



Retired Public Employees Council
Chapter 6 – Everett Area
Your voice for Retirement Security

Working to protect and enhance your pension and health care benefits.

January 2023

RPEC Chapter 6 Officers – Contact Info

President	Christine Lavra	(425) 280-4477	4ce4prof@earthlink.net
Vice President	Judith Taber	(425) 319-1127	windsplitter@hotmail.com
Secretary	Debby Lippincott	(360) 774-1595	debby.lippincott@gmail.com
Treasurer	Jim Brandley	(425) 337-0884	js.brandley@gmail.com

Do you know someone who recently retired in the state retirement system? Tell them about RPEC. You can also receive email reminders for each meeting. Please send an email to **RPEC Chapter 6 Secretary at rpecchpt6@gmail.com**.

February 2023 Membership Meeting

The February RPEC Chapter 6 Membership meeting will be held on **February 7th at 1:00 PM at the Everett Library Evergreen Branch at 9512 Evergreen Way**. The chapter will be meeting in person only until we have members who can help set up virtual meetings.

Susanna Johnson, Candidate for Snohomish County Sheriff, will join us. She is an award-winning law enforcement officer and leader with over three decades of experience keeping communities safe. Join us to learn more about her.

Other Agenda Items

- Reports on 2023 Legislative Day to be held on January 30, 2023.
- Updates on legislation discussed in the Executive Director's Monthly Letter (see below).
- Discussions on meeting formats and how to make meetings more inviting and interesting to members.

IMPORTANT!

See page 3 for Official Notice of Nominations and Elections of Chapter 6 Officers and Chapter 6 Executive Board members.

January 2023 Membership Meeting Highlights

January's meeting featured guest speaker Sylvia Anderson, CEO of the Everett Gospel Mission. Her topic was homelessness amongst the elderly. Ms. Anderson hails from Texas, graduated from Evergreen State College, and eventually became the Executive Director of Big Brothers Big Sisters in Pierce County. In 2017, Ms. Anderson accepted the CEO position at the Everett Gospel Mission. At that time, the Mission provided meals for men and women and only sheltered men. She oversaw the expansion of services that included:

- The building of the Women's and Children's Mission
- Obtained a 9 bedroom building
- Established Everett's first co-ed pallet village in collaboration with Everett Police Department
- Operation of a cold weather shelter as needed

She identified the main circumstances that warrant elders to seek their services, such as:

- Death or divorce of a spouse

- Catastrophic illness or mental health
- Excessive cost of housing, including the high assessments imposed on condos
- Loss of a job

There are two challenging issues for elders seeking shelter:

1. Health concerns – Men are required to get a physical prior to services. This is because Mission staff has found that men ignore their health and related issues with their health. Women, on the other hand, tend to be more accepting and, in fact, eager to engage in treating health issues.
2. With more elders seeking shelter, the need for end-of-life care has grown. Ms. Anderson has worked to establish a collaborative relationship with Providence Hospital. The Mission has set aside 5 beds designated for terminal patients to be treated by Providence.

Concluding her remarks, we engaged in a lively discussion about homeless elders and how to address their needs so we can become more effective in solving the problem of homelessness.

Council News

Cheryl Moser of Chapter 7 was elected as the new District 1 representative at a special meeting of the Executive Board on January 13, 2023.

Non-Elected Roles Needing to be Filled

Chapter 6 needs to fill the very vital position of **Membership Chairperson**. This person would recruit new members and help retain current members with the help of the Membership Committee.

Chapter 6 also needs to fill the position of **Technical Support Person**. This person will know how to set up computer equipment to connect those members who want to attend our monthly meetings virtually by Zoom.

If you need additional information on any of these positions, please contact Christine Lavra.

Odds and Zen

The Snohomish and Island Counties Labor Council is proud to announce the creation of the Mike Sells Labor Champion Award to honor retired Washington State Legislator Representative Mike Sells (D-LD 38). The first recipient is Mary Fosse, Everett City Council Member and newly elected 38th District Representative.

UNION SOLIDARITY NIGHT – SILVERTIPS Friday February 17th Discounted tickets are available at https://everettsilvertips.3dcartstores.com/UNION-SOLIDARITY-NIGHT-BR-FRIDAY-FEBRUARY-17--7PM-VS-SPOKANE-BRSUBSIDIZED-UNION-TICKETS-STARTINGSolidarity -AT-300- p_2101.html. Where it asks for your local union put AFSCME/RPEC, Chapter 6. Sponsored by the Snohomish/Island County Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

“Unions have been the only powerful and effective voice working people have ever had in the history of this country.”

--Bruce Springsteen “The Boss”

FROM: Debby Lippincott, Chapter 6 Secretary • **TO:** Members of RPEC Chapter 6 (Everett Area)

Official Notice* of Nominations and Elections for:
• **Chapter 6 Officers • Chapter 6 Executive Board Members**

• This notice constitutes the requirement that all Chapter 6 members be mailed an advance notice of at least 15 days before nominations open and elections are held for the offices listed in this notice.

