



**Retired Public Employees Council**  
**Chapter 24 – Mason County**  
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“Our mission is to unite retired public employees for their mutual welfare.”

Dear Chapter 24 Members,

This is the first newsletter you've received since February 2022! Not having a monthly chapter newsletter is one symptom of a chapter in danger of disappearing. Were that to happen, chapter membership would be transferred to chapters “nearby”; Grays Harbor, Olympia Chapter, etc., and chapter funds would revert to the Council. As your District Representative to the Executive Board of the Council, I am committed, with lots of help from others, to restoring Chapter 24 to good health. That means it has elected officers, meetings and social events, and reliable dissemination of information about threats or improvements to your retirement security.

I chose to give you the bad news first, though there IS good news!

First, a handful of chapter members met on August 26 to discuss how to revitalize the chapter. If you want to be involved in helping the chapter, please contact me.

Second, our new Executive Director is Laurie Weidner, and she's amazing! RPEC discovered in June that there was a planned vote of the Public Employees Benefit Board (PEBB) to cancel (for retirees only) the Uniform Medical Plan (UMP) effective January 1, 2024. This plan was distressing to many RPEC members statewide. In an absolute first, the people and processes coordinated and implemented by Laurie have, at least for now, stopped the plan to terminate UMP. The balance of this newsletter is Laurie's report on the actions RPEC leaders and members, and our partner organizations, took that led to blocking the vote that would have been the death knell of this popular Medicare Program. Whether the UMP termination plan would have directly affected you or not, this unprecedented stoppage of a state agency's one-sided decision is historic. Please take the time to read Laurie's report.

## Executive Director's Report

Dear RPEC Members:

This is a busy season for our organization. Here's a recap of our key activities and news.

### Public Employees' Benefits Board (PEBB) update

Last month, I reported about our collective landslide victory to stop the vote on a resolution that would have eliminated the UMP Classic Medicare plan for more than 53,000 state retirees. This achievement and our work going forward with PEBB is significant for all RPEC members – regardless of whether this personally impacts you. And here's why ... Traditional Medicare (government, self-insured Medicare plans) are under attack here in Washington and at the federal level. If this resolution had succeeded, it would have limited health care plan choice and eliminated the only government self-insured comprehensive plan available in Washington for state retirees.

RPEC opposes the privatization of Medicare. We will continue to fight to keep traditional Medicare options available to all retirees. Having health care choices and preserving Medicare are key legislative priorities for RPEC and all Plan 1, 2 and 3 members.

#### RPEC's Opposition Campaign Results

- More than 100 emails from RPEC & the PEBB Medicare Coalition to the Health Care Authority and PEBB
- Meetings with the Governor's staff and key legislators
- More than 300 retirees protesting at the virtual meeting on June 30
- Front-page story in the *Olympian*
- Leadership of the PEBB Medicare Coalition that will shape the state's first health care listening sessions with retirees to inform future health care plan choices

Here are a few highlights of our recent achievements and the work we have underway:

- **Expand the PEBB Medicare Coalition:** RPEC created and is leading a coalition of partners around the state who stand with us in opposing the privatization of Medicare. The coalition includes: the Washington Education Association-Retired (WEA-R), Washington State Senior Citizen's Lobby, Washington State Labor Council, Washington Federation of State Employees (AFSCME Council 28), American Federation of Teachers-Washington (AFT-WA and AFT-WA Retired), Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action (PSARA), Healthcare Is A Human Right, Social Security Works Washington, and the Washington State Alliance of Retired Americans (WSARA). We aim to expand the coalition to include additional partners. If you have suggestions, please email me at [laurie.weidner@rpecwa.org](mailto:laurie.weidner@rpecwa.org).
- **Co-construct public engagement opportunities:** Through our leadership of the PEBB Medicare Coalition, we are convening discussions with Health Care Authority (HCA) staff about a transparent public engagement process to inform health care plan choices for retirees. We envision working collaboratively with HCA staff to co-construct listening sessions with our members. We have also requested that PEBB hold additional public forums, which we hope to help shape. The public forums will give retirees opportunities to speak to the features of the UMP Classic Medicare Plan that they value most, describe the features they want/need in health care plans, and address concerns about the privatized options that are currently available.
- **Unanimous passage of a WSLC Resolution:** RPEC, in concert with the PEBB Medicare Coalition, crafted a resolution for consideration at last month's Washington State Labor Council (WSLC) Constitutional Convention. The resolution called for labor partners to join with us in our efforts to sustain the UMP Classic Medicare Plan, oppose the privatization of Medicare, and urge the state to explore the availability of more government self-insured health care options. RPEC President Kandy Kraig led the discussion before the assembly about the resolution's merit and importance to state retirees. Members of the PEBB Medicare Coalition joined President Kraig by speaking in favor of the resolution. The resolution passed unanimously on July 21, 2022.

