



Governor Names Three New Trustees to TRS Board

Tim Lee, Inside Line, 11-16-17

In November Governor Greg Abbott announced the names of the three new trustees who will fill open positions on the Board of Trustees for the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS).

Governor Abbott has appointed Jarvis V. Hollingsworth, James “Dick” Nance, and Nanette Sissney to the TRS Board of Trustees for terms set to expire August 31, 2023. Additionally, the Governor named Hollingsworth chair of the board, replacing current chair David Kelly, who has served since 2007.

The following information appears in a news release made available by the Governor’s office:

“**Jarvis V. Hollingsworth** of Missouri City is a partner and member of the Management Committee of the law firm of Bracewell LLP. He is a former regent of the University of Houston System, where he served in many capacities, including chairman of the Board of Regents. He is a former trustee of the Teacher Retirement System of Texas, where he served in many capacities, including as chairman of the Board. He is a member of the American Bar Association, Houston Bar Association, State Bar of Texas Foundation, and the State Bar of Texas and previously served on its Board of Directors. Additionally, he is former treasurer of the Houston Bar Foundation and a member of the United Way of Greater Houston’s Alexis de Tocqueville Society. Hollingsworth received a Bachelor of Science from the United States Military Academy at West Point, and served for several years on active and reserve duty in the United States Army. He received a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Houston.

James “Dick” Nance of Hallettsville is retired from Pasadena ISD after 35 years of service. He is a former member of the Texas Athletic Directors Association, Greater Houston Football Coaches Association, and the Texas

High School Coaches Association. Additionally, he is president of the District III Texas Retired Teachers Association and former president of Pasadena South Rotary Club and Lavaca County Retired Teachers Association. He is former secretary of the Hallettsville ISD Education Foundation and a former member of the Hallettsville Lions Club and the Hallettsville ISD Strategic Planning Committee. Nance received a Bachelor of Science in education, a mid-management certificate, and a Master of Education from the University of Houston.

Nanette Sissney is a school counselor and former high school teacher with Whitesboro ISD. She is former state president of the Texas Classroom Teachers Association and former member of the National Council on Teacher Retirement. Additionally, she is a volunteer for Christmas Angel Tree and Ministerial Alliance and chair of Whitesboro Santa’s Breakfast. Sissney received a Bachelor of Arts from Texas Woman’s University and a Master of Education from Southeastern Oklahoma State University.”

James “Dick” Nance is a member of the Texas Retired Teachers Association (TRTA) and the Lavaca County RTA local unit, where he serves currently as Immediate Past President. He will fill the position left vacant after the passing of beloved TRTA member and friend Anita Smith Palmer, who passed away in January of 2017. Nance was appointed by the Governor from three retired member candidates who were nominated by retired TRS members.

The Board of Trustees of TRS, the trustee of all plan assets, is responsible for the general administration and operation of TRS, and is authorized by law to adopt rules for the administration of TRS and the transaction of the business of the Board. Congratulations to all who were named to the TRS Board! TRTA is looking forward to continuing our positive work with the TRS Board of Trustees. The next meeting of the TRS Board of Trustees will be held on December 14 and 15 in Austin, Texas.

TRTF Making a Difference: Bailey Bohlken

Tim Lee, 11-6/27-17

The Texas Retired Teachers Foundation (TRTF) is the charitable arm of the Texas Retired Teachers Association (TRTA) and is responsible for providing grants and assistance to active and retired educators but the Foundation is also dedicated to cultivating the next crop of teachers and public education professionals in Texas. As a part of this mission, TRTF has created the Beginning Teacher Scholarship program. At \$750 apiece, Beginning Teacher Scholarships are a great way for new teachers to pay for certification tests and classroom supplies. In 2018, TRTF will distribute 15 Beginning Teacher Scholarships!

Bailey Bohlken began her first year of teaching at Sulphur Springs High School this fall. Bohlken is teaching algebra and is also a softball coach. She received three scholarships during her studies, and the scholarships helped pave her way into the teaching field.

