropriate death benefit. A retired member who is receiving a benefit under the provisions of Option 2, 3, or 4 retirement allowance may designate a replacement beneficiary for a monthly survivor benefit if the designated beneficiary predeceases the retired member or if the member and the designated beneficiary become divorced. See [Replacement Beneficiary](#) on page 17.

## Change of Address

Having your current home mailing address on file with the TRS is very important. Many important documents are mailed to each member such as your *Advisor*, TRS Board of Control Election ballots, Annual Statement of Account, and RSA-1 statement.

You may change your address through Member Online Services on our website. You will need to set up a User ID and Password to log in.

You can also change your address in writing, with signature, either by letter or ADDRESS CHANGE NOTIFICATION form. The change of address form can be obtained from our website or requested from Member Services. Address changes cannot be made through email or over the phone.

## Types of Creditable Service

Creditable service is the total service credit accrued to your account and is one part of the formula used to calculate your retirement benefit. It includes membership service, prior service, purchased service, and transferred service. Periods of part-time or less than full-time service should be prorated based on the percentage of time worked in relation to full time.

### Membership Service

Membership service is service credit earned as an employee while a member of the TRS and making contributions to the TRS. Members can only earn a year's worth of service credit in a year's time. Service credit is calculated by your employer and reported to the TRS. Service credit is subject to review, audit and correction by the TRS prior to retirement.

### Prior Service

Service credit earned prior to your agency's participation date in the TRS.

### Purchased Service

Alabama state law allows active members to purchase service credit for certain types of past employment. Purchasing service credit may increase the amount of your retirement income or allow you to retire sooner. See [Purchasing Additional Service Credit](#) on page 10.

### Transferred Service

If a member previously worked for an agency covered under the ERS, the member must authorize a transfer of service credit to the TRS.

### Leave of Absence

A member of the TRS who is on leave of absence without pay is not entitled to any service credit while on such leave. A member receiving workmen's compensation pay is also not entitled to any service credit for such pay.

## Vesting

Vesting means the member has earned enough service credit to be eligible for a lifetime retirement benefit other than a refund of contributions. Members have a vested status in the TRS after accumulating 10 years of creditable service.

## Termination of Service

### Ineligible for Retirement

Once a member terminates employment prior to retirement eligibility, he or she has three options:

1. If the member is vested (has at least 10 years of service), retirement contributions may be left in the system until age 62. The member may apply for service retirement to be effective the first of the month following attainment of age 62.
2. With less than 10 years of service, the member may leave contributions in the system for up to five years. If the member has not returned to employment as a participating member, the account will be terminated and contributions plus any refundable accrued interest will be payable to the member.
3. The member may withdraw all retirement contributions and refundable interest. Member contributions are only refunded at the request of the member upon termination of employment and application for refund.

**Note:** An approved leave of absence does not constitute termination of employment.

To request a refund, contact the TRS and request a FORM 7, NOTICE OF FINAL DEPOSIT AND REQUEST FOR REFUND and the SPECIAL TAX NOTICE REGARDING YOUR ROLLOVER OPTIONS or download them from our website. Instructions for completing the form are located on the reverse side of the form.

Please read the Special Tax Notice for its valuable tax information. The taxable portion of the refund is subject to federal income tax withholding at the rate of 20 percent unless the taxable amount of the refund is transferred directly (rolled-over) from the RSA to the trustee of an Individual Retirement Account, Annuity, or Qualified Retirement Plan.

If the member elects to receive the refund directly, he or she will be refunded 80 percent of the taxable amount of the retirement contributions and refundable interest, if any. The taxable portion of the refund may also be subject to a 10 percent additional tax if the member is less than 59½ years old. No portion of the refund is subject to state of Alabama income tax.

In January following the calendar year in which a taxable refund is made, a 1099-R will be issued to the member who has directly received the refund, regardless of whether the individual rolled-over the refund to a qualified plan within 60 days of the date of withdrawal.

### Refund of Contributions

A member's contributions are only refundable at the request of the member upon termination of employment and application for refund (FORM 7). There are no partial refunds; all contributions are refunded in full.

Interest on the account is only refunded if the member has at least three years of membership service. The employee is not entitled to the total interest credited to the account.

Upon withdrawal, all service credit established with the TRS is canceled. For vested members, the right to lifetime monthly retirement benefits at age 62 is forfeited.

**Table of Refunds**

Years of Membership Service	Amt of Interest Refunded	Contributions Refunded
Less than 3 yrs	None	All
3 yrs, but less than 16 yrs	50%	All
16 yrs, but less than 21 yrs	60%	All
21 yrs, but less than 26 yrs	70%	All
26 yrs or more	80%	All

By law, interest is credited on the previous year's average balance at the rate of four percent per annum. Refunds may be subject to a federal tax penalty.

## Purchasing Additional Service Credit

Alabama state law allows active members to purchase service credit for certain types of past employment. Purchasing service credit may increase the amount of your retirement income or allow you to retire sooner.

To purchase service credit, the member must ensure proper certification of the service. Request the appropriate certification form by contacting the TRS or downloading the form from our website. Have the form completed by an official record keeper where the service was performed. Then return the completed certification form to the TRS.

