



Retired Public Employees Council

Chapter 21 – Tri-Cities Area

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opeiu8/aflcio

Meeting Date: Tuesday, July 26, 2022
Meeting Time: Lunch: 11:30 AM – Meeting: 1:00 PM
Meeting Place: Pasco IHOP
Meeting Address: 5015 N Rd 68, Pasco, WA 99301

Dear Fellow Chapter 21 Members,

Our Guest Speakers for the June 28 meeting were Crystal Bednarski and Edith Ramirez, employees with My Friends' Place. This is a Homeless Teen Shelter and 24 Hour Drop-In Center that provides shelter and support services for Homeless and At Risk youth - teens between 13 and 17 coming from broken homes.

This program offers bedding, meals, clothing, showers, hygiene products, laundry facilities, and individualized case management service. The Cognitive-behavioral program provides individualized mental health assistance with music, sports, and curricular activities and thus addresses many of the challenges that teens go through in this stage of life. Clearly, there was much interest in this presentation, based on the number of questions. More details are captured in the Minutes, also included in this newsletter.

This meeting was held at the International House of Pancakes (IHOP) at 5015 North Road 68 in Pasco. Members started arriving around 11:30 AM onward so they could buy lunch and enjoy the eat, meet, and greet, before the business meeting started at 1:00 PM. At the end of the meeting, there was a drawing for a \$25 gift card and the lucky person was pleasantly surprised. You could be that lucky person if you join us at our next meeting.

Our Guest Speaker for the July 26 meeting will be Clint Whitney, Energy Services Director for the City of Richland. His topic will be Data Analytics – Finding Stories Within Data.



Clint Whitney is the Energy Services Director at the City of Richland and responsible for the municipal electric utility department which includes 60 employees and a \$80M annual budget.

He has a Bachelor of Science degree in electrical engineering (WSU '91), Master of Business Administration (WSU '18) and is a licensed professional engineer in Washington.

We look forward to the RPEC State Convention to be held in person this year for the first time in a few years. It will be in Wenatchee on September 22-29. We have eight delegates who have signed up to attend this convention.

RPEC is the only organization in the State that represents retirees on the Select Committee on Pension Policy (SCPP), the Washington State Investment Board (WSIB), the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB), the Health Care is a Human Right Coalition, and at the federal level, with lobbyists working to protect Social Security and Medicare.

If you have comments or suggestions, please contact me at 253-370-9899 or rarego1213@gmail.com.

In Solidarity,

Robin Rego, RPEC Chapter 21 President

Executive Director's Report

Our pace quickens in the Council Office, as we dive deeply into the logistics associated with the Political Action Committee (PAC), work to expand relationships to increase the visibility of RPEC and the value of membership and address the many moving parts that come together to ensure a successful Convention. Here's a round-up of our latest news:

Free annual RPEC membership

June marks the kick-off of Recruit 2, Get Your Dues, a member-to-member recruitment campaign. 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 essentially free for a year! The chapter that recruits the most new members per capita, and the top-performing member-to-member recruiters will be highlighted in the Executive Director's Monthly Letter and the quarterly newsletter. How many new members can you and your chapter recruit to join RPEC?

Leadership Calls

Council staff will be leading monthly Leadership Calls for all chapter leaders and anyone interested in learning more about chapter leadership. The schedule of topics for the monthly Leadership Calls will be provided at the June training sessions, promoted through the events calendar on the website at www.rpecwa.org and promoted through my monthly letter to chapter leaders. The summer Leadership Calls will be held on July 22 and August 19.

PAC individual contributions reach new record high

Through your resounding support for our PAC, individual member contributions have nearly tripled this month. Thank you for stepping forward and providing pension deductions and individual cash contributions. Soon, the PAC will be meeting to disburse the funds to worthy candidates. The funds are especially critical now due to the impending primary election on August 2, and many pivotal races in both chambers. With your help, RPEC's funds will support candidates who prioritize our issues.

PAC endorsements

The PAC finalized the list of early endorsements of incumbents and has sent candidate questionnaires to those who we have not previously endorsed. We have consulted with our lobbyist for insights on the most critical races to help inform final endorsements and the distribution of PAC contributions leading into the primary election on August 2. In addition, this month, PAC and Council leaders will also be interviewing the candidates for Secretary of State to identify endorsements. The full list of endorsements will appear in the summer edition of the Council membership newsletter, which will be published in early July.

