



# Retired Public Employees Council Chapter 39 – Asotin & Garfield Counties

*Darrell Russell, President: (509) 295-6244*

[dkrsar65@gmail.com](mailto:dkrsar65@gmail.com)

**Meeting Date:** Wednesday, December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
**Meeting Time:** Noon  
**Meeting Place:** Mama K's Restaurant - Clarkston  
**Meeting Address:** 902 6<sup>th</sup> St, Clarkston, WA 99403

Greetings Chapter 39 Members,

Please join us on **Wednesday, December 20<sup>th</sup>**, at **noon** for a chapter meeting at **Mama K's Restaurant**.

This is our Christmas meeting, so please be sure to bring something to contribute to the Clarkston food bank and a gift for our chapter gift exchange.

I look forward to seeing you on December 20<sup>th</sup>.

Darrell Russell  
President, Chapter 39



*Chapter 39 members at the membership meeting on November 15<sup>th</sup>.*



*Member Nick Fiore reports on DRS webinar and discusses pensions.*

**Photo credit: Stephen Lee**

## **December 2023 Executive Director's Report**

Thank you for all your hard work this past year to move our legislative priorities through the Legislature, Select Committee on Pension Policy, and Public Employees Benefits Board. All the recognition that RPEC has garnered this year for our advocacy work and legislative victories, including earning the Washington State Labor Council's top award, is due to our members' engagement with legislators and the legislative process, our policy leadership, and our collective advocacy work with partner organizations. We have a lot to be proud of with more important work ahead at both federal and state levels in 2024.

As you consider how you will contribute to RPEC in the year ahead, start by registering today to participate in the annual Legislative Day on January 22<sup>nd</sup>. If you are new to RPEC, this is the perfect way to learn about our legislative priorities, meet other members from your chapter and legislative district, and meet your state legislators and their staff.

On behalf of the professional team at the Council Office, we wish you a joyful and safe holiday season.

### **We Thank Our Extraordinary Leaders**

As a member-run organization, we are grateful for the service of our Executive Committee, Executive Board, chapter presidents and officers, those serving on RPEC Standing Committees and Workgroups, and all those who serve at a chapter level. Thank you for giving your time and talents to us over the last year.

RPEC is the only retiree organization that has volunteer leaders serving on key statewide committees and boards that impact retirement security. We are also grateful for the leadership, advocacy, and service of: **Bev Hermanson**, Select Committee on Pension Policy (RPEC Political Action Committee Chair, Chapter 2); **Yona Makowski**, State Investment Board (Chapter 2); **Gwen Rench**, Healthcare Is a Human Right (Chapter 3); **Elyette Weinstein**, Public Employees Benefits Board (Chapter 18); and **Carol Dotlich**, Washington Federation of State Employees Executive Board (President, Chapter 12; RPEC Executive Board, District 8).

### **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 purportedly 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](http://www.rpecwa.org).

## **State Relations & Advocacy**

### **Register today for RPEC/WEA-R Legislative Day – January 22, 2024**

RPEC's annual Legislative Day, held in concert with the Washington Education Association-Retired (WEA-R), will take place on January 22<sup>nd</sup> in Olympia. The event is open to all RPEC members. Legislative Day gives RPEC members a chance to meet with their state legislators from their respective districts in their offices on the Capitol campus. Register at <https://rpecwa.org/2024-rpec-wea-retired-legislative-day/>. Registration closes on January 3. Please register soon.

### **Two anticipated bills will benefit RPEC members**

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 policy bill and potential 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.

Both bills will be introduced sometime soon and will be leading priorities for RPEC during Legislative Day and the legislative session.

### **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 on the HCA website on December 1<sup>st</sup> at [www.hca.wa.gov](http://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 12<sup>th</sup>, 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 begin 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](http://www.rpecwa.org) by January. Executive Board members will be sharing more information about the plan in the coming months.

### **Upcoming Events**

All meetings below will be held virtually on Zoom. Visit [www.rpecwa.org](http://www.rpecwa.org) for a full calendar of Council Office and chapter meetings.

- Dec 14 – Healthcare Workgroup, 3:30 p.m.
- Dec 18 – Senior Lobby, 10 a.m.
- Dec 25-Jan 1 – Council Office closed for Holiday Break
- Dec 28 – Healthcare Workgroup, 3:30 p.m.
- 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.
- Feb 1 – PEBB Retreat, 9 a.m.

Best,  
Laurie