### Military Service in the U.S. Armed Forces

- ◆ During an active member's **first year** of participation in the TRS, he or she may purchase up to four years of eligible military service provided the member has had no previous period of eligibility.

Eligible service includes honorable service in the U.S. Armed Forces for which the member is not currently receiving service retirement benefits from any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, or from any source other than benefits received exclusively as payment for a service connected disability.

Weekend service and summer camp service with the National Guard and Reserves are not eligible to be purchased as creditable service.

To purchase this service, complete the TRS SMS 1109 STATEMENT OF MILITARY SERVICE form and submit it to the TRS. Military documentation that verifies the periods of military service and character of service must be provided. Examples of documentation include DD Form 214 and discharge notification.

The cost to purchase military service in the first year is four percent of the average salary paid to a teacher during each year of claimed service plus eight percent interest

compounded from the last date of service to the date of payment. The full amount must be paid in a lump-sum for all active duty time up to four years.

- ◆ The next opportunity to purchase military service will be after accumulating **10 years of creditable service** and will cost substantially more.

Once an active member of the TRS has accrued 10 years of service, he or she may purchase up to four years of active military service if not purchased during the first year of participation.

Eligible service includes honorable service in the U.S. Armed Forces for which the member has not received credit for such service toward retirement status in the TRS, ERS or any other public pension fund, including the U.S. Armed Forces.

Weekend service and summer camp service with the National Guard and Reserves are not eligible to be purchased as creditable service.

To purchase this services, complete the TRS SMS 90-528 STATEMENT OF MILITARY SERVICE and submit it to the TRS. The cost of purchasing credit for military service after ten years of service will be the full actuarial cost. The full actuarial cost is based on the member's life expectancy, salary, and earliest date eligible to begin receiving retirement benefits. This service must be purchased prior to the member's retirement.

### Noble Eagle Service (Act 02-430)

Noble Eagle Service applies to TRS contributing members who are called to active military duty.

Upon return from active duty, members are permitted to purchase credit for the retirement service credit that was missed during the period of military activation. The member must provide

the TRS with a copy of his or her Form DD214. The employing agency must provide the TRS with a record of the missed salary for the period. The member must submit the contributions that were missed during that period and the employer must submit the employer contributions that were missed during that period. No interest is charged.

The member has up to 3 times the length of the activation, up to a maximum of 5 years, to submit the contributions. For example, a member who was activated for 1 year will have 3 years to submit the missed contribution and establish retirement credit. A member who was activated for 6 months would have 18 months to submit the missed contributions.

Members cannot purchase Noble Eagle credit for a leave of absence for training.

### **Restoration of Withdrawn Service Credit from the RSA**

After completing two years of contributing service, any member who previously participated in either the TRS or ERS and withdrew his or her contributions may restore the previously canceled creditable service. The withdrawn service cannot be service credit established with any other public retirement system.

The cost to purchase the withdrawn service is the amount previously withdrawn plus eight percent interest compounded from the date of withdrawal to the date of payment. The total withdrawn amount must be paid in a lump-sum and made prior to termination of employment. A member may request a STATEMENT OF WITHDRAWN SERVICE from the TRS or download it from our website.

### **Maternity Leave Without Pay**

An active member (male or female) of the TRS may purchase up to one year of credit for each period of maternity leave without pay. The member cannot purchase credit for any period of maternity leave that he or she already has credit for in the TRS.

The cost to purchase this service is the full actuarially determined cost. Payment must be made no later than June 30 of the calendar year following the expiration of maternity leave without pay. Contact the TRS for more information.

### **Out-of-State Public Service**

Any active member with a minimum of 10 years contributing service, exclusive of purchased military service and transferred ERS service, may purchase up to ten years of out-of-state public service. The service to be purchased must have been credited under another public retirement plan, but cannot qualify the member for any benefits under any other public plan.

This service may be purchased in increments of one year. The cost of purchasing credit for out-of-state public service is the full actuarial cost. The purchase must be completed prior to the member's retirement. The APPLICATION AND CERTIFICATION FOR OUT-OF-STATE SERVICE CREDIT is located on our website or you may request this form from the TRS.

### **TRS Support Personnel, Teacher Aide, Job Corps, and Teacher Corps**

This service may be purchased under the same conditions as out-of-state public service. However, a member can only purchase up to eight years of Alabama public service. The CERTIFICATION OF TEACHER AIDE SERVICE, TEACHER CORPS SERVICE, AND JOB CORP SERVICE form is located on our website or request it from the TRS.

### **Department of Defense Dependent School Service**

Any active member with a minimum of 10 years contributing service, exclusive of purchased military service, may purchase credit for service as a regular employee of a school operated by the U.S. Department of Defense.

Eligible service cannot include service credited to another plan. This service may be purchased

in increments of one year at the full actuarial cost. The cost is the full actuarial cost and must be made prior to retirement. The DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE DEPENDENT SCHOOL SERVICE form is located on our website or request it from the TRS.

