



Retired Public Employees Council
Chapter 37 – Lynnwood Area
Brenda Williams, President
(206) 399-2183 or kdhbmw4@icloud.com

Virtual Meeting Date: Thursday, July 7, 2022
Virtual Meeting Time: 1:00 PM

Computer Login Information

Go to <https://zoom.us/join>
Meeting ID: 875 2765 8007
Passcode: 108208

Phone Login Information

Dial: (253) 215-8782
Meeting ID: 875 2765 8007
Phone Passcode: 108208

Guest: Maurice Garrott RPEC membership chair, running for Council Vice President

Summary of RPEC District 1 Meeting

On June 7th, twenty-two (22) RPEC Members from Chapter 6 Everett, Chapter 7 Bellingham, Chapter 8 Skagit and Chapter 37 Lynnwood met with Legislators. In attendance was Senator June Robinson of the 38th District, Representative Carolyn Eslick of the 39th District, Senator John Lovick of the 44th District and Representative Brandy Donaghy of the 44th District.

Clair Oliver from Chapter 6 provided background history concerning PERS Plan 1 and PEBB for the benefit of the Legislators and RPEC members in attendance.

PERS 1 was established in 1961

Minimum Benefit increased in 1967 and 1969

1970-1994 included 11 increases to the Minimum Benefit, and 3% annual automatic increase starting in 1987. 1970-1994 included 15 general COLAs in addition to specific optional COLA increases. The UCOLA was adopted in 1995 and repealed in 2011.

Two more Minimum Benefit increases were adopted in 2004 and 2006

Gainsharing was adopted in 1998 and repealed in 2007 after establishing a pay-out for 2008. Thankfully, a limited 1.5% COLA was adopted in 2018 and a limited 3% COLA in 2020.

Senator Robinson -

Clearly, the lack of a COLA in the original Plan 1 legislation was a constant concern for legislators, as was the need to increase the minimum accordingly. It took up a lot of time and effort until the establishment of the UCOLA and is now again taking up a lot of time and effort.

The current path being followed to pay down the Unfunded Accumulated Actuarial Liability (UAAL) is projected (FY 2019 Report) to attain full funding of PERS 1 in 2027 (TRS 1 In 2026); and 2021-23 employer contribution rates for PERS, at 10.07% (down from 12.68% in 2019-21), are projected to further decline to 9.20% for the 2023-25 biennium and to about 8.5% for the 2025-27 biennium. This difference would fund about a 9% increase in total PERS 1 pension payments spread over this and the next two biennia.

PERS and TRS members (in addition to the uniformed services employees) are the people who deliver the essential services that the legislature directs be provided across all levels of state and local government.

Nearly all the emergency reductions enacted to address the Great Recession have been reinstated; the notable exceptions are the PERS/TRS Plan 1 COLA, PEBB Medicare supplemental insurance cost-sharing, and Plan 3 Gainsharing.

In response to COVID public employees have been furloughed and had their wages frozen.

The PERS 1/TRS 1 retirees are the oldest and longest-retired public employees, so they have also seen the greatest loss of purchasing power in their retirement years. They deserve a predictable, recurring, and fair COLA. This would let them, and the legislators address other important issues rather than revisiting this critical need over and over. And remember that the pensioners spend this money for their basic needs and predominantly at local businesses.

Senator Lovick stated he understood the many concerns shared by Senator Robinson and he would be comfortable reviewing future alternatives after some of those questions were answered. He noted he appreciates working with RPEC as they are organized and knowledgeable when they present their position.

Representative Eslick joined Senators Robinson and Lovick and stated she has supported retirement funding and would do so in the future.

Other questions presented to the legislators were as follows.

1. The PEBB Medicare Supplemental Insurance benefit was reduced in 2011 and was not returned to the 2010 level of State contribution until 2020, while inflation since 2010 has eroded even that amount. We propose legislation to establish a 50%-50% cost sharing between the State and retirees using the PEBB insurance coverage so that this will be a predictable and fair cost-sharing in the future. Same question as above regarding helping to move this legislation.
2. Our members have supported fixing the state's regressive tax code and greatly appreciate the work that resulted in eliminating the capital gains loophole for the largest such gains this year. Many of our members are low-income and are paying much larger percentages of their income in taxes compared to the wealthy. How can we, RPEC, help you accomplish other steps to make our tax code even fairer and less regressive?

Representative Eslick stated she also supports tax code reform. She is open to reviewing and providing feedback on any proposed legislation. Senator Lovick could support rebalancing of the tax code.

