



Retired Public Employees Council of Washington

March 2004

www.rpecwa.org

Toll-Free: 1-800-562-6097

Direct: 360-352-8262

President's Message

By George Masten

We have a big year ahead!

Plans and efforts to make RPEC even stronger are taking shape. We've been busy and will get busier.

Growing our membership is a major goal – one that every RPEC member should be involved in. Our efforts to improve RPEC's visibility are working. The posters and articles described elsewhere in this newsletter are a major step forward in making more people aware of our existence.

Growing our influence is a goal. In an election year, organizations with money and volunteers get the attention of political candidates. We will be conducting and participating in candidate interviews, making endorsements in key races, giving money to candidates friendly to our cause, and offering volunteer services where possible. To have influence you have to have clout. Our political action program is designed to give us clout.

Growing our strength as an organization is a goal. Having more members and influence makes it essential that we have strong leaders. To do that our chapter leaders must receive training and support from the Council office. After chapter elections are done, our chapter leadership training will take place. We want to give chapter officers the tools they need to do a good job without spending undue amounts of time.

Our mission is to make RPEC a visible, dynamic force working for the interests of public-sector retirees. We hope you'll give just a little bit of your time to help us succeed.

Executive Director's Report – Bits and Pieces

By Cassandra de la Rosa

As this is written, the Legislature has not yet adjourned and a lot of business is unfinished. Here are some bits and pieces. The bill to provide a \$1,000 minimum benefit to the oldest and poorest retirees passed. The bill to give Plan 1 retirees their COLA in the year they turn age 66 rather than by July 1, is dead. We stopped an effort to repeal ESSB 5777 providing local government retirees access to an employer-sponsored group health plan, but won't be able to add gains to it. The House passed a bill authorizing some state agencies to buy prescription drugs from Canada. The Senate bottled the bill up in the Judiciary Committee, where it died. We'll give you a more comprehensive report on this and other legislation, along with a voting report card in the next newsletter.

RPEC EXECUTIVE BOARD

George Masten - President

Howard Jorgenson - Eastern WA. VP.

Ed Montermini - Western WA. VP.

Anne Matthews - Treasurer

Gail Spaeth - Secretary

Rowland Williams - District 1

Joe Brown - District 2

Don McKay - District 3

Tom Mitts - District 4

Bill Ayres - District 5

Larry Vogltanz - District 6

Wanda Riley - District 7

Jim Spangler - District 8

Gwen Rench - District 9

Charles Gelsleichter - District 9

RPEC COUNCIL

OFFICE STAFF

Cassandra de la Rosa - Executive Director

Cass@rpecwa.org

Linda Olson - Office Manager

Linda@rpecwa.org

Barbie Montermini - Accountant

Barbie@rpecwa.org

Derek VanSpor - Info Tech App Spec

Derek@rpecwa.org

Jean Kivi - Office Assistant

Jean@rpecwa.org

Our efforts to make RPEC more visible and provide more and better benefits to our members are progressing. If you have any questions about the "Hear in America" discount plan or the Combined Fund Drive, please let us know.

The new membership posters will be 11"x14" and have a tear off postage-paid reply card asking for information. These are intended for places where active employees will see and use them. We need help identifying good locations to put them. Each chapter president will receive a copy of the FTE News Magazine with the article on RPEC member Justine McGrath when the March copy comes out. Go to your chapter meeting to read it. It's great! We're counting on you to provide ideas for future articles, as we hope to have a column each month. Please call the Council office if you have questions, ideas or comments. We look forward to hearing from you.

In Memoriam – Kay Wood

We were all saddened at the death of Kay Wood, a graceful lady and tireless RPEC volunteer. She could always be counted on for a kind word, quick wit and countless hours organizing the P.E.O.P.L.E. table at annual conventions. The Council board authorized a \$100 donation to Hospice of Snohomish County in her memory.

Tom has been comforted by the outpouring of support and caring he has received from chapters and individuals. He asked us to convey heartfelt appreciation on behalf of himself, his son, daughter and grandsons for your kindness, the flowers and memorial donations.