### Sources of Funds

Members of the TRS who are purchasing any type of permissible service as outlined previously in this section may do so by rolling funds from tax deferred savings plans such as tax sheltered annuities (IRC 403(b)), governmental deferred compensation plans (IRC 457) like RSA-1, IRAs (IRC 408), or qualified plans (IRC 401). **This includes funds in your RSA-1 account.**

The member may have these funds transferred directly from the other plan to the TRS and avoid paying tax at the time of transfer, any early distribution penalty, or required withholding. The necessary form will be provided to members when they are notified of the cost for any service purchases.

**Note:** Eligibility for and cost of all service purchases are based on the provisions of law in effect at the time of purchase.



## Death of a Member Prior to Retirement

### Preretirement Death Benefit

If a member dies prior to retirement, death benefits are calculated and paid to the beneficiary(ies) based on the member's age, service credit, employment status and eligibility for retirement. The preretirement death benefits the beneficiary(ies) or estate will receive are outlined in the chart below.

Member Age	Years of Service Credit	Preretirement Death Benefit
<i>Ineligible to Retire</i>		
Under 62* or 62* and older	Between 1 and 10	Member contributions, total interest earned, plus an amount equal to the member's salary for the prior fiscal year (July 1 - June 30)
Any Age*	Less than 1 year, death was job-related	Member contributions, total interest earned, plus an amount equal to the member's salary at time of death
Any Age	Less than 1 year, death was not job-related	Member contributions, total interest earned, plus an amount matching the contributions and interest but limited to a maximum of \$5,000
<i>Eligible to Retire</i>		
62* and older	10 or more	<i>Choice of:</i> (1) Option 3 monthly benefit (50% of member's retirement benefit) to the spouse or beneficiary or (2) Member contributions, total interest earned, plus an amount equal to the member's salary for the prior fiscal year (July 1 - June 30)

*\* If death occurs more than 180 calendar days after the member's last day in pay status or if the deceased had applied for a refund of contributions or terminated employment, the lump-sum payment will be the same as for status of less than 1 year and not job-related.*

The designated beneficiary(ies) will receive the death benefit after the RSA-SB, APPLICATION FOR SURVIVOR BENEFIT, and a certified death certificate have been submitted to the RSA. If there is no designated beneficiary, the death benefit will be paid to the member's estate.

## Term Life Insurance Benefits

The beneficiary(ies) or estate of a deceased full-time **active** member or a full-time member who dies within 90 days of being in active pay status is eligible to receive \$15,000 in life insurance benefits. For members who are less than full-time, the benefit will be prorated. For example, if the member was half-time, the benefit paid would be \$7,500.

## Change of Beneficiary

When a new member joins the TRS, he or she designates a primary beneficiary(ies) and contingent beneficiary(ies) on the FORM 100, MEMBER INFORMATION RECORD. It is very important for the member to maintain a current beneficiary on record. If an active member wishes to change the beneficiary designation, the change must be made on the RSA 100-C CHANGE OF BENEFICIARY - PRIOR TO RETIREMENT form.

If the primary beneficiary predeceases the member, the TRS will pay the contingent beneficiary the death benefit. If at the member's death, there is no beneficiary designated, the estate of the member will receive the appropriate death benefit.

To make beneficiary changes, retired members must contact the TRS. See Replacement Beneficiary on page 17.

## Reporting the Death of a Member

The beneficiary or family of a deceased active member should contact the Payroll/Personnel Officer of his or her place of employment for information and the appropriate forms. The TRS may be contacted if there are any questions about benefits or identity of beneficiaries.

Upon the death of a retired member, the beneficiary or family should contact the TRS for information and the appropriate forms.

## Retirement Benefits

### Service Retirement

Service retirement benefits are available to members who cease TRS-covered employment and meet minimum service and age requirements. The monthly retirement benefit is made for life without interruption unless there is a return to full-time employment with a TRS or ERS agency, or to temporary employment in excess of the limits to be described in [Postretirement Employment](#) on page 20.

A member is eligible to receive retirement benefits when:

- ◆ He or she has at least 10 years of service credit and has attained the age of 62.

A member is eligible to retire the first day of the month following attainment of age 62 with 10 years of creditable service. Members may only retire on the first day of any month they are eligible.

Any member convicted of a felony offense related to their public position must forfeit their right to lifetime retirement benefits. The employee will receive a refund of his or her retirement contributions.

To apply for retirement, request a RETIREMENT APPLICATION PACKET PART I from the TRS or your employer, or download the form from our website. This packet includes the FORM 10 - APPLICATION FOR RETIREMENT, PEEHIP INSURANCE AUTHORIZATION form, and DIRECT DEPOSIT AUTHORIZATION form.

**The application must be received no less than 30 days nor more than 90 days prior to the effective date of retirement.** It is the responsibility of the member to notify the TRS in writing regarding intent to retire. Please include your full name and Social Security number on all written correspondence.

### Disability Retirement

If the career of a TRS member is cut short because of permanent disability, the member may qualify for monthly disability benefits. To qualify for a disability benefit, the member must meet **all** the following conditions:

1. The member must have 10 years of creditable service.
2. The member must be in-service. A member is considered in-service if currently working or on official leave of absence for one year, which may be extended for no more than one additional year. A member will not receive service credit for periods of leave without pay.
3. The RSA Medical Board must determine the member to be permanently incapacitated from further performance of duty. The Medical Board bases its determination upon information provided by the member's physician.