“When I was in school, (the scholarships) helped with tuition and books and just different expenses that I had,” Bohlken said. “As a new teacher, they’ve helped pay for my certification tests and also helped set up some new stuff for my classroom.”

Bohlken comes from a family of educators. Her mother, Dana Bohlken, has worked for more than 20 years as a teacher and coach. Two of Bohlken’s aunts and uncles have worked as teachers, and Bohlken’s sister is in her third year of teaching.

“She gets lots of advice. She gets lots of dos and don’ts,” said Dana Bohlken. “The good thing is we have lots of experience from different age levels and different subject areas, and so it’s just kind of a wide knowledge base.”

Bailey Bohlken received her greatest inspiration from her high school math class. It was in those classes that she learned the value of problem solving.

“I just fell in love with it, and it really clicked for me,” Bailey Bohlken said. “That was kind of the time that I figured out that, ‘Hey, this might be something that I really want to do for the rest of my life.’”

You can help support future educators like Bailey Bohlken by donating to the Texas Retired Teachers Foundation.

Each Classroom Assistance Grant is worth \$500 and are provided to active teachers. Application deadline for the these Grants is March 15, 2018.

The “Helping Hand” program is set to disburse \$17,500 in 2018 to retired educators in need. Since the program’s 2010 inception, “A Helping Hand” has given more than \$110,000 to 107 retired educators. 2017 has been a particularly difficult year for many educators, as the Texas coast was devastated by Hurricane Harvey. TRTF brought educators together to raise more than \$130,000 for victims of the hurricane through its Disaster Relief program. So far, TRTF has helped more than 450 educators with \$250 short-term grants and long-term grants in amounts up to \$1,000.

Your State Legislators

Sen. Larry Taylor - 512-463-0111

League City - 281-332-0003

larry.taylor@senate.texas.gov

Rep. Dennis Paul - 512-463-0734

NASA area 281-488-8900

Dist. 129 area north of Clear Creek

dennis.paul@house.texas.gov

Rep. Greg Bonnen - 512-463-0729

League City - 281-338-0924

Dist. 24 - area south of Clear Creek

greg.bonnen@house.texas.gov

Rep. Ed Thompson - 512-463-0707

Pearland - 281-485-6565

Dist. 29 – area of Pearland/Alvin

ed.thompson@house.texas.gov

Rep. Wayne Faircloth - 512-463- 0502

Dist. 23 – Bacliff/Texas City

2121 Market Street, Suite 205

Galveston, Texas 77550

(409)762-0304

wayne.faircloth@house.texas.gov

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick:

Capitol Station

P.O Box 1206 8

Austin, TX

512-463-0001

Website :www.ltgov.texas.gov

Just scroll to the bottom of his

website and email a letter under:

“CONTACT THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR.”

Dallas County Sheriff would bring firsts to race for state governor

Ken Herman, *Austin American-Statesman*, 12-6-17

Good morning, class. From the following list, please choose the one you'd least expect the Great State of Texas to be the first state to do. Remember, we're looking for the one you'd least expect Texas to be the first to do:

1. Officially recognize football as a religion.
2. Make it illegal to be poor.
3. Declare education optional.
4. Make football the official religion of the state.
5. Elect a Hispanic lesbian governor.

Easy, right? But it looks as if we might get a shot at being the first state to knowingly elect a gay governor of any ethnic or gender persuasion.

Before the filing deadline Monday, we're expecting Dallas County Sheriff Lupe Valdez to file and become a (the?) leading Democratic gubernatorial candidate. Her candidacy would invite some interesting firsts and precedents. I'm saving the most surprising for last, so stick around to the end.

Valdez, the nation's only Hispanic female sheriff, would be trying to leap from county official to governor. She'd also be the first Hispanic governor of Texas, the first child of migrant farmworkers elected governor of Texas and the first openly gay person elected governor in the U.S.

That last one needs an asterisk or two:

* In 2004, then-New Jersey Gov. Jim McGreevey's coming out came in a resignation speech after some official unpleasantness involving an unqualified man McGreevey put on the state payroll. Back then, a good joke was that McGreevey was a governor with a man date.