### **OIC Credit Score Ruling update**

On July 29<sup>th</sup>, the Thurston County Superior Court overturned a ruling by the Office of the Insurance Commission (OIC) that would have prohibited insurance companies from using credit scores to set premium rates for auto, home, life, and renter's insurance policies. This ruling would have adversely impacted seniors who often have high credit scores, and therefore benefit from lower insurance premiums calculated using credit scores. At the May Executive Board meeting, the Board approved a resolution, submitted by Chapter 13, opposing this ruling.

President Kandy Kraig, RPEC member Nancy Heley and I will be meeting with OIC staff this month. We plan to discuss a wide range of topics including this ruling, our position, and whether OIC will seek an appeal.

### **Membership at a 20-year high**

The response to our annual statewide new member mailing was significant, and now RPEC's membership is at a 20-year high. All chapters have received their new member lists. Please take the time to call or email your new members to welcome them to your chapter and RPEC.

### **Monthly Leadership Call – August 19**

With the influx of new members joining RPEC this summer, the August Monthly Leadership Call will focus on cultivating new members to be more active in chapter activities. The Zoom link and other details are available on the Council calendar at [www.rpecwa.org](http://www.rpecwa.org).

### **Free annual RPEC membership**

Members around the state are beginning to recruit former co-workers and friends to join RPEC through the Recruit 2 member-to-member campaign. Since this membership campaign kicked off in May, 11 new members have joined the organization. Susan Herring, Ch 2, and RPEC Treasurer Clair Olivers, Ch 6, have each recruited two new members since May. Ch 2 leads the recruiting effort with four new members, but Ch 6 and Ch 16 are close behind. How many new members can your chapter recruit?

For every two new members you recruit, you will receive a check for \$84! To get credit, your name must appear in the "Recruited by" field on the new members' membership applications. Associate members do not count until they become full dues-paying members. Checks will only be issued to current members in good standing. If you recruit just two new members, your annual membership in RPEC will be free for a year!

### **Convention update**

All amendments and resolutions for Convention are due to the Council Office on or before August 13<sup>th</sup>. Please email them to Derek VanSpoor at [derek.vanspoor@rpecwa.org](mailto:derek.vanspoor@rpecwa.org).

### **PAC fund-raiser**

RPEC will host a fund-raiser at Convention, September 27-29, to bolster contributions to our Political Action Committee (PAC). Chapters and individual members are encouraged to donate items, from original artwork and one-of-a-kind items to excursions, experiences, and gift baskets. All proceeds support the PAC for campaign contributions to endorsed state and federal candidates. Please inform your chapter president if you have items to donate. Every chapter is responsible for transporting their donated items to the Convention in Wenatchee.

### **WSLC Adopts Permanent Plan 1 COLA resolution**

At the Washington State Labor Council (WSLC) Constitutional Convention in July, the assembly voted unanimously to support our resolution calling for a permanent Cost of Living (COLA) adjustment for Plan 1 retirees. President Kandy Kraig introduced the resolution, emphasizing that a permanent COLA is vital to the financial security of Plan 1 retirees.

### **Happy birthday, Medicare!**

On July 30, Medicare and Medicaid celebrated their 57<sup>th</sup> birthdays. Strengthening and protecting Medicare are among RPEC's top legislative priorities. Our work with PEBB and our advocacy efforts to

oppose the privatization of Medicare are two of the ways that RPEC is currently fighting to protect health care affordability for all members.

### **AFSCME Free Online College Benefit Suspended For Now**

We have been notified by the AFSCME Retiree Council that the Free College benefit, afforded to AFSCME Retiree Council chapters including RPEC, has been challenged by the U.S. Department of Education. AFSCME will continue to urge the Department to support the continuation of this program.

In the meantime, the U.S. Department of Education has confirmed that the Free College partners (Eastern Gateway Community College and Central State University) may continue to enroll new and existing students for the fall semester. New and continuing students should contact these institutions about their enrollment status. If you have questions, please contact the AFSCME Retiree Council at [www.afscme.org/about/retirees](http://www.afscme.org/about/retirees).

### **Important Dates**

Visit the RPEC website at [www.rpecwa.org](http://www.rpecwa.org) for a full calendar of Council and chapter events and meetings. All meetings noted are virtual via Zoom except for Convention.

**Sept. 23:** Legislative Committee meeting

**Sept 27-29:** RPEC Convention (in-person, Wenatchee)

**Oct. 5:** Monthly Legislative Update Call

**Oct. 21:** Monthly Leadership Call (chapter leaders and all those interested)

**Oct. 24:** Finance Committee meeting

**Oct 27:** Membership Committee meeting

**Oct. 28:** Legislative Committee meeting

**Nov.14:** Executive Board meeting

Best,  
Laurie