Monthly disability retirement benefits are calculated identically to those for service retirement.

To apply for disability retirement, request a REPORT OF DISABILITY PACKET and RETIREMENT APPLICATION PACKET PART I from the TRS or your employer. Both forms are on our website. The STATEMENT BY EXAMINING PHYSICIAN (included in the REPORT OF DISABILITY PACKET) and the retirement application must be received by the TRS office no less than 30 days nor more than 90 days prior to the effective date of retirement, which is the first day of a month. The member is responsible for notifying the TRS regarding disability retirement.

A disability retiree will be reviewed once each year for the first five years and once every three-year period thereafter until age 62 to determine whether the retiree remains disabled.

## Computing Your Retirement Benefit

A member's retirement benefit is calculated based on a retirement formula. The member must be age 62 or older to receive a retirement benefit. The retirement benefit cannot exceed 80% of the Average Final Salary.

The factors used in calculating this benefit include:

- 1. Average Final Salary (Compensation):** The average of the highest five years (July - June) out of the last 10 years the member made contributions. Partial years are included when calculating the average final salary if they benefit the member. The retirement benefit is capped at 80% of average final salary.
- 2. Years and Months of Creditable Service:** The total amount of creditable service to include membership service, prior service, purchased service, and transfer service.
- 3. Retirement Benefit Factor:** The current benefit factor, as established by the Alabama Legislature, is 1.65%.

### Retirement Formula for Maximum Monthly Benefit

$$\text{Average Final Salary} \times \text{Years and Months of Service} \times \text{Benefit Factor} \div 12 = \text{Maximum Monthly Benefit}$$

**Example:** Average Final Salary: \$42,000  
 Service Credit: 27 years and 6 months  
 Age 62

$$\$42,000 \times 27.5 \times .0165 \div 12 = \$1,588.13 \text{ per month}$$

The member also has four options to choose from that are a reduction from the Maximum Monthly Benefit.

**Important:** When a member submits a retirement application, the staff calculates the monthly benefit under the Maximum Monthly Benefit and the Optional Monthly Benefits. The TRS mails this information to the retiring member, along with the RETIREMENT BENEFIT OPTION SELECTION AND TAX FORM PACKET PART II. This packet includes the RETIREMENT BENEFIT SELECTION form, WITHHOLDING CERTIFICATE FOR PENSION OR ANNUITY PAYMENTS, and POSTRETIREMENT EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION.

**If no election of an option is made prior to the effective date of retirement, the law specifies that the member will receive the Maximum Monthly Benefit retirement allowance.**

## Maximum or Optional Monthly Benefit

The member must select either the Maximum Monthly Benefit or one of the Optional Monthly Benefits on the RETIREMENT BENEFIT OPTION SELECTION form. Failure to select either the Maximum Monthly Benefit or one of the Optional Monthly Benefits will, by law, result in the Maximum Monthly Benefit as the member's retirement benefit selection.

### Maximum Monthly Benefit

The Maximum Monthly Benefit pays the highest monthly benefit to a retiring member of the TRS. This benefit is a lifetime benefit paid to the retiree on a monthly basis. At the death of the retiree, all monthly benefits cease. The designated beneficiary(ies) will only receive a one-time prorated monthly benefit covering the days of the month that the retiree was still living.

### Optional Monthly Benefit

A member may provide a benefit for a beneficiary by selecting one of the following options.

#### Option 1

The monthly benefit under Option 1 is slightly less than the Maximum. This benefit is a lifetime benefit paid to the retiree on a monthly basis; however, if the retiree dies prior to receiving payments exceeding his or her account balance, the remaining balance will be paid to the designated beneficiary(ies).

#### Option 2 (100% Survivor Benefit)

Option 2 allows the retiree to receive a reduced benefit over the life of the retiree in return for allowing the designated beneficiary (only one beneficiary may be designated) to receive the same lifetime benefit after the retiree's death. The benefits are based on the ages of the retiree and the beneficiary. Once the member retires, he or she cannot change their beneficiary unless the beneficiary predeceases the retiree or if the retiree and the beneficiary divorce. See [Replacement Beneficiary](#).

#### Option 3 (50% Survivor Benefit)

Option 3 allows the retiree to receive a reduced benefit over the life of the retiree in return for allowing the designated beneficiary (only one beneficiary may be designated) to receive one-half the retiree benefit over the beneficiary's lifetime after the retiree's death. The benefits are based on the ages of the retiree and the beneficiary. Once the member retires, he or she cannot change their beneficiary unless the beneficiary predeceases the retiree or if the retiree and the beneficiary divorce. See [Replacement Beneficiary](#).

#### Option 4

Members may elect to receive a monthly benefit actuarially equivalent to the regular retirement benefit. The monthly benefit paid to the beneficiary cannot exceed the limits determined by federal tax laws. The TRS Board of Control must approve this option.