A. NOMINATIONS: Open March 7, 2023

- Nominations open at the March 7, 2023 Chapter 6 General Membership Meeting for:
 - Ch. 6's 4 officers (President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer) for a 1-year term from 4/4/23 until 4/2/24;
 - 4 RPEC Chapter 6 Executive Board positions for a 1-year term from 4/4/23 until 4/2/24;

- Date, time and place of this Chapter 6 General Membership Meeting when nominations open:

DATE: Tuesday, March 7, 2023 • **TIME:** 1:00 PM

LOCATION: Everett Library Evergreen Branch – 9512 Evergreen Way, Everett, WA 98204

B. ELECTIONS: April 4, 2023

- Elections (for any position with more than one nominee) for the offices listed in A above will take place at the April 4, 2023, Chapter 6 General Membership Meeting.

- Date, time and place of this Chapter 6 General Membership Meeting when elections take place:

DATE: Tuesday, April 4, 2023 • **TIME:** 1:00 PM

LOCATION: Everett Library Evergreen Branch – 9512 Evergreen Way, Everett, WA 98204

e-Newsletter now available

We are now offering a digital version of our Chapter Newsletter

By choosing email rather than a mailed paper newsletter, you help reduce mailing expenses and staff workload. Plus, you can get the newsletter and meeting reminders faster and in **C-O-L-O-R!**

Let us know how you want to receive your monthly newsletter:

Email or Mailed paper

Please include your name, email address and year you joined

Reply to:
rpecchpt6@gmail.com

Executive Director's Report – January 23, 2023

Dear RPEC Members:

Happy New Year from our team to each of you! Please ensure you support our legislative efforts by signing in with a PRO position on the following four bills.

All RPEC priority bills have public hearings, week of January 23, 2023

The week of January 23 is one of the most important for RPEC members with four of our priority bills scheduled for public hearings. If you have not already done so, be sure to sign in PRO on the bills scheduled for hearings on January 26 and 27. You may sign up PRO up to one hour before each hearing begins. Directions on how to sign up and register a PRO position was sent to all members via email on January 21. Details are also available on the Council Office website at www.rpecwa.org. You may also email Emmett Mills, Government Affairs Coordinator, at Emmett.mills@rpecwa.org, for assistance.

- **SB 5350:** RPEC worked with the Select Committee on Pension Policy to craft the language in this bill. It provides a legislative path to a recurring cost-of-living (COLA) and a one-time 3% COLA, effective on July 1, 2023, for Plan 1 retirees. This bill was heard in Senate Ways & Means on January 23.
- **SIGN IN PRO ON HB 1057:** This is the companion bill to SB 5350 (which means it is identical to the one that was filed in the Senate). We have two panels of RPEC and Washington Education Association-Retired (WEA-R) members testifying. The hearing is January 26th. You can sign in PRO through 3 p.m. that day.
- **SIGN IN PRO ON HB 1459:** This bill fully restores a recurring COLA for Plan 1 retirees effective July 1, 2023. We have two panels of RPEC and WEA-R members testifying. You will also have until 3 p.m. on January 26th to sign in PRO on this bill.
- **SIGN IN PRO ON SB 5169:** This bill preserves the United Medical Plan (UMP) Classic Medicare option for retirees. This plan is still the leading plan of choice among Medicare-eligible retirees despite significant premium increases. Moreover, the bill adds accountability to the Health Care Authority (HCA) to consider the needs of retirees and to use input from stakeholder engagements to effect better policies. The bill requires that HCA report to the Legislature their findings from the listening sessions and public forums. This agency has a long history of ignoring seniors in decision-making. We hope this added accountability will change that for all RPEC members who obtain their healthcare benefits from the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB). Sign-in PRO before 7 a.m. on January 27th.

PEBB Stakeholders' Medicare Coalition news

On January 5, 2023, the Health Care Authority (HCA) signed an agreement with the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB) Stakeholders' Medicare Coalition stating that it would not close the UMP Classic Medicare Plan! While this is a good first step, RPEC and our Coalition partners want the preservation of UMP Classic Medicare codified in law. Please support and sign in PRO on SB 5169 by 7 a.m. on January 27.

As a reminder, RPEC formed the Coalition this summer to work with HCA to broaden health care choices for public sector retirees and to include retiree voices in policy decision-making. The Coalition includes: RPEC, the Washington Education Association-Retired, the American Federation of Teachers Washington/Retiree Chapter, Social Security Works Washington, Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action, the Washington State Alliance for Retired Americans, Healthcare Is a Human Right, and Washington State Senior Citizens' Lobby.

