



Retired Public Employees Council Chapter 11 – Walla Walla County

Barry Jenkins, President

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Meeting Date: Tuesday, June 13th, 2023
Meeting Time: 11:30 AM
Meeting Place: Pioneer Park
Meeting Address: Whitman Dr & Fern St, Walla Walla, WA 99362

Summer greetings from your Walla Walla Chapter of the Retired Public Employees Council.

To celebrate the beginning of summer in Walla Walla, you are invited to join your fellow retirees at our RPEC picnic on **TUESDAY, JUNE 13th starting at 11:30 AM. As we did last June, we will gather at Pioneer Park at the shelter next to the duck pond on the Whitman Dr. side of the park across from the Fern St. intersection.** This will be a social gathering rather than a formal meeting, so come for the food and the fun. The chapter will provide chicken, water, and disposable eating ware. Please bring a potluck side dish and a chair of your own if you wish. Spouses, significant others, and prospective members are welcome and encouraged to attend, but **please RSVP to Barry by June 11th.**

Last month we had our final meeting until September. Our new officers were sworn in and we had an informative presentation by Sean Myers from Baker Boyer Bank who talked to us about fraud prevention. We welcome suggestions for speakers and programs for our upcoming autumn meetings.

Don't forget to invite other retired public employees that you know. If you get two friends to sign up, you can receive an \$84 check from the council (free dues for a year)! Make sure your name is included in the "Recruited by" section. There is no limit on how many members one person can recruit or on the number of times the \$84 reward can be granted.

Questions? Call President Barry Jenkins at (509) 529-6372.

June 2023 Executive Director's Report

Dear RPEC Members:

While our work advocating for members' priorities never stops and is truly year-round, the late spring is the time when we refresh our interim legislative session advocacy plan, invest time to deepen relationships with legislators, craft and implement our strategy with the Select Committee on Pension Policy (SCPP) and the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB), and cultivate new RPEC champions, both at a local and state level, as candidates launch their campaigns for the 2024 election season. Let's roll up our sleeves and get to work!

Based on the initial responses from our all-member written survey, Plans 2/3 members have expressed great interest in working on federal issues impacting retirement security. To that end, my

monthly letter and the weekly Newsflash emails will be carrying more information on these subjects. Stay tuned!

Federal Relations Update

Debt ceiling

Thank you for taking the time to call members of the Washington congressional delegation about the need to remedy the debt ceiling stalemate. As you know, the call to action came at the request of the AFSCME Retiree Council and we stand in solidarity with our labor siblings on this important piece of legislation. At the time of this publication, the House had approved the compromise bill with the Senate vote to follow the week of June 5. RPEC urged our members to weigh in, so that Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid payments would not be impacted, nor vital services administered locally to seniors, that are entirely or partially federally funded.

HB 82 & S 597 – Social Security Fairness Act

AFSCME Retiree Council has been working tirelessly to broaden the scope of congressional cosponsors for these companion bills. These bills repeal provisions that reduce Social Security benefits for individuals who receive pensions from state and local governments, eliminate the government pension offset (which reduces the benefits for spouses, widows and widowers who receive government pensions of their own), and eliminate the windfall elimination provision, which in some cases reduces benefits for those who receive a pension from an employer who did not withhold Social Security taxes. Several of our House members and one of our US senators have not yet signed on in support. RPEC will work this summer to ensure that happens!

Speakers' Series

Stay tuned for more details about RPEC's new Speakers' Series, which will kick off in August with a member of the Washington congressional delegation. Details to follow. More information will be available in my July all-member letter and the weekly Newsflash emails.

State relations & advocacy

Healthcare

This past legislative session, RPEC worked to support the successful passage of several key healthcare-related bills that will take effect on July 23.

[SSB 5490](#) is an important bill for any RPEC member who lost access to Public Employees' Benefits Board (PEBB) healthcare coverage for failing to notify the Health Care Authority (HCA) of their intent to defer benefits and filed an appeal. The HCA anticipates that the bill will only impact about 100-120 retirees given the eligibility requirements outlined in the bill. HCA will be providing RPEC with details soon to help our members determine if they are eligible and the steps to take to initiate PEBB healthcare coverage. Details will also be available on the HCA website in July.

[SB 5421](#), an agency request bill initiated by the HCA, protects the confidential information that healthcare plan enrollees submit during open enrollment from inclusion in public records requests.

As more information is available, it will be shared through the weekly Newsflash emails with all members.

One-time COLA for PERS 1/TRS 1

Through our successful advocacy of SB 5350, RPEC members vested in Plan 1 will receive a one-time 3% cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) next month. The COLA is capped at \$110 per month.

Health Care Authority (HCA)

Online FAQ now available

Many thanks to all RPEC members who took part in the Health Care Authority's (HCA) listening sessions and public forums. All told, about 176 retirees, many of whom were RPEC members, joined the conversation to provide insights to HCA staff. As a follow-up to those meetings, the HCA crafted a frequently asked question (FAQ) document, drawn from the questions asked by retirees during these sessions. The FAQ also addresses myths that surfaced during the stakeholder engagements. The FAQ is hard to find on the HCA's new website – www.hca.wa.gov. After accessing the main homepage, find the [Employee & Retiree Benefits Page](#). Once you arrive on that page, access [Retiree Engagement](#). The questions are found at the bottom of that page.

Agency launches new online portal - Benefits 24/7

The HCA will launch a new online benefits portal on June 12th. I met with HCA leaders recently and suggested that they offer a webinar for retirees on how to navigate the new portal and to preview its features. They agreed! More details to follow. In the meantime, RPEC members who obtain their healthcare insurance through PEBB can read more about [Benefits 24/7](#) in HCA's PEBB Program May newsletter. HCA staff say the portal will make it easier for retirees to apply for and change benefits during open enrollment. Paper forms will remain available for those who cannot access the portal or choose not to use it.

Monthly Legislative Update Calls Extend through December

The Legislative Update Calls will be held monthly through December. The next call will take place on June 2nd from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. Visit www.rpecwa.org for the login information.

Upcoming events

Visit www.rpecwa.org for a full calendar of Council Office and chapter meetings:

June 16: Monthly Leadership Call, 1:00 PM

June 20: RPEC Select Committee on Pension Policy Meeting, 10:00 AM

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June 22: Healthcare Workgroup Meeting, 3:30 PM

June 23: Pension Policy Workgroup Meeting, 10:00 AM

June 26: Leadership Training Part A, 10:00 AM

June 29: Public Employees Benefits Board Meeting, 9:00 AM

June 30: Leadership Training Part B, 10:00 AM

Best,
Laurie