### Replacement Beneficiary

Retirees who elected joint survivor options (Option 2, 3 or 4) at the time of retirement may name a new beneficiary under either of the two following conditions:

- ◆ If the named beneficiary dies before the retired member
- Or**
- ◆ There is a divorce between the retired member and the beneficiary

The retired member should contact the TRS for information and forms. Generally, there will be a recalculation of the benefit amount for the retired member and beneficiary. The replacement beneficiary must be in place for at least two years to become effective. If the retired member dies within this two year period, no monthly survivor benefit is payable.

## Table of Maximum Monthly Retirement Benefit

Average Final Salary	Years of Creditable Service							
	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24
\$10,000	138	165	193	220	248	275	303	330
12,000	165	198	231	264	297	330	363	396
15,000	206	248	289	330	371	413	454	495
17,000	234	281	327	374	421	468	514	561
20,000	275	330	385	440	495	550	605	660
22,500	309	371	433	495	557	619	681	743
25,000	344	413	481	550	619	688	756	825
27,500	378	454	529	605	681	756	832	908
30,000	413	495	578	660	743	825	908	990
32,500	447	536	626	715	804	894	983	1,073
35,000	481	578	674	770	866	963	1,059	1,155
37,500	516	619	722	825	928	1,031	1,134	1,238
40,000	550	660	770	880	990	1,100	1,210	1,320
45,000	619	743	866	990	1,114	1,238	1,361	1,485
50,000	688	825	963	1,100	1,238	1,375	1,513	1,650
55,000	756	908	1,059	1,210	1,361	1,513	1,664	1,815
60,000	825	990	1,155	1,320	1,485	1,650	1,815	1,980
65,000	894	1,073	1,251	1,430	1,609	1,788	1,966	2,145
70,000	963	1,155	1,348	1,540	1,733	1,925	2,118	2,310
75,000	1,031	1,238	1,444	1,650	1,856	2,063	2,269	2,475
80,000	1,100	1,320	1,540	1,760	1,980	2,200	2,420	2,640
85,000	1,169	1,403	1,636	1,870	2,104	2,338	2,571	2,805
90,000	1,238	1,485	1,733	1,980	2,228	2,475	2,723	2,970

**Note:** Average Final Salary is the average of the highest five years (July - June) out of the last 10 years the member made contributions. Partial years are included when calculating the average final salary if they benefit the member. The retirement benefit is capped at 80% of average final salary. All numbers are rounded for this table.

To compute the maximum monthly retiree benefit, the following formula is used:

$$\text{Average Final Salary} \times \text{Years and Months of Service} \times \text{Benefit Factor } (.0165) \div 12$$



## Table of Maximum Monthly Retirement Benefit

Average Final Salary	Years of Creditable Service							
	25	26	28	30	32	34	36	38
\$10,000	344	358	385	413	440	468	495	523
12,000	413	429	462	495	528	561	594	627
15,000	516	536	578	619	660	701	743	784
17,000	584	608	655	701	748	795	842	888
20,000	688	715	770	825	880	935	990	1,045
22,500	773	804	866	928	990	1,052	1,114	1,176
25,000	859	894	963	1,031	1,100	1,169	1,238	1,306
27,500	945	983	1,059	1,134	1,210	1,286	1,361	1,437
30,000	1,031	1,073	1,155	1,238	1,320	1,403	1,485	1,568
32,500	1,117	1,162	1,251	1,341	1,430	1,519	1,609	1,698
35,000	1,203	1,251	1,348	1,444	1,540	1,636	1,733	1,829
37,500	1,289	1,341	1,444	1,547	1,650	1,753	1,856	1,959
40,000	1,375	1,430	1,540	1,650	1,760	1,870	1,980	2,090
45,000	1,547	1,609	1,733	1,856	1,980	2,104	2,228	2,351
50,000	1,719	1,788	1,925	2,063	2,200	2,338	2,475	2,613
55,000	1,891	1,966	2,118	2,269	2,420	2,571	2,723	2,874
60,000	2,063	2,145	2,310	2,475	2,640	2,805	2,970	3,135
65,000	2,234	2,324	2,503	2,681	2,860	3,039	3,218	3,396
70,000	2,406	2,503	2,695	2,888	3,080	3,273	3,465	3,658
75,000	2,578	2,681	2,888	3,094	3,300	3,506	3,713	3,919
80,000	2,750	2,860	3,080	3,300	3,520	3,740	3,960	4,180
85,000	2,922	3,039	3,273	3,506	3,740	3,974	4,208	4,441
90,000	3,094	3,218	3,465	3,713	3,960	4,208	4,455	4,703

## Postretirement Employment

### Employment Restrictions

A TRS retiree employed with a TRS or ERS member agency may continue to receive full retirement benefits provided the retired member meets **both** of the following conditions:

1. The retiree must not be employed or under contract for permanent, full-time employment.
2. The retiree's salary cannot exceed the limitation on earnings. The limits are subject to change each year based upon the Consumer Price Index (CPI). **The limit for the 2015 calendar year is \$24,000 and \$30,000 for 2016.**

If a retiree's earnings or remunerations exceed the annual limitation on earnings, the retirement benefit will be suspended for the remainder of the calendar year.

