



# Retired Public Employees Council of WA Chapter 12 – Tacoma Area Newsletter

*Carol Dotlich, President*

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## Chapter President's Message

I cannot begin to express my deep disappointment in the outcome of the PERS/TERS Plan 1 COLA in this last legislative session. I simply do not understand why it was not included in the final budget. Support for the measure was unanimous in the House of Representatives, and for that I am grateful. The rest is inexcusable in my view.

The hope is that we can get it passed next time around by redoubling our efforts. Please join me when meetings with legislators are scheduled for our Chapter. Without your presence and support, this issue will continue to disappoint.

I am happy that our Medicare subsidy took no loss. However, under our present circumstances, it should not have even been a thought in the minds of our legislators.

Please do your best to help with our legislative agenda! I am counting on you. We are all counting on you.

**June Chapter Meeting:** Please note that we will not meet on the second Wednesday this month, because I will be out of state. Our next membership meeting will be held virtually on ZOOM on Wednesday, June 23rd at noon. RPEC's new Legislative Committee Chair Debby Lippincott will be on hand to introduce herself and give us an update. In addition, Membership Coordinator Tara Jo Heinecke will provide some insight as to how the legislative budget process works. Prior to coming to work for RPEC, Tara Jo was the Legislative Assistant to Washington State Senator Karen Keiser.

## **Chapter 12 Virtual Membership Meeting**

**Wednesday – June 23, 2021**

**11:45 AM – 2:00 PM**

### **Guest Speakers**

**Debby Lippincott**  
**RPEC Legislative Committee Chair**  
**and**  
**Tara Jo Heinecke**  
**RPEC Membership Coordinator**

### **To join the meeting online by computer, tablet, or smartphone:**

Go to: [www.zoom.us/join](http://www.zoom.us/join)

Enter Meeting ID: **824 139 8737**

Enter Passcode: **941 284**

### **To participate by telephone:**

Dial: **1-253-215-8782**

Enter Meeting ID: **824 139 8737**

Enter Passcode: **941 284**

**WSLC Convention:** At the last Chapter 12 Membership Meeting, we approved three delegates to attend the virtual Washington State Labor Council Convention (WSLC). Our representatives are Celeste Sullin Burris, Audrey Ahrens, and Carol Dotlich. The Zoom Convention will occur July 21st-23rd. The resolution packages have not been sent out yet, so I have no report at this time as to the topics to be discussed.

**Resolution Sent to AFSCME International Union:** The statewide RPEC Executive Board met and forwarded a resolution to AFSCME International Union. The resolution deals with the fact that some of our retiree members who live overseas do not have access to the COVID vaccine. Some countries will only vaccinate their own citizens, and the U.S. embassies do not currently offer vaccines to these members. Our resolution seeks to remedy this problem.

**Member Recruitment Incentive Program:** RPEC of Washington has 11,171 members at present, and we are looking for more. There is political power in our numbers. The Gimme 5 recruitment incentive program is ongoing through December 31, 2021. If you recruit 5 dues-paying members in 2021, there is a \$100 prize waiting for you! Prospective members now have the option to join online via the RPEC website. Be sure that the person lists your name at the bottom of the form on the "Recruited By" line, to make sure you get credit for the recruitment. To locate the membership form, go to: <https://rpecwa.org/join-rpec/>

**It is Never Too Late!** Time magazine recently reported that Cecil Lockhart died on May 4 at the age of 95. Lockhart's liver was later donated to a woman in her 60's, making him the oldest organ donor in U.S. history.

**Member Only Benefits:** A new section has been added to the RPEC website with information on resources available to our members. Please visit the link below for details on the many discounts available to retirees and their family members, such as hearing and dental services, the AFSCME Free College benefits, and the Foundation for Working Families relief program for members in need. Go to: <https://rpecwa.org/member-only-benefits/> or <https://www.afscme.org/member-resources/afscme-advantage>

### **RPEC Executive Director's Report**

**In Person Meetings:** If your Chapter is considering in-person meetings, make sure you understand and follow the local health agency guidance and/or State guidance for gatherings.

**Final State Budget Update:** On the evening of Sunday April 25th, the Legislature voted to approve the final negotiated 2021-2023 budget. It included a strong measure to address the capital gains tax loophole while exempting retirement accounts, residential property, and small businesses. The success of this near decade long effort to enact a capital gains tax is due in no small part to the work of members like you. Together with our allies, we have taken a big step towards fixing the state's upside-down tax code.

