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Retired Public Employees Council Chapter 9 – Clark County

Sam Arola, President

(360) 606-1806 – searola@tds.net

Meeting Date: Thursday, April 20th, 2023
Meeting Time: 12:00 PM Lunch Followed by Meeting
Meeting Location: Peachtree Restaurant & Pie House
Meeting Address: 6600 NE Hwy 99
Vancouver, WA 98662

Greetings Chapter 9 Members,

Please join us on **Thursday, April 20th** for good conversation with your fellow retirees and to discuss the current status of the legislature regarding our priority bills. Please see Laurie Weidner's Executive Director's Report on page 2 for details about how you can contact Legislators in the Operating Budget Committee to thank them and urge them to follow through with the Senate's version of our bill.

Chapter 9 Elections will conclude at the April 20th meeting.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the April meeting.

Sam Arola,
President, Chapter 9
Retired Public Employees Council of Washington

April 2023 Executive Director's Report

Dear RPEC Leaders:

April marks another successful whirlwind month for RPEC and its legislative priorities. This is also a big month for member engagement. We need your immediate assistance with an urgent state budget priority.

WE NEED YOUR URGENT HELP – Contact These State Legislators by April 11th

The Legislature has begun negotiations on the state's operating budget. While both the House and the Senate intend to provide a one-time COLA for Plan 1 retirees, RPEC favors the language in the Senate budget proposal. Additionally, the Senate's budget funds a study that will make sure retirees have input into the health insurance plans offered by the Public Employees Benefits Board.

A select group of legislators will be leading budget negotiations. Instead of contacting your own legislators, please contact the key negotiators listed below.

Email or call and relay this message to House leaders:

Thank you for supporting a much-needed one-time 3% cost of living adjustment for PERS 1 and TRS 1 retirees, which will help retired public servants continue to afford necessities. Retirees prefer the Senate's COLA proposal because it prioritizes the full funding of the pension plans. The Senate proposal also funds the one-time COLA from the state general fund while the House proposal extends the fiscal responsibility for the COLA to future budgets.

Additionally, please consider adopting a budget proviso that allocates \$500,000 to the Health Care Authority to report findings of stakeholder engagements to the Legislature. HCA needs to do a better job listening to and serving seniors. This proviso, which already appears in the Senate's budget proposal, will ensure that happens.

Thank you.

(First and last name)

Member of the Retired Public Employees Council of Washington

House Legislators	Email	Office Phone
Representative Timm Ormsby	timm.ormsby@leg.wa.gov	(360) 786-7946
Representative Nicole Macri	nicole.macri@leg.wa.gov	(360) 786-7826
Representative Mia Gregerson	mia.gregerson@leg.wa.gov	(360) 786-7868
Representative Steve Bergquist	steve.bergquist@leg.wa.gov	(360) 786-7862
Representative Joe Fitzgibbon	joe.fitzgibbon@leg.wa.gov	(360) 786-7952
Representative Drew Stokesbary	drew.stokesbary@leg.wa.gov	(360) 786-7846
Representative Kelly Chambers	kelly.chambers@leg.wa.gov	(360) 786-7948
Representative Chris Corry	chris.corry@leg.wa.gov	(360) 786-7810
Representative J.T. Wilcox	jt.wilcox@leg.wa.gov	(360) 786-7912

Email or call and relay this message to Senate leaders:

Thank you for supporting a much-needed one-time 3% cost of living adjustment for PERS 1 and TRS 1 retirees, which will help retired public servants continue to afford necessities. Retirees prefer the Senate's COLA proposal because the Senate's proposal prioritizes the full funding of the pension plans.

Thank you for including the \$500,000 proviso for the Health Care Authority to report findings of stakeholder engagements to the Legislature. HCA needs to do a better job listening to and serving seniors. This proviso will ensure that happens.

Thank you.

(First and last name)

Member of the Retired Public Employees Council of Washington

Senate Legislators	Email	Office Phone
Senator Christine Rolfes	christine.rolfes@leg.wa.gov	(360) 786-7644
Senator June Robinson	june.robinson@leg.wa.gov	(360) 786-7674
Senator Andy Billig	andy.billig@leg.wa.gov	(360) 786-7604
Senator Lynda Wilson	lynda.wilson@leg.wa.gov	(360) 786-7632
Senator Chris Gildon	chris.gildon@leg.wa.gov	(360) 786-7648
Senator John Braun	john.braun@leg.wa.gov	(360) 786-7638

Thank you for your speedy assistance. Let's stand in solidarity to ensure RPEC's legislative priorities are included in the Legislature's final budget. If you have questions, please reach out to Emmett Mills at emmett.mills@rpecwa.org or Laurie Weidner at laurie.weidner@rpecwa.org.

Background on the Senate and House Budget Proposals

Two of our key priorities have been included in the Senate budget proposal.

Funding is earmarked to implement [SB 5350](#), which provides a one-time 3% COLA to PERS 1 and TRS 1 retirees capped at \$110 per month. It also includes language to require the Select Committee on Pension Policy to study and recommend a proposal for a recurring annual COLA. RPEC worked tirelessly to create this language and ensure it was retained throughout the legislative session.

The Senate budget proposal also addresses the need for greater accountability for the Health Care Authority (HCA), which selects and administers healthcare plans for many public sector retirees. The budget proposal allocates \$500,000 for use by the HCA to report to the Legislature the findings from the stakeholder engagements (virtual and in-person listening sessions and virtual public forums highlighted in this Monthly Letter) taking place this spring. The proviso specifies that retiree feedback from these engagements will be used to inform policy decisions about the selection of healthcare plan choices and features. Furthermore, the proviso directs HCA to explore the availability of additional government self-insured healthcare plans with benefits that are equal to or greater than those of Uniform Medical Plan (UMP) Classic Medicare but are more affordable. This proviso supports the intent of Substitute Senate Bill 5169, which RPEC initiated, in concert with the Public Employees Benefits Board Stakeholders' Medicare Coalition.

While the House also intends to give a one-time 3% COLA to Plan 1 retirees in 2023, the House would prefer to pay for the COLA at a