The next questions to the Legislators asked them to tell RPEC members how we could help them with their specific items.

Representative Eslick likes constituencies to be proactive by testifying and writing targeted letters to their Representatives. It means much more than having only a paid lobbyist come forward to testify.

At this point in the meeting members were given the opportunity to ask questions. Many expressed their concerns and provided information on how the lack of COLA's have impacted their lives.

After the Legislators questions and answers we heard from our Executive Director, Laurie Weidner.

She has been our ED for two months. She praised member strength and knowledge. She wants to see that RPEC is strong for the next 50 years and beyond. For the immediate focus she wants to focus not only on the plan 1 but would like to lean into plan 2 and 3, strengthen chapters and focus on building leadership. As previously noted, it is so important to

have members share their story. These are the stories that legislators use to address our issues. As noted above Representative Eslick indicated, it means much more to have those directly impacted to have their testimony rather than a paid lobbyist.

Laurie encouraged members to write, email or call her so she can document your story. It is very important to collect these stories now so we can use them in the next legislative session. You can do this by writing her at RPEC 906 Columbia St SW, Suite 501, Olympia, Wa 98501, Email her at laurieweidner@rpecwa.org or call her at 1-800-562-6097 Toll Free, or 360-352-8262.

Note from Chapter President Brenda Williams.

As many of you know our strength is seen in the number of members we have. Some of you are very active, attend meetings sit on committees, executive boards, some make calls and write letters, and some pay dues. All of these make RPEC strong. Everyone contributes at whatever level they are comfortable. Thank you for your contribution.

If you would like to increase your participation, we would welcome it. RPEC is providing leadership training throughout the year. You can also always call me, and I would be happy to discuss activities or leadership positions with you.

As noted, our strength is in numbers. I am saddened every time we lose a member because of death, I know we have an aging membership, but it still hurts. For RPEC to remain powerful and continue to protect pensions and health care we need to grow our membership.

We need your assistance to do this. I know some of you keep in contact with those you previously worked with or attend retirement parties for those recently retired.

Maybe your prior work group meets for lunch every few months. These are great opportunities for you to ask them if they would participate in RPEC. Dues is just \$7.00 per month, a small price to pay to have a voice in protection of their pensions. Now a little incentive.

RPEC has a new program called RECRUIT 2. What this means is you recruit two members to join RPEC and we will pay you the equivalent of one year dues. (\$84.00) Your name must appear on the membership card under who recruited the new member. If you need membership cards or additional information, please give me a call. Brenda Williams, Chapter 37 President 206-399-2183 Cell or 425-486-5051 Home or email me at KDHBMW4@icloud.com.

I would also like to tell you about a resolution that started with an RPEC member and resulted in the passage of a bill recognizing Women in the Military. June 12th was set as a day in Washington State to recognize women in the military. This shows the power of one person with an idea, moving it through the process and getting results. We can all make a difference.

Note: Chapter 37 will not meet in August.

*Chapter 37 meetings will take place virtually until further notice. You can participate by phone or computer. Please call Brenda Williams at 425-486-5051 if you would like to practice signing into a meeting by phone or computer. *

*Council meetings will take place virtually until such time as it is safe to meet in person

*Sign up for Text Message Alerts

Text RPEC to 237263 to sign up for legislative alerts. If you are not receiving email updates, email info@rpecwa.org or call (360) 352-8262 ext. 100 to sign up.

When we prepared this newsletter we received information that on June 30, the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB) is scheduled to act on a resolution to eliminate the Uniform Medical Plan (UMP) Classic Medicare option effective January 1, 2024. Statewide, this decision will impact more than 53,000 retirees. This is an unprecedented and alarming policy decision, and we know our members are deeply concerned about this vote and its implications for the quality of their medical care.

On June 13, RPEC President Kandy Kraig sent a letter of concern to the Governor, his key advisors, the leaders of the Healthcare Authority and PEBB, as well as PEBB voting members. On June 15, a team of us met with PEBB leaders to share our concerns and discuss a viable path forward as well as meeting with the Governor's staff. Members have been asked to write, email and phone key persons. We have asked that the vote be postponed by six months to allow for a rigorous input process.

We will provide an update at our next chapter meeting.

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.

June 27: Legislative Committee meeting

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 11: Chapter 37 – NO MEETING FOR AUGUST

August 13: Resolution/amendment submittal deadline for Convention

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

August 24: Executive Board meeting

September 1: Chapter 37 meeting, Zoom

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

October 6: Chapter 37 meeting, Zoom

November 3: Chapter 37 meeting, Zoom

November 14: Executive Board meeting