The budget will also keep the PEBB monthly Medicare benefit at its current level. This is a tremendous victory given there was genuine concern about losing this important benefit entirely. Unfortunately, the proposal to provide a one-time increase to Plan 1 retirees did not survive the budget negotiation process. This is especially frustrating given the modest nature of the increase which was capped at \$22 per month and the fact that it was included in the house budget with unanimous support.

In the coming days and weeks, we will be putting together more information and having discussions about where we go from here on the Plan 1 COLA issue. Our sincerest appreciation to those who called, emailed, testified, and otherwise made their voices heard during this Legislative session.

**Online Membership Application:** We have updated the “Join RPEC” page on our website to provide the option for new members to sign up for dues deduction or payment via credit card. Please encourage any fellow retirees to utilize this new convenient and secure option to sign up today.

Make sure they list your name in the “Recruited By” field so you can be entered into our membership recruitment rewards program.

**State Legislative Update:** RPEC Leaders are encouraged to schedule meetings with their members and the Legislators in their area. Meetings during the Legislative interim are vital to ensuring retiree issues are addressed during the upcoming session.

2022 will present our members with the opportunity to secure a substantial and consistent COLA for Plan 1, address Medical and Prescription affordability, and build on the recent efforts to balance the upside-down tax code.

The discussions our members have between now and January will pay dividends next year. Specific talking points and opportunities to connect with Legislators will be shared as they become available.

**Please join us on the 1st Wednesday of each month for a Zoom meeting on our Legislative priorities and activities during the interim.**

**To join the meeting via computer or tablet go to: <https://zoom.us/join>**

Enter the Meeting ID: **828 6634 6713**

Enter Passcode: **205 507**

**To join the meeting via telephone:**

Dial: **1-253-215-8782**

Enter Meeting ID: **828 6634 6713**

Enter Passcode: **205 507**

**Leadership Training Reminder:** Our virtual Leadership Training will be on Monday, June 14th from 10 AM -Noon. Materials and meeting login information will be sent to

attendees in early June via email and USPS.

**Action Item: Tell Congress to Repeal GPO/WEP:** The Government Pension Offset (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) have been unfairly impacting the Social Security benefits of some public service retirees for decades. Because of GPO-WEP, 25% of public sector retirees see cuts to their Social Security due to other earnings or pensions. Some retirees have even had their Social Security benefits cut to zero. AFSCME & RPEC have consistently pushed for the repeal of these harmful provisions.

A recently introduced bi-partisan proposal called the Social Security Fairness Act (S. 1302, H.R. 82) would fully repeal both the GPO and WEP. Please contact your member of Congress to ask that they support this important proposal.

**DRS- Public Records Request:**

We have been informed of a public records request to DRS from a group called American

Transparency, which operates a website called openthebooks.com. The group has routinely made these requests every few years. Their purpose appears to be a creation of a database of retirees and active employees nationally, and they have received data from many states. Their agenda appears to be promoting the idea that salaries and pensions for public sector folks are somehow grandiose or wasteful of tax payers' dollars.

We understand our members may have concerns about the information being released but under current law this information is public record. We will be monitoring how the group uses this information and evaluate any next steps we can take to protect the interests of our members. **It is important to note that contact information is not included in this request and cannot be released.**

**Chapter 12 Events/Meetings**

June 23, 2021	Chapter 12 Virtual Membership Meeting
September 8, 2021	Chapter 12 Virtual Membership Meeting
October 13, 2021	Chapter 12 Virtual Membership Meeting
November 10, 2021	Chapter 12 Virtual Membership Meeting
December 8, 2021	Chapter 12 Virtual Membership Meeting

**Important Dates- Statewide RPEC Events/Meetings**

June 7, 2021	RPEC Political Action Committee Meeting
June 14, 2021	RPEC Leadership Training
June 18, 2021	RPEC Legislative Committee Meeting
July 27, 2021	RPEC Membership Committee Meeting
August 16, 2021	RPEC Finance Committee Meeting
August 25, 2021	RPEC Executive Board Meeting
October 28, 2021	RPEC Membership Committee
November 8, 2021	RPEC Finance Committee Meeting
November 15, 2021	RPEC Executive Board Meeting

\*Statewide meetings will be held virtually until it is safe to resume meeting in-person. For details about meeting times and how to join the meeting, call the RPEC office at 1-800-562-6097 or view the calendar on the RPEC website at: <https://rpecwa.org/calendar-3/>

-James Cockburn, RPEC Executive Director