For months, the Coalition has been meeting with HCA staff to plan stakeholder engagements. The listening sessions will be held via Zoom and will include between 10-12 participants, drawn from the organizations within the Coalition. The pilot will take place in late February. As background, listening sessions are like virtual focus groups. Participants are invited to take part and are expected to prepare in advance for a

rigorous discussion. All those invited to take part in the pilot will receive a briefing packet, the questions to be covered by the facilitator, and meeting agreements to ensure everyone who participates can share their insights. The pilot is designed to test the effectiveness of this engagement model and to make modifications for improvement.

Once the pilot is completed, HCA anticipates hosting many virtual listening sessions through May. HCA will also be hosting virtual public forums to give beneficiaries an opportunity, in an unstructured format, to share insights about their plans of choice and to express concerns about plan offerings and/or HCA services.

We believe that HCA staff should use the input received from these stakeholder engagements to expand plan choices and to select plans that meet the needs of public sector retirees. That is why RPEC, in concert with the PEBB Stakeholders' Medicare Coalition, worked with Senator Sam Hunt to sponsor SB 5169. This bill adds accountability to HCA to better serve retirees. Again, please sign in PRO on this bill before 7 a.m. on January 27.

Regence and BlueCross reach agreement with the Everett Clinic and The Polyclinic

On December 22, 2022, Regence and The Everett Clinic and The Polyclinic reached a new multi-year network agreement. Regence will mail letters to notify affected Uniform Medical Plan (UMP) members that they may continue to receive care from The Everett Clinic and The Polyclinic at the preferred provider network rate.

The new agreement applies to all employees, non-Medicare retirees, and Medicare retirees enrolled in any UMP offering under both the PEBB and SEBB Programs. For more information, please visit: <https://www.hca.wa.gov/about-hca/news/announcements/everett-clinic-and-polyclinic-network-status-regence-blueshield/uniform-medical-plan>.

Recruit 2 – Get your dues

For a limited time, RPEC is offering members a chance to earn one year's free membership. 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.

Federal relations update

All RPEC members are concerned about preserving health care benefits and protecting and expanding Medicare. To that end, in December, RPEC's leadership sent a letter of support to the federal chair of the Subcommittee on Health in support of HB 8800: Supporting Medicare Providers Act of 2022.

As background, recent federal legislation boosted the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule to include higher physician reimbursement rates. The increases were set to sunset in December 2022. HB 8800 aims to extend the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule through 2023. This bill is important to our members because, prior to this legislation, some physicians would not accept Medicare patients or dropped existing Medicare patients due to low reimbursement rates for service. This bill helps to expand access to physicians for retirees on Medicare.

RPEC will continue to be vigilant in fighting to safeguard not only Medicare but also Social Security. In the short term, we will be focusing on the following priorities:

- Supporting legislation to sustain reimbursement rates for physicians who serve Medicare patients.
- Opposing legislation to increase the age of eligibility for Social Security and Medicare.

- Expanding federal subsidies for health care plans to include state and employer self-insured plans like UMP Classic Medicare. (These subsidies are currently only available to Medicare Advantage Plans).

If health care interests you at a state and/or federal level, consider attending meetings of the newly formed Health Care Workgroup. The Workgroup's meeting schedule is posted on the RPEC calendar at www.rpecwa.org.

Looking for a new volunteer opportunity? SHIBA is recruiting volunteer advisors

Many years ago, RPEC was instrumental in working with the Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC) to create the Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors (SHIBA). Volunteer advisors, many of whom are retired from state and local government agencies and school districts like RPEC members, are trained by OIC staff to help answer questions about Medicare and retiree health insurance. SHIBA volunteer advisors are caring and unbiased and receive no commissions or other payments; they volunteer because they want to help other retirees.

To learn more about becoming a volunteer advisor or to get your questions answered about Medicare and retiree health insurance, visit <https://www.insurance.wa.gov/about-shiba-services>.

Important Dates

Visit the RPEC website at www.rpecwa.org for the full calendar:

- Jan. 26:** Appropriations hearing on HB 1057 and HB 1459 – sign in PRO before 3 p.m.
- Jan. 27:** Senate Health and Long-term Care Committee hearing on SB 5169 – Sign in PRO before 7 a.m.
Legislative Update Call
- Jan. 30:** Legislative Day (in-person in Olympia)
- Feb. 3:** Legislative Update Call
- Feb. 8:** Health Care Workgroup
- Feb. 10:** Legislative Committee Meeting
- Feb. 10:** Legislative Update Call
- Feb. 13:** Senior Lobby
- Feb. 17:** Legislative Update Call
- Feb. 22:** Health Care Workgroup
- Feb. 24:** Monthly Leadership Call
- Feb. 24:** Legislative Update Call
- Feb. 27:** Executive Board Meeting

Best,
Laurie