- ◆ Retirees who return to work with a TRS or ERS member agency in the same calendar year as their retirement are subject to a prorated earnings limitation based upon the number of months remaining in the year. Retirees who retire effective January 1 of a given year are only subjected to the annual earnings limitation amount.
- ◆ Retirees who return to work with a TRS or ERS member agency in a subsequent year from their retirement are subject to the yearly earnings limitation.
- ◆ If a TRS or ERS retiree exceeds the annual limitation on earnings, the employing agency must notify the RSA immediately. Any questions concerning postretirement law should be directed to the TRS.

### Contract Employment

Retirees providing services to TRS or ERS agencies on a contractual basis may be subject to the limitations on earnings and remunerations. If a TRS or ERS agency has entered into a contract

with a TRS or ERS retiree, please provide a copy of the contract to the TRS to confirm whether or not this contract would violate the postretirement employment law.

### Private Employment

There are no limitations on earnings for a service retiree employed in private industry, private education, or for any other organization which does not participate in either the TRS or ERS.

### Disability Retiree

A disability retiree employed with a TRS or ERS participating agency is subject to the following limitation: the lesser of the same limitations as a non-disabled retiree or the difference between the average final salary and the annual retirement benefit.

If the retiree is employed with a non-participating agency, earnings cannot exceed the difference between the average final salary and the annual retirement benefit. The earnings restriction is waived upon attaining age 62 for employment with non-participating agencies.

### Employment with the ERS

A TRS retiree who is employed with an ERS member agency in a position eligible for retirement coverage must begin participation in the ERS. The member's TRS retirement account will be terminated and remaining funds and creditable service will be transferred and credited to the new ERS account.

### Elected Officials

A TRS retiree who is elected or appointed to an office that is covered under the ERS must have their benefit suspended once compensation from the office exceeds the annual limitations on earnings.

A TRS retiree who becomes an elected official and participates in a supernumerary plan may continue to receive his or her retirement benefit

while he or she serves in the elected position. However, if the TRS retiree is ultimately eligible to become an “appointment supernumerary official,” he or she would not be able to receive both the TRS retirement benefit and the supernumerary benefit.

### **Full-Time Employment with the TRS**

A TRS retiree who is employed full-time with a TRS member agency must have his or her retirement benefit suspended until he or she withdraws from service again, at which time the benefit will resume as previously calculated.

If the retiree is employed for a period of two years, he or she may petition the TRS Board of Control to permit the resumption of participation in the TRS. Upon approval, the member will pay the contributions over the non-contributing period plus interest and begin contributing on future compensation.

Upon termination of service, the member’s retirement benefit would be recalculated to include service accrued since reemployment. The member will also be allowed to reselect a retirement option and beneficiary.

## Public Education Employees' Health Insurance Plan (PEEHIP)

PEEHIP was established in 1983 under the provisions of Act 83-455 of the Alabama Legislature to provide health insurance benefits for active and retired employees of Alabama's public educational institutions, which provide instruction at any combination of grades K-14, exclusively under the auspices of the State Board of Education.

PEEHIP is a self-funded plan with the benefits and rates being determined by a 14-member Board. The PEEHIP Board and staff strive to offer members a comprehensive benefit plan at an affordable price and to research and implement cost-saving medical management programs.

The Board also employs a third party administrator to properly pay claims within the scope of benefits determined by the Board. The third party administrator has no financial risk for the plan, but simply pays claims with PEEHIP funds. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama has been the claims administrator for the Hospital/Medical plan since October 1, 1992. Beginning October 1, 2010, MedImpact began administering the prescription drug benefit for PEEHIP. Southland Benefit Solutions has been the third party claims administrator for the supplemental plans since the inception of PEEHIP in 1983.

### PEEHIP Information

To receive more information about your PEEHIP benefits, contact PEEHIP at 877.517.0020. Our website contains valuable information such as the PEEHIP Member Handbook, Premium Rates and Copays, Annual PEEHIP Changes, PEEHIP Financial Statements, Retired Member Information, and HIPAA Information. The Member Online Services on our website allows members to enroll, make changes, or delete insurance coverages.

## Retiree Information

### Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLAs)

Cost-of-Living Adjustments for retirees are made on an ad hoc basis by the State Legislature. The amount of the increase is based upon the provisions of the legislation.

### Direct Deposit

The TRS strongly encourages retirees to elect to have their retirement benefit checks sent directly to their bank by electronic funds transfer (EFT), also known as direct deposit. Members using direct deposit do not have to worry about lost, stolen, or damaged checks, nor arrange for someone to deposit their checks when they are out of town or unable to go to the bank. This service is free, secure, reliable, and convenient.

To obtain a DIRECT DEPOSIT AUTHORIZATION form, contact the TRS or download the form from our website.

### Tax Information

- ◆ Retirement benefits from the TRS are subject to federal income tax.
- ◆ Previously taxed contributions, including payments made to purchase additional service credit using pre-taxed monies, are exempt from federal taxation over the life of the retiree.
- ◆ Federal income tax may be withheld from the monthly benefit payment.
- ◆ All retirees will receive a Form 1099-R Income Statement every January for use in filing a federal income tax return. The 1099-R will report the retirement benefits subject to federal income tax.
- ◆ If you reside in Alabama, RSA retirement benefits are not subject to state of Alabama income tax. However, if you reside in another state, check with that state's revenue department to determine your tax status.

