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# Retired Public Employees Council Chapter 8 – Skagit, Island, and San Juan Counties

*John M. Smith, President*

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**Meeting Date: Thursday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

**Meeting Time: NOON**

**Meeting Location: Hillcrest Park, Mount Vernon**

## **Agenda**

Call to order

Flag salute

Minutes of the previous meeting

Treasurer's Report

Membership Committee report

Political Action Committee Report

Legislative Committee Report

Legislative Session Update

Other business

## **Welcome, long-time and new members of Chapter 8.**

For June's meeting only we will meet at the Gazebo in Hillcrest Park in Mount Vernon, WA at **NOON** for a pizza lunch provided by the chapter.

***Please RSVP to Chapter President, John M. Smith by phone or email if you will attend so that we can ensure there is enough pizza and salad for all.***

As an enticement to attend the meeting, two gift cards, each worth \$20, will be awarded by drawing two members **who have not attended a meeting in the past six months.**

## **Other Business**

### **District 1 meeting:**

**Date: June 6, 2023**

**Place: Hubb's Pizza & Pasta, 21102 67th Ave. NE, Arlington**

**Phone: 360-435-9349**

**Time: 12:30 p.m.**

**Food: Pizza or pasta and a non-alcoholic beverage**

Sincerely,

John M. Smith, President  
Chapter 8, Retired Public Employees Council

## June 2023 Executive Director's Report

Dear RPEC Leaders:

While our work advocating for members' priorities never stops and is truly year-round, the late spring is the time when we refresh our interim legislative session advocacy plan, invest time to deepen relationships with legislators, craft and implement our strategy with the Select Committee on Pension Policy (SCPP) and the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB), and cultivate new RPEC champions, both at a local and state level, as candidates launch their campaigns for the 2024 election season. Let's roll up our sleeves and get to work!

Based on the initial responses from our all-member written survey, Plans 2/3 members have expressed great interest in working on federal issues impacting retirement security. To that end, my monthly letter and the weekly Newsflash emails will be carrying more information on these subjects. Stay tuned!

### **Federal Relations Update**

#### **Debt ceiling**

Thank you for taking the time to call members of the Washington congressional delegation about the need to remedy the debt ceiling stalemate. As you know, the call to action came at the request of the AFSCME Retiree Council and we stand in solidarity with our labor siblings on this important piece of legislation. At the time of this publication, the House had approved the compromise bill with the Senate vote to follow the week of June 5. RPEC urged our members to weigh in, so that Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid payments would not be impacted, nor vital services administered locally to seniors, that are entirely or partially federally funded.

#### **HB 82 & S 597 – Social Security Fairness Act**

AFSCME Retiree Council has been working tirelessly to broaden the scope of congressional cosponsors for these companion bills. These bills repeal provisions that reduce Social Security benefits for individuals who receive pensions from state and local governments, eliminate the government pension offset (which reduces the benefits for spouses, widows and widowers who receive government pensions of their own), and eliminate the windfall elimination provision, which in some cases reduces benefits for those who receive a pension from an employer who did not withhold Social Security taxes. Several of our House members and one of our US senators have not yet signed on in support. RPEC will work this summer to ensure that happens!

#### **Speakers' Series**

Stay tuned for more details about RPEC's new Speakers' Series, which will kick off in August with a member of the Washington congressional delegation. Details to follow. More information will be available in my July all-member letter and the weekly Newsflash emails.

### **State relations & advocacy**

#### **Healthcare**

This past legislative session, RPEC worked to support the successful passage of several key healthcare-related bills that will take effect on July 23.

[SSB 5490](#) is an important bill for any RPEC member who lost access to Public Employees' Benefits Board (PEBB) healthcare coverage for failing to notify the Health Care Authority (HCA) of their

intent to defer benefits and filed an appeal. The HCA anticipates that the bill will only impact about 100-120 retirees given the eligibility requirements outlined in the bill. HCA will be providing RPEC with details soon to help our members determine if they are eligible and the steps to take to initiate PEBB healthcare coverage. Details will also be available on the HCA website in July.

[SB 5421](#), an agency request bill initiated by the HCA, protects the confidential information that healthcare plan enrollees submit during open enrollment from inclusion in public records requests.

As more information is available, it will be shared through the weekly Newsflash emails with all members.

### **One-time COLA for PERS 1/TRS 1**

Through our successful advocacy of SB 5350, RPEC members vested in Plan 1 will receive a one-time 3% cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) next month. The COLA is capped at \$110 per month.

### **Health Care Authority (HCA)**

#### **Online FAQ now available**

Many thanks to all RPEC members who took part in the Health Care Authority's (HCA) listening sessions and public forums. All told, about 176 retirees, many of whom were RPEC members, joined the conversation to provide insights to HCA staff. As a follow-up to those meetings, the HCA crafted a frequently asked question (FAQ) document, drawn from the questions asked by retirees during these sessions. The FAQ also addresses myths that surfaced during the stakeholder engagements. The FAQ is hard to find on the HCA's new website – [www.hca.wa.gov](http://www.hca.wa.gov). After accessing the main homepage, find the [Employee & Retiree Benefits Page](#). Once you arrive on that page, access [Retiree Engagement](#). The questions are found at the bottom of that page.

#### **Agency launches new online portal - Benefits 24/7**

The HCA will launch a new online benefits portal on June 12th. I met with HCA leaders recently and suggested that they offer a webinar for retirees on how to navigate the new portal and to preview its features. They agreed! More details to follow. In the meantime, RPEC members who obtain their healthcare insurance through PEBB can read more about [Benefits 24/7](#) in HCA's PEBB Program May newsletter. HCA staff say the portal will make it easier for retirees to apply for and change benefits during open enrollment. Paper forms will remain available for those who cannot access the portal or choose not to use it.

### **Monthly Legislative Update Calls Extend through December**

The Legislative Update Calls will be held monthly through December. The next call will take place on June 2nd from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. Visit [www.rpecwa.org](http://www.rpecwa.org) for the login information.

### **Upcoming events**

Visit [www.rpecwa.org](http://www.rpecwa.org) for a full calendar of Council Office and chapter meetings:

- June 2: Monthly Legislative Update Call, 2:00 PM
- June 8: Public Employees Benefits Board Meeting, 9:00 AM
- June 8: Healthcare Workgroup Meeting, 3:30 PM
- June 9: Monthly Leadership Call, 1:00 PM
- June 20: RPEC Select Committee on Pension Policy Meeting, 10:00 AM
- June 20: Select Committee on Pension Policy Meeting, 1:00 PM
- June 22: Healthcare Workgroup Meeting, 3:30 PM
- June 23: Pension Policy Workgroup Meeting, 10:00 AM

June 26: Leadership Training Part A, 10:00 AM

June 29: Public Employees Benefits Board Meeting, 9:00 AM

June 30: Leadership Training Part B, 10:00 AM

Best,  
Laurie