Oh say can you speak?

Personal contact is one of the best means of getting the word out about RPEC. The Membership Committee is asking for volunteers willing to speak before union locals and other groups. Speakers will receive training and a presentation packet. Contact Jean at the Council office to have your name put on the list.

Improving RPEC Visibility

The Membership Committee has two more projects designed to improve RPEC visibility for recruitment. The first is an informational 11"x14" poster to be placed on bulletin boards where potential members work. The professionally-designed poster asks the question, "Now that you're retiring, who's looking after your interests?" It has a pad of tear-off postpaid cards that prospective retirees can fill out and mail in for more information.

The second project is a monthly column in the FTE News Magazine featuring an RPEC member or issue. FTE is a public-employee focused news magazine that is distributed free to all state agencies and many other worksites. It has a readership of thousands of public employees. The first column features Justine McGrath of Chapter 3. Copies will be sent to all chapter presidents as soon as the March issue is delivered.

Board Meeting Highlights

The RPEC executive board met February 10, 2004 in Olympia. A copy of the minutes has been sent to every chapter president. If you are interested in details, attend your chapter meeting. Here are a few highlights:

The treasurer's report stated that final expenses for the 2003 convention came in and were lower than expected. The lobbyist's contract has been changed to reflect the fact that he is not doing the political action training. This will be done by the Council.

Hugh Spitzer made an educational presentation on the Washington State Tax Structure Study. This is also called the Gates Report, since William Gates, Sr. was chair of the study committee. Mr. Spitzer donated his time to give the board and guests a snapshot of how our tax system developed and functions.

The board adopted recommendations from the legislative committee:

Support for HB 2405 and HB 2768 – keeping jobs created by state-funded contracts from being sent offshore;

Support for HB 2469 – allowing certain state agencies to purchase prescription drugs from Canada.

The board adopted recommendations from the political action committee:

Increase the monthly PAC contribution from \$1,000 to \$2,000 effective January 1, and to be reviewed at the end of the year;

RPEC involvement in key legislative races, including participating in candidate interviews with the Federation of State Employees;

RPEC involvement in key statewide races, such as governor, attorney general and insurance commissioner. The board voted to conduct a forum giving the gubernatorial candidates a chance to discuss their positions on issues of importance to public retirees. The forum would include the board and chapter presidents. Other chapter members could attend at their chapter or their own expense.

Lee McNatt was appointed to the legislative committee.

George Masten and Jim Lengenfelder were approved to attend the ARA regional conference in Las Vegas in late April.

The board directed that a letter be sent to AFSCME expressing concern at the timing and manner in which Howard Dean's endorsement was withdrawn.

Hear in America

Members received a brochure informing them of a new member benefit – a discount program for hearing aids. The Hear in America program paid for the mailing and RPEC receives nothing for the service. All benefits are passed on to members. Thanks to those who have called expressing appreciation for the new program.

Combined Fund Drive

The Combined Fund Drive (CFD) was formed so active employees could make charitable contributions of their choice through payroll deduction. Retirees are now being given the opportunity to do the same. You should soon receive a letter and brochure inviting you to participate. All costs of the printing and postage were paid by the CFD.

In exchange for our help in reaching retirees, the CFD will list RPEC as a new partner in an upcoming Retirement Outlook newsletter sent to all retirees by DRS.

Legislative Update

Status of bills as of March 3, 2004

HB 2538 - \$1000 minimum benefit - passed on 3/3/04, yeas, 45; nays, 0; absent, 0; excused, 4.

SB 6249 - smoothing corridor - passed on 3/3/04, yeas, 94; nays, 2; absent, 0; excused, 2.

HB 2985 - modification to ESSB 5777 - currently in second reading in Senate Rules, likely to move forward to full Senate vote.

HB 2539 - Age 66 COLA - stalled, no action.

HB 2469 - importing prescription drugs from Canada - stalled, no action.

OUR STRENGTH IS YOUR SECURITY!