### Deductions from Your Retirement Benefit Check

The following amounts may be deducted from your retirement benefit check:

- ◆ Federal income taxes
- ◆ If you move to another state, your benefit will be subject to that state's tax laws. You can find information about other states' tax laws at [www.kiplinger.com](http://www.kiplinger.com) and [www.retirementliving.com/taxes-by-state](http://www.retirementliving.com/taxes-by-state).
- ◆ PEEHIP premiums if applicable

Your benefit is not subject to Alabama income tax.

### When Checks Are Mailed

Retirement benefit checks are mailed on the last working day of the month. If you have direct deposit, your retirement benefit will be electronically transferred to your account on the last working day of the month.

## RSA-1 Deferred Compensation Plan

The RSA-1 Deferred Compensation Plan was established to allow public employees to defer receipt of a portion of their salary until a later determined date, usually at retirement or termination of service. Because receipt of the income is deferred, the deferred income is not included in the employee's federal or state of Alabama gross taxable income.

The majority of people working today expect their retirement income to come from three sources: their pension plan, Social Security, and personal savings. With experts estimating that a person will require between 70 and 80 percent of his or her preretirement income, increasing your personal savings is a good retirement strategy to help supplement your retirement income.

One way for public employees in Alabama to increase their personal savings and add to their financial security is by investing in an Internal Revenue Code Section 457 Deferred Compensation Plan like RSA-1. RSA-1 offers an easy and flexible way to save for retirement through payroll deduction while providing tax relief today.

### Employee Eligibility

Any public official or employee of the state of Alabama or any political subdivision thereof is eligible to participate in the RSA-1 Deferred Compensation Plan, regardless of age or participation in the RSA. Participation in RSA-1 is strictly voluntary.

### Employee Enrollment

You can enroll in RSA-1 at any time. There are no administrative, membership, investment transaction, sales or commission fees for participating in RSA-1. All the money you defer and all investment earnings are placed into your account.

To participate in RSA-1:

1. An employee must complete the RSA-1 ENROLLMENT form, the BENEFICIARY

DESIGNATION form, and the INVESTMENT OPTION ELECTION FOR NEW ACCOUNTS form and submit the completed forms to the RSA-1 Deferred Compensation Plan office at the RSA to establish an account.

2. Initiate salary deferrals by filing an AUTHORIZATION TO DEFER COMPENSATION form **with your payroll officer**. Do not send the AUTHORIZATION TO DEFER COMPENSATION form to RSA-1 or the RSA. This form simply authorizes your payroll officer to defer money from your salary.

### Easy to Make Deferrals

1. Deferrals may be in any amount desired by the participant as long as the participant does not exceed the maximum deferral allowable.
2. The amount of the participant's deferral may be increased, decreased or suspended as often as the participant wishes, subject only to employer payroll requirements.
3. You can only defer contributions to RSA-1 through payroll deductions.

### Rollovers

Members may defer taxes on their sick and annual leave pay by rolling over these payments to RSA-1 at termination of employment. RSA members may also rollover their RSA DROP account funds to RSA-1 at termination of employment. Rollover of RSA DROP account funds and sick and/or annual leave results in a direct tax savings to you. Likewise, RSA-1 funds may be rolled over to purchase permissible service credit under TRS (see page 10).

RSA-1 accepts trustee-to-trustee transfers from other Section 457 plans. RSA members must establish an RSA-1 account prior to the transfer. Funds transferred from other Section 457 accounts must never have been from any source other than 457(b).



## Tax Savings

The following is an example of how participation in RSA-1 can help you reduce current taxes:  
Assume:

- ◆ An employee earning \$1,000 semimonthly
- ◆ Deferring \$100 into RSA-1 semimonthly
- ◆ Filing as single with one withholding allowance

Contributing to RSA-1		Not Contributing to RSA-1	
Semimonthly pay	\$1,000.00	Semimonthly pay	\$1,000.00
RSA-1 Deferral	\$100.00	RSA-1 Deferral	\$0.00
7.5% Retirement Contribution	\$75.00	7.5% Retirement Contribution	\$75.00
Federal Tax	\$51.96	Federal Tax	\$66.96
State Tax	\$29.00	State Tax	\$33.00
FICA	\$76.50	FICA	\$76.50
<i>Take-Home Pay</i>	<i>\$667.54</i>	<i>Take-Home Pay</i>	<i>\$748.54</i>

In this example, deferring \$100 only decreases your take-home pay by \$81 while saving \$19 on taxes. (Based on 2014 tax tables.)