Are you a policy wonk? Do you enjoy following the political landscape in Washington? If so, there are and will be many opportunities for you to volunteer your time during campaign season. One of the most immediate ways you can get involved is to conduct candidate interviews that will be coordinated by Council staff. Chapters that are interested in conducting candidate interviews in local legislative races should contact Emmett Mills at emmett.mills@rpecwa.org as soon as possible.

In addition, candidates running for state offices always need help with their campaigns. Volunteering is a great way to introduce those running for office for the first time to RPEC and our legislative priorities. Claude Burfect, District 9 representative, will be sharing best practices for candidate relationship-building on the July 6 Monthly Legislative Call. If you're not available to volunteer now, there will be opportunities in mid-July to participate in phone banking organized by WFSE/Council 28 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). Scripts are provided and all calls will be made to union members to inform them about key races and endorsed candidates. If you have interest in getting involved, reach out to your chapter president. More details to follow.

ACO REACH – help us learn more to inform legislative action

Over the past few months, members and Council staff have been hearing and learning about ACO REACH, a federal program under the auspices of the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation. Under this program, groups or coalitions of medical providers coordinate care, take on different levels of financial risk, in return for the ability to provide beneficiaries (retirees) with enhanced benefits. The goal and ultimate test of the model, from the retiree perspective, is whether this new arrangement can improve the quality of care, especially for those with complex care needs. The program was recently revamped by the Biden Administration to remove concerning features added by the previous administration. ACOs (Accountable Care Organizations) began under the Obama administration. The program is being piloted through December 2026.

As an affiliate of the AFSCME Retirees, RPEC relies on AFSCME Retirees to provide counsel and support regarding our federal relations priorities. Ann Widger, AFSCME Retirees Director, participated in the Special Executive Board, held on May 26, to provide more information and answer questions. To date, many national unions are monitoring the program and have not taken a formal position. Some local retiree organizations have signed on to letters opposing the program.

The Board approved the motion below, calling upon staff to undertake additional research that will be shared with the Legislative Committee for the development of a letter to policy makers that articulates the concerns and issues of our members. We also anticipate teaming with AFSCME Retirees on our next steps.

Some of our members have already received information about ACOs and ACO REACH through their medical providers. Members from Chapters 13 and 27 have provided us with samples of the kinds of brochures, fact sheets and letters they are receiving.

Have you received information from your medical provider about ACO REACH? We would appreciate receiving a copy of the materials you have received. What are your concerns about the proposed program and the materials you have received? We want to hear from you to inform our next steps. Email me at me: laurie.weidner@rpecwa.org.

Executive Board Motion:

M/S/C: The Committee recommends the Executive Board adopt the following position: RPEC follow the counsel of AFSCME Retirees and will monitor this issue with the intent of crafting our own communication to the Congressional delegation focused on the specific concerns of our members. Staff, in concert with the Executive Committee, will broaden education of and outreach to members about this program. Staff, in concert with the Executive Board and chapter leaders, will gather more information from other partner organizations and examples of materials being sent to members. This information will be used to craft our own communication to the Congressional delegation that will outline member concerns aligned with our federal policy priorities.

Welcome to Tracy Cooper

Tracy Cooper joined our team as a temporary Administrative Assistant. She replaces Kelly Houck, who accepted an exciting new opportunity with the WA Department of Ecology in Lacey. Tracy will continue with us while we search for a permanent candidate.

Nominees sought for Norm Schut Award

Please send in your nominations for the Norm Schut Award. The award is given to a member in good standing who has provided exceptional service to RPEC. Nominations are due in writing to the Council Office no later than August 5. The awardee will be chosen by secret ballot by the Executive Board at the August 24 meeting. If you have questions, please call the Council Office.

Important Dates

Visit the RPEC website at www.rpecwa.org for a full calendar of Council and chapter events and meetings. All meetings noted are virtual via Zoom except Convention.

July 1: Deadline for Convention Delegate Registration

July 6: Monthly Legislative Update (guest presenter will be Claude Burfect, District 9 representative)

July 22: Monthly Leadership call (chapter leaders and all those interested)

July 25: Membership Committee meeting

August 3: Finance Committee Meeting

August 5: Deadline for the submission of Norm Schut Award nominees

August 13: Resolution/amendment submittal deadline for Convention

August 19: Monthly Leadership Call (chapter leaders and all those interested)

August 24: Executive Board meeting

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

November 14: Executive Board meeting

Best,
Laurie