



Retired Public Employees Council Chapter 20 – Cowlitz/Wahkiakum County Area

Judy DeVoe, President
(360) 261-2780 ~ judyjod@aol.com

Dear Fellow Chapter 20 Members,

Please join us for our June meeting as we celebrate the reopening of our state. We will be meeting in-person for the first time in 15 months!

We will be holding a “hybrid” meeting, meaning you can join the meeting in several ways. You can attend in-person, or join us online using your computer, smartphone, or tablet, or you can join us using a regular old-fashioned telephone.

I am looking forward to seeing and or hearing from you on June 15th!

In Solidarity,

Judy DeVoe, Chapter 20 President
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judyjod@aol.com

It is Never Too Late! Time magazine recently reported that Cecil Lockhart died on May 4, 2021, 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.

RPEC Chapter 20 **Membership Meeting**

Tuesday – June 15, 2021 at 1:00 PM

Guest Speaker

Ruth Kendell
Longview City Councilmember

To attend the meeting in-person:

Longview Country Club
41 Country Club Drive
Longview, WA 98632

Note: Come early if you would like to join us for a no-host lunch!

To join the meeting online, click on:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84561722987?pwd=Z1djTUJWampSellnMXZ5YXk0VWRodz09>

Or go to: www.zoom.us/join
Enter Meeting ID: 845 6172 2987
Enter Passcode: 954782

To join the meeting by telephone:

Dial: 1-253-215-8782
Enter Meeting ID: 845 6172 2987
Enter Passcode: 954782

Be sure to check it out, there may well be benefits and discounts that could be of interest to you! For more info go to:

<https://rpecwa.org/member-only-benefits/> or
<https://www.afscme.org/member-resources/afscme-advantage>

How Big Will the Raise for Social Security Recipients Be in 2022? The Social Security cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) are announced annually and helps offset your loss of purchasing power due to inflation. The cost-of-living adjustment for Social Security could be the largest in over a decade. For the nearly 70 million people receiving Social Security benefits, this may help offset higher costs of items needed to survive during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Social Security COLA for the following year is generally announced in October and is based on current inflation. The Social Security COLA was just 1.3% in 2021, but benefits could increase by 4.7% next year. This would be the most significant Social Security cost-of-living adjustment since 2009 when there was an astounding 5.8% Social Security COLA. Before you start planning on spending your larger Social Security benefit, keep in mind there are several more months of data that could change the eventual Social Security COLA for 2022.

In 2021, the average Social Security benefit was just \$1,543 per month, and the maximum benefit was \$3,148 per month at full retirement age in 2021. The full retirement age is 66 if you were born from 1943 to 1954. The full retirement age increases gradually if you were born from 1955 to 1960 until it reaches 67. For anyone born 1960 or later, full retirement benefits are payable at age 67.

As the economy sprints out of the coronavirus recession, it is expected that inflation will lead to a larger Social Security COLA than we have seen in quite some time. Each year, the Social Security Administration (SSA) bases the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) increase on the Department of Labor's consumer price index (CPI) for urban wage earners and clerical workers. The CPI is meant to be used as a measure of inflation.

More Social Security Taxes Coming in 2022? For those of you still working and earning an income, you will likely also see an increase in the income subject to Social Security taxes in 2022. This year, your first \$142,800 of earned income will get hit with Social Security payroll taxes for 2021. It is too early to know whether this number will increase again in 2022. President Biden ran on adding new Social Security taxes for earned incomes above \$400,000. Time will tell if this is implemented in 2022 and if the additional taxes will also translate into potentially larger Social Security benefits for retirees.

Inslee Announces Vaccination Incentives: Governor Jay Inslee recently announced a suite of new incentives to help encourage unvaccinated Washingtonians to get the COVID shot. The Washington State Lottery will be conducting a "Shot of a Lifetime" giveaway series during the month of June, working with state agencies, technology

companies, sports teams, and higher education institutions across the state to offer a myriad of different prizes to vaccinated individuals.

This includes people who have been vaccinated in Washington, regardless of when. The incentives are not just for new vaccinations. Vaccinated Washingtonians do not need to do anything to be entered in the four drawings. The Lottery will automatically gather names from the DOH statewide immunization database.

The incentives include:

- Lottery cash drawings, with prizes totaling \$2 million. The Lottery will conduct one drawing for \$250,000 every week for four weeks for all vaccinated individuals. At the end of the four weeks, there will be a final drawing for a \$1 million prize.
- Higher education tuition and expense assistance
- Sports tickets and gear
- Gift cards
- Airline Tickets
- Game Systems and smart speakers

According to the most recent data from the state Department of Health (DOH), approximately 63% of Washingtonians 16 years and older have initiated their vaccinations. The state hopes that the incentives will entice unvaccinated people to initiate their vaccinations and raise the statewide rate to save more lives and protect more people.

Washington is set to reopen fully on June 30, or when the percentage of eligible adults who have initiated vaccination reaches 70%, whichever comes first.

RPEC Executive Director's Report

If your Chapter is considering in-person meetings, make sure you understand and follow the local health agency guidance and/or State guidance.

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 online 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

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.

Sincerely,



James Cockburn
RPEC Executive Director

RPEC Chapter 28 Events/Meetings

June 15, 2021 – Chapter 20 Membership Meeting
September 21, 2021 – Chapter 20 Membership Meeting
October 19, 2021 – Chapter 20 Membership Meeting
November 16, 2021 – Chapter 20 Membership Meeting

Important Dates – RPEC Statewide Meetings & Events

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 20, 2021– RPEC Membership Committee
November 8, 2021 – RPEC Finance Committee Meeting
November 15, 2021 – RPEC Executive Board Meeting

Meetings will take place virtually until such time as it is safe to meet 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/>