** Oregon Gov. Kate Brown is married to a man and is openly bisexual. She was elevated to governor from secretary of state (Oregon doesn't have a lieutenant governor, and, no, this isn't an invitation for you to say you wish Texas didn't) when then-Gov. John Kitzhaber quit in 2015 during an influence-peddling scandal. Brown later won a 2016 special election.

Other than that, best as we know (though we probably know better), no state has ever had anything other than heterosexuals as governor. Wait, one more asterisk: California had an openly gay governor for eight hours on July 30, 2014, when Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins served as acting governor while

real Gov. Jerry Brown and others in the succession line were out of state.

I'm not sure anybody would pick Texas as likely to be the first to back an openly gay gubernatorial candidate. But there was a time when Dallas County didn't seem likely to elect a Hispanic lesbian sheriff. That time has passed. Valdez is in her fourth term.

I've long been amazed at how self-defeatingly dumb it is to rule out candidates of particular groups. Seems like we'd want to cast as broad a net as possible when looking for qualified, intelligent people to help steer this ship. They come in various genders, sexual orientations, ages, colors, ethnicities, talents and physical abilities. Heck, Texans, in picking statewide officials, someday also might find that qualified, intelligent people come from more than one political party.

Of all the characteristics that might seem challenging for a Texas gubernatorial candidate, the one that stands out most for Valdez is obvious: She's a Democrat.

And of all the characteristics that make Valdez a trailblazing candidate, the one that might be most surprising involves the trail she'd blaze for older Texans. She was born on Oct. 11, 1947, which means she'd be 71 if she wins and takes the oath in January 2019. That would make her the oldest person to become Texas governor for the first time.

The current record holder for oldest first-time Texas governor? Looks as if it's Sam Houston, who was born March 2, 1793, and was 66 when he got the guv gig in December 1859. (Although that was the first time Houston became governor of Texas, it was not the first time he became a governor. He was elected Tennessee's governor at age 34 in 1827.)

Gov. Bill Clements was 69 when he took office in January 1987, but he was 61 when he took the oath for his first term in January 1979.

So in addition to appealing to other important demographics, perhaps we'll see Geezers for Lupe bumper stickers.

From the Texas Tribune:

Valdez is one of several Democrats who have lined up to challenge Republican Gov. Greg Abbott.

Andrew White, son of late Gov. Mark White, has entered the race as of last Friday and in next few days the other candidates for the March Primary will fill news pages with information.

The following article appeared in the Galveston News last week and caused much concern among retired educators who don't regularly receive TRTA information.

Retired Texas teachers leaving state health plan

Associated Press

» AUSTIN

Thousands of retired Texas teachers are abandoning the health insurance program the state created for them, a concerning move for a health care system that faces a \$700 million funding shortfall.

About 7,800 retirees have requested to leave the health insurance program housed under the Teacher Retirement System of Texas. The number of requests to opt out of the program has been about 1,500 or less per year in the past, the Austin American-Statesman reported.

The wave of requests to leave the health plan threatens to worsen the program's budget woes and could mean higher costs to retired teachers down the road.

"Before if somebody called and told me they were leaving TRS-Care, I would have said, 'Why would you do that?' and advise against it," said Tim Lee, executive director of the Texas Retired Teachers Association. "But this plan has become far more expensive and there are real reasons that somebody may choose to leave ... and most of it has been can they afford it."

This year's wave comes as officials with TRS replaced four plans for Medicare-eligible retirees with a new Medicare Advantage plan that goes into effect Jan. 1. The new plan is administered by a private insurer instead of the federal government, and has created higher premium costs and deductibles with limited networks of doctors and services for many retirees and their families.

Additionally, the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services didn't receive information last month from TRS about the thousands of teachers who are opting out of the health system. Because of that, many of those teachers couldn't buy health insurance elsewhere by the program's open enrollment deadline Thursday.

"These people have been put through the wringer, and some of them think that it's just being done just to keep the (TRS) plan intact," Lee said.

The health plan has since given the required information to the federal agency. Most of the retirees trying opting out of TRS will be offered a special enrollment period starting Friday to buy health insurance in the open market.