

ELECTION EDITION

IT'S TIME TO VOTE

The SERS Retirement Act requires an active member and a retiree to serve on the Board of Trustees of the State Employees' Retirement System. An election for these positions is held every five years.

In order to run for Trustee, members need at least eight years of service credit with SERS, and collect 400 signatures from contributing members. The candidates provide short biographies that are included in this SERS-O-GRAM. They are listed in the order they appear on the ballot.

Enclosed with this newsletter is a ballot and a return postage paid envelope. Read the instructions on the ballot carefully and make your selection. In order for your ballot to count, it must be clearly marked and returned in the envelope provided by May 30, 2006. Ballots received after May 30 will be disqualified. We encourage your participation.

After the election results are tabulated and certified, they will be published in the August edition of the SERS-O-GRAM. If you have questions about the election, contact us in Springfield (217-785-7017) or Chicago (312-814-5853).

Lori Gaston

I am a 22-year Corrections employee and have been president of my local union since 1996. I also serve as executive vice-president of AFSCME Illinois Council 31. I am a seasoned, experienced leader and problem solver.

My proudest achievement is helping to win substantial pension improvements for Illinois state employees. With AFSCME leadership, we won increased retirement benefits for employees in the regular pension plan in 1998 and those in the alternative pension plan in 2001, as well

as implementing the Rule of 85 (a permanent early retirement option).

A key factor in these victories was a close working relationship between AFSCME and SERS, which I pledge to maintain.

SERS faces many challenges. Politicians have used our pension fund as their piggy bank and **that has to stop**. Our current retirement benefits, which are fair and reasonable, are now under attack.

We deserve a secure, adequate pension plan! As your representative, I will work to preserve benefits, enhance them as needed, and win full funding of our pensions.

I'm married to Steve Gaston. We have two children, Aimie and Zach-

ary. I raised three foster daughters who are all on their own and doing very well. I'd appreciate your support!

James Vygnal

I am running for the SERS Board to protect the retirement security of state employees. The fair pension benefits we worked so hard for are under threat.

Failure to fund our pension system and using our funds to balance the state budget endangers the ability of our fund to meet its obligations to us. Schemes in Springfield to change us over to a defined contribution system would mean we'd no longer have coverage for life.

I've worked for the Illinois Toll Highway Authority for 24 years. This is my life-long career. Like you, my wife, four children and I are counting on the retirement I was promised in return for all those years of service. I have a real interest in protecting our pensions, and would work for the improvements in our benefits that we need, not reductions.

I've been a union steward for SEIU Local 73 for 20 years and have helped negotiate seven Tollway contracts. I am the vice-president of the Troy Baseball League and also active with a political organization in Will county.

I know I can meet the challenge to be a voice for our state's working men and women on the SERS Board. I will fight for you.

Harish Bhatt

I am Harish Bhatt. My education includes an undergraduate degree as well as a graduate degree in Business Administration & Management. I have been working for the State of Illinois for more than 26 years, and for the last 18 years I have been an auditor for the Department of Employment Security.

I am the right candidate for the SERS board member because out of three candidates, I am the only one who has often publicly dared to oppose the governor's efforts to cut or limit state employee retirement benefits via Letters to the Editor in the local newspaper.

I am a member of the national marrow donor program, the donor recruitment committee from 2003 to 2005. I donated my bone marrow in 2000 to save the life of a child. I'm a regular blood and platelet donor, having donated over 18 gallons of blood and platelets.

I'm a Friend-in Deed volunteer; helped raise over \$5500 for 911 victims; member, Board of Directors for March of Dimes in 1986 & 1987 to raise thousands of dollars; as president of India Association of Greater Springfield in 1998, raised over \$1000 for St. John's Breadline; helped raise over \$25,000 for earthquake victims in 2001; recently raised over \$1000 for Crimestoppers.

Please vote for me, I will protect our retirement benefits.

The results of the election will be posted on our website in June at www.state.il.us/srs.

BOARD OF TRUSTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

A member of the SERS Board of Trustees has a fiduciary responsibility to the members and beneficiaries of SERS, which serves approximately 120,000 members and oversees assets totaling over \$10.5 billion.

A trustee of SERS must demonstrate strategic leadership and have the ability to work as part of a group. The trustees serve without compensation but are reimbursed for all necessary expenses incurred through service on the Board.

The Board holds regular meetings

at least four times each year. Specific responsibilities include oversight of the administration of SERS benefits; establishing rules and regulations and formulating policies for the proper operation of SERS and its business.

The Board also adopts actuarial tables used in the operation of SERS as prepared by the actuary; has the accounts of SERS audited annually by a certified public accountant designated by the Auditor General; and certifies the rate of state contributions for the next fiscal year.

The Board consists of seven members

SERS ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Our organizational chart shows the relationship between the Board of Trustees and the agency.

