



Retired Public Employees Council
Chapter 22 – Jefferson County
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Date: Tuesday, January 9, 2024
Time: 12:00 PM
Place: Zoom

Go to zoom.us OR call (253) 215-8782
Meeting ID: 620 156 4173
Passcode: 160595

Dear Chapter 22 members,

I hope everyone had a most enjoyable of holidays. For this winter's meeting, we're on Zoom!

Now, as every day is growing longer, it is time to pull out an oar, shovel, plow, or any other metaphor you can come up with.

For the first time in quite a while, we will have a change in our lineup of state legislators, with Senator Van De Wege running for public land commissioner and Rep. Mike Chapman running for his Senate seat. As far as I know, Chapman is running unopposed, and two people vie for his House seat.

We need to start the process of interviewing these candidates, so that will be a part of this meeting's discussion. Also in the mix is our U.S. Congress seat. We'll talk about that too.

And while we're on politics, have you heard that RPEC/WEA-R's joint Legislative Day is on January 22nd?! You can register at this link: <https://rpecwa.org/2024-rpec-wea-retired-legislative-day/>. RPEC pays mileage, the Chapter will pay one night lodging at the special rate listed in the link.

See you in January via the magic of Zoom.

For more information: Call Mike Marston, Chapter President, (360) 821-1211.

Mike Marston, President, Chapter 22, RPEC

January 2024 Executive Director's Report

Happy New Year and Here We Go!

Welcome to the New Year and a short legislative session kicks off on January 8th. The short session will conclude by late March. Thus, bills will be heard in committee within the first full week of January. Hold on and stay tuned!

This monthly letter summarizes some of RPEC's noteworthy achievements in 2023 and includes a few priorities for the month of January.

2023 Highlights

- Adoption of RPEC's strategic plan by the Executive Board. The organization has not had a strategic plan in over 5 years.

Awards

- Awarded the Washington State Labor Council's (WSLC) Mother Jones Group Award, along with partner organizations, for our legislative successes regarding healthcare access and affordability.
- Awarded Senior Champion of the Year with the Washington Education Association-Retired (WEA-R) for our healthcare advocacy work.
- Awarded Advocate of the Year by WEA-R for our healthcare advocacy leadership.

Legislative Efforts

- Passage of SB 5350, which provided a one-time 3% cost of living adjustment for retirees vested in Plans 1.
- Passage of a proviso that increased accountability for the Health Care Authority (HCA) and required that they provide reports to the Legislature. The proviso also required the agency to explore plan options with benefits greater than or equal to UMP Classic Medicare but more affordable.
- Safeguarded the UMP Classic Medicare healthcare plan, offered by the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB).
- Coordinated 60 listening sessions with retirees and HCA to glean insights to inform policy decisions and improve services to retirees. RPEC, with partners, recruited more than 170 retirees to participate.
- Successful mobilizations on both state and federal legislation. State mobilizations have averaged 1,000 PRO sign-ins. More than 500 members signed onto the RPEC's Call-to-Action regarding federal government funding.
- Successful Legislative Day which included 143 members who participated in 70 meetings with legislators/staff.
- Expansion of federal advocacy efforts to include meetings with healthcare policy staff working for members of Washington's Congressional Legislation.
- Launch of the RPEC Speakers' Series featuring Congresswoman Maria Gluesenkamp Perez.

Membership

- Recruitment of the highest number of new members in more than a decade. The Council Office's efforts this spring added 1,600 new members to RPEC!
- Significant growth in member contributions to the RPEC Political Action Committee, totaling \$85,880.18 – a more than 25% increase from 2022.
- Implementation of an all-member written survey.

Communications & Engagement

- Launch of the weekly NewsFlash reports.
- High levels of digital engagement by members through increased content generation on the RPEC website, social media, and through the weekly NewsFlash.
- Developed a three-part webinar series with Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors (SHIBA) about navigating open enrollment and the plans available by the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB).
- Led well attended webinars initiated by RPEC with DRS and HCA, and hosted a first ever "Members-Only Benefits Webinar."

Labor

- Secured RPEC President Clair Olivers as a presenter at the Washington Federation of State Employees (WFSE) Policy Meeting and RPEC at the AFSCME Council 2 Executive Board meeting– both firsts!
- Expanded relationships with the Washington Federation of State Employees (WFSE), AFSCME Council 2, and the Teamsters.
- Standing-room only presentations by RPEC Membership Coordinator at the WFSE and Council 2 Conventions.

