



AUDIT EXPOSES \$76.6M IN PENSION BONUSES & \$44.2M IN BANKED HOURS AT SARASOTA SCHOOLS, PUTTING CHILDREN AND EMPLOYEES AT RISK; TAXPAYER GROUPS DEMAND CONTRACT NONRENEWALS & LEAVE CAPS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SARASOTA, FL — A forensic fiscal audit of Sarasota County School District public records (PR2026-913) and Florida Retirement System (FRS) data reveals that 253 retired school employees are collecting full salaries while building \$76.6 million in total pension cash bonuses. Property owners pay a mandatory 22.02% FRS surcharge—costing taxpayers \$4.67 million annually—while DROP participants pay 0% into the pension system. See this full list of Sarasota School TripleDippers at <https://tripledippers.org/>

In addition to pension bonuses, these school employees have banked 13,074 days off (\$5.6M liability). District-wide, over 3,800 employees hold more than 60 hours of banked time off, creating a \$44.2 million taxpayer liability. Meanwhile, over 85% of private-sector workers have no pension at all. Because all district personnel operate under standard 1-year annual contracts expiring June 30, taxpayer advocates are calling on the School Board to non-renew retired DROP pension bonus contracts to hire entry-level staff, cap banked leave at 60 hours, and direct savings toward property tax relief on the November 4, 2026 ballot.

Top 5 Sarasota School Pension Cash Bonus Recipients:

Rank	Employee Name	Title / Location	Salary	5-Yr Bonus	8-Yr Bonus
1	RONALD CORSO	Assistant Principal, North Port High	\$151,536	\$408,594	\$760,689
2	KAREN CRAMER	Teacher, Cranberry Elementary	\$125,100	\$438,150	\$700,800
3	VICTORIA STILLO-GROSS	ESE Facilitator, Early Learning	\$146,064	\$436,124	\$697,559
4	ERIKA FRANZ	Teacher, Tatum Ridge Elementary	\$124,343	\$420,770	\$673,002
5	KATHY WILKS	Assistant Principal, Riverview High	\$152,194	\$419,530	\$671,018

Top 5 Employees Hoarding Banked Leave Hours:

Rank	Employee Name	Title / Location	Salary	Hoarded Days	Hoarded Hours	Cashout Value
1	RICARDO BELLON	Teacher, Suncoast Technical College	\$108,592	325 Days	2,438 Hours	\$160,421
2	HENRY BLOCKER	12 Month Custodian, Wilkinson Elem.	\$58,733	280 Days	2,100 Hours	\$74,751
3	CHERYL STEELE	Teacher, Pine View School	\$115,382	280 Days	2,100 Hours	\$146,850
4	GAVIN THOMAS	Teacher, Sarasota High School	\$96,560	261 Days	1,958 Hours	\$114,556
5	DIANA ENCARNACION	Teacher, Venice Middle School	\$106,665	248 Days	1,860 Hours	\$120,240

Statement from Taxpayer Advocacy Leadership:

"Work-life balance is essential for mental health and family wellness. Encouraging staff to take earned time off protects school children and employees from critical mistakes caused by burnout. Cashing out hoarded hours at final, highest salaries is a massive taxpayer rip-off that artificially spikes last-year pay, boosting pension bonuses and lifetime payouts at the expense of local property owners—85% of whom have no pensions. Ending these bonus extensions and capping leave hoarding at 60 hours gives School, City and County Leaders savings needed to deliver property tax cuts on November 4."

— Dave Jaye, Chairman, Lee County Taxpayers Association; Lead Researcher, USATaxFighters.org



<https://TripleDippers.org> | <https://www.facebook.com/tripledippers>
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Key Policy Reforms Requested:

1. Non-Renew Retired Contracts: Allow 1-year contracts for DROP retirees to expire on June 30 to hire entry-level staff.
2. Cap Banked Leave at 60 Hours: Implement a private-sector standard to stop leave-hoarding liabilities and burnout.
3. Pay Leave at Rate Earned: Eliminate compensation spiking by calculating cashouts at the rate of pay when earned.

Stay tuned for investigative reports regarding the Lee County Port Authority, RSW, Lee County elected officials, the Lee County school district, fire districts, and municipal governments at <https://tripedippers.org/>

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