

Utrust Who's Who



Each of the following persons has made significant contributions to the success of the Tennessee School Boards Unemployment Compensation Trust (Utrust). Each has played an important role in the history of Utrust and to each of these people the Utrust membership extends their deepest gratitude. Utrust is committed to forever retain a record of their achievements in our archives.

PEGGY WALTERS

Peggy Walters was a founding trustee and the first chairman of the board of trustees of the Tennessee School Boards Unemployment Compensation Trust. She served as Chairman of the trust for only one year but she was an enthusiastic supporter and promoter of the trust. She attended all nine of the TSBA Fall District Meetings and promoted the trust. She served as the President of the Tennessee School Boards Association and was a member of the Maury County Board of Education.

SUE PUCKETT JERNIGAN

She led the board in its early efforts to establish a purpose, identity and operating procedures. She helped establish and clarify the vision of the trust which has guided its success. She was a strong and effective chairman and spokesperson for the trust. Sue was a single mother, a full-time employee, a school board member, a member of the Executive Council of the Tennessee School Boards Association and a full time college student while she was serving as chairman of the UCT. She was a member of the DeKalb County Board of Education, one of the charter members of the trust.

WANDA LITTLE

Wanda Little was an administrative assistant at the Tennessee School Boards Association when the Unemployment Compensation Trust was established. She took a special interest in promoting the trust and traveled across the state as part of a team holding meetings to discuss benefits of membership in the trust. She attended trustee meetings and took minutes for several years as the trust was in its infancy. Her outgoing personality and positive attitude made her popular with trustees as well as the membership. She was largely responsible for influencing several boards to join the trust. She was committed to becoming a teacher and left to become a successful high school history teacher when she completed her education.

BILLY RAY VINSON

Billy Ray was one of the founding trustees who was instrumental in establishing the Unemployment Compensation Trust. He saw the trust as an excellent way to save school systems money and he also felt that the trust could promote good employment practices to help school boards reduce the number of employees who would draw unemployment. He promoted membership in the program, especially in West Tennessee where he was a longtime member of the Hardin County Board of Education. Billy Ray became President of the Tennessee School Boards Association and a member of the State Board of Education. He also served as President of the Southern Region School Boards Association.

MERLIN COHEN

Dr. Merlin Cohen was Chairman of the Unemployment Compensation Trust during the year that he served as President of the Tennessee School Boards Association. He was also simultaneously serving as Chairman of the Union City Board of Education. He was a strong supporter of the UCT and influential in helping the board of trustees to hang together and remain faithful to the vision.

CHARLES BRIDWELL

Charles Bridwell served as chairman of the UCT for 12 years. The trust thrived under his leadership and investments grew steadily. During the years that he served as chairman, he also chaired the Sullivan County Board of Education, one of the largest boards in Utrust. The trustees secured the services of an actuary, reduced premium rates and began to develop plans for distribution of dividends. He was an excellent leader and was well known and highly respected by school board members and superintendents across the state.

JIM MANSFIELD

Jim Mansfield was a strong and effective trustee who only spoke when he had something important to say. When he spoke, other trustees listened. Jim was a member and Chairman of the Warren County Board of Education

JIM NEELEY

As chairman of the Unemployment Compensation Trust, Jim Neeley led the board of trustees in refining investment policies which led to a period of excellent returns on invested reserves. He was recognized by other trustees as shrewd and politically astute. He was a member of the board of trustees when it funded the building of a board development and risk management center for the Tennessee School Boards Association. He was a long time member and chairman of the Huntingdon Board of Education. Jim Neeley later became the Tennessee Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development.

ROGER GREENE

Roger Greene served as chairman of the UCT for 12 years. During the time he chaired the trust, it experienced its most significant changes. The trustees declared a dividend in the latter years that he was chairman because the reserve reached \$15 million and investment returns were good. TSBA broke with the trust because its attorney opined that the UCT was owned by TSBA and that the funds could be used by the association for the benefit of all the boards in Tennessee- not just the members of UCT. He led the trustees in standing up to protect the assets of the trust and its member boards. The trust began to sponsor an annual member appreciation dinner instead of a breakfast. In the last year that he chaired the trust, reserves reached an all time high. The trust purchased its own offices for the first time and hired its first full time employee. Roger was a longtime Chairman of the Hamblen County Board of Education.

DAVID JONES

David Jones is the second longest serving trustee on the Unemployment Compensation Trust. As Chairman of the Hancock County Board of Education, he led his board in becoming a founding member of the trust. After he had served six years as a trustee, he became ineligible for reappointment because of term limits which were in effect at that time. He was the first trustee to be elected at-large by the entire membership of the trust. He has been invaluable to the trust in dealing with investment of reserves. David was chairman of the trust when the Employee Appreciation Program was instituted. Having been a former President of the Tennessee School Boards Association, he recognized the benefit to TSBA to have an affiliation to the UCT. He led the board of trustees in ensuring that trustees were professional and generous in dealing with TSBA.