Federal Relations

Fiscal Stability Act Poses Threat to Social Security and Medicare Funding

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Retirees and the Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA) have concern about a new piece of bi-partisan legislation introduced in the Senate in November. The Fiscal Stability Act (S. 3262) would create a fiscal commission that will produce a plan to improve the nation's fiscal trajectory and decrease the national debt. Retiree organizations fear the real agenda is to slash funding for Social Security and Medicare for seniors. RPEC will work, in concert with other AFSCME Retiree chapters nationwide, to oppose the bill and the companion legislation (H.R. 5779) introduced in the House. A detailed [position paper](#) about the proposed debt commission is available at <https://retiredamericans.org>.

Keep apprised of RPEC's work at a federal level by reading the weekly NewsFlash and visiting www.rpecwa.org.

State Relations & Advocacy

Two priorities emerge for Legislative Day, January 22nd

Through the advocacy efforts of RPEC and our retiree organization partners, the Select Committee on Pension Policy will advance a bill next legislative session that not only provides another one-time cost-of-living adjustment to retirees vested in Plans 1, but also expands the maximum cap to \$125 per month.

Moreover, RPEC, in concert with the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB) Stakeholders' Medicare Coalition (which RPEC formed and leads), has initiated both a budget proviso that will increase the Medicare Explicit Subsidy provided to Medicare-eligible retirees who obtain their healthcare benefits from the Health Care Authority (HCA)/PEBB. The Medicare Explicit Subsidy reduces the monthly premium costs for the most expensive healthcare plans offered and managed by HCA/PEBB.

HCA Update

In the last legislative session, RPEC, in concert with the PEBB Stakeholders' Medicare Coalition, initiated a proviso requiring the HCA to hold listening sessions with retirees to ascertain their needs and to use this information to inform policy and to improve communication and services. The proviso also required the agency to report the findings to the Legislature. The report will be available soon on the HCA website at www.hca.wa.gov. The report will be available under About

HCA, Data/Reports. The Coalition will study the report and will be referencing it throughout the 2024 legislative session to ensure HCA honors the input of retirees moving forward.

Legislative Update Calls Begin Weekly in January

This month marks the end of the monthly Legislative Update Calls. Starting on January 12th, the calls will be held weekly each Friday at 2 p.m. and will extend through the end of the legislative session in late March.

Executive Board approves Strategic Plan

The Executive Board approved RPEC's strategic plan at its November meeting. The plan will guide RPEC's priorities through 2027. The five goal areas relate to: organizational sustainability, member recruitment, member retention and engagement, member communications, and federal advocacy. The plan was informed by research conducted in Spring 2023 by AFSCME Retirees and data gathered by the Council Office.

The Board also appointed the Strategic Plan Ad Hoc Committee to outline potential next steps for the Board to implement the plan. The Committee is chaired by **Maurice Garrott**, Vice President and Chair of the Membership Committee, and includes President **Clair Olivers**, District 1 Representative **Cheryl Moser**, District 3 Representative **Kandy Kraig**, District 9 Representative **Alma-jean Marion**, and me.

A backgrounding document will be available at www.rpecwa.org in January. Executive Board members will be sharing more information about the plan in the coming months at regional meetings.

Upcoming Events

All meetings below will be held on Zoom. Visit www.rpecwa.org for a full calendar of Council Office and chapter meetings.

- Jan 2 – Council Office opens
- Jan 3 – Deadline to register for Legislative Day
- Jan 8 – First Day of the 2024 Legislative Session
- Jan 11 – Healthcare Workgroup, 3:30 p.m.
- Jan 12 – Legislative Committee meeting, 10 a.m.
- Jan 12 – Beginning of weekly Legislative Update Calls, 2 p.m.
- Jan 15 – Senior Lobby, 10 a.m.
- Jan 19 – Weekly Legislative Update Call, 2 p.m.
- Jan 22 – Legislative Day, 9 a.m.
- Jan 26 – Weekly Legislative Update Call, 2 p.m.
- Feb 1 – PEBB Retreat, 9 a.m.

Best,
Laurie