## Retirement Savings

Effect of Saving Over a 25 Year Period*				Effect of Saving Over a 30 Year Period*			
<i>Monthly Deferral Amount</i>	<i>Assumed Earnings Rate</i>			<i>Monthly Deferral Amount</i>	<i>Assumed Earnings Rate</i>		
	<i>6%</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>8%</i>		<i>6%</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>8%</i>
\$25	17,324.85	20,251.79	23,775.66	\$25	25,112.88	30,499.27	37,258.99
\$50	34,649.70	40,503.58	47,551.32	\$50	50,225.75	60,998.55	74,517.97
\$100	69,299.40	81,007.17	95,102.64	\$100	100,451.50	121,997.10	149,035.94
\$200	138,598.79	162,014.34	190,205.28	\$200	200,903.01	243,994.20	298,071.89
\$400	277,197.58	324,028.68	380,410.56	\$400	401,806.02	487,988.40	596,143.78

*\*These examples are provided for illustration purposes only and do not guarantee that the fund will perform at this level in the future.*

## Contact RSA-1

For more information about RSA-1 and the forms necessary to enroll, contact RSA-1 at 877.517.0020; email RSA-1 at [rsalinfo@rsa-al.gov](mailto:rsalinfo@rsa-al.gov); or download the information from our website.

## RSA Publications and Notifications

### Member Handbooks

#### (TRS, ERS, State Police, and JRF)

Each Member Handbook presents an overview of mandatory participation, creditable service, vesting, disability and service retirement, preretirement death benefits and postretirement employment. Each agency is sent a supply of the handbooks. Each new member is mailed a handbook upon receipt of an enrollment form from the employing agency. A handbook may be requested at any time.

### RSA-1 Deferred Compensation Plan Member Handbook

RSA-1 is a voluntary deferred compensation plan governed by Section 457 of the Internal Revenue Service Code. RSA-1 will provide information at the request of the member or the agency.

### Educational Opportunities

The RSA offers its members several opportunities for retirement education. Retirement Preparation Seminars are offered at various sites throughout Alabama. This program helps members to begin or continue their planning and preparation for retirement. The Ret Prep Seminars are full-day programs. Schedules for these seminars are released once a year. The registration packets including the schedule are mailed to Human Resource Offices and Payroll Offices. All schedules and forms are placed on the RSA website for our members' convenience.

The RSA also offers mid-career seminars for members with 1-19 years of service credit. They are called Control Your Money Game and are half-day seminars to help you get and stay on the right track for retirement.

Individual counseling appointments are offered across the state as well. These are twenty-minute appointments with a TRS counselor. The counselor will answer your questions and review your estimate of benefits. Schedules are released once a year and are placed on the RSA website.

TRS members are always welcome to come to the RSA Executive Building on the corner of Union and Adams in Montgomery. To avoid long waiting times, schedule an appointment by calling Member Services at 877.517.0020.

### RSA Annual Report

In February of each year, the RSA publishes the Annual Report. The report provides information about assets, investments, membership, the RSA Boards of Control, RSA departments, and financial statements.

### Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR)

The CAFR, published annually, provides more detailed financial and actuarial information about the RSA.

### RSA Newsletter

The monthly *Advisor* is mailed to each RSA active member, RSA retired member, and any other persons or organizations interested in the RSA. The *Advisor* informs recipients of important topics regarding the TRS, ERS, RSA-1, PEIRAF, PEEHIP, legislation, investments, and counseling schedules. Comparisons of insurance and retirement benefits provided by other states and current information regarding Social Security, taxes, and Alabama's economic and political climate are also featured.

### RSA Website ([www.rsa-al.gov](http://www.rsa-al.gov))

The RSA website publishes RSA's member handbooks, the *Advisor*, Annual Reports and information about the TRS, ERS, PEIRAF, RSA-1 and PEEHIP benefits. News from RSA features updates on policies, procedures, new legislation, federal laws, and other late-breaking events. The website also offers links to other state and federal agencies, as well as RSA's investments, such as the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail and the Grand Hotel.

Legislative Updates keep members informed about legislative news, current legislation and

archive legislation. The Retirement Benefits Estimate Calculator allows members to estimate retirement benefits under the Maximum allowance and Options 1, 2, and 3. Information about Retirement Preparation Seminars, Agency Seminars and Individual Counseling Sessions is listed under Retirement Planning.

### Annual Statement of Account

The TRS provides each member a Statement of Account for the year ending June 30. The statements are mailed to the TRS member's current address on record.

The Statement of Account verifies current year contributions and accumulated interest. The total service credit, interest, service purchases, previously taxed contributions, non-taxed contributions, and balance are also provided. The member's designated beneficiary and mailing address as of June 30 are listed.

### RSA-1 Statement

For those electing to participate in the RSA-1 Deferred Compensation Plan, a statement is sent to the member's mailing address quarterly. The member's designated beneficiary is listed. You may also view your statement online at our website.

### Postretirement Employment Notification

Each year, the TRS provides the participating agency information regarding postretirement earnings limitations and the requirement for certifying postretirement employment information.

The law mandates that the employer notify the TRS when a retired, RSA member is employed full-time. If the retired, RSA member is not employed full-time, the agency must notify the TRS when the retiree's earnings exceed the earnings limit.

### Terminated Account Information Request

The TRS may request mailing address information from participating agencies about former employees whose retirement accounts have been terminated due to an absence of participation. The TRS reviews terminated accounts throughout the year and tries to locate former members to make eligible disbursements. Vested accounts (with at least 10 years of service) will not be terminated.







**TEACHERS'  
RETIREMENT SYSTEM**  
P. O. Box 302150  
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-2150

[www.rsa-al.gov](http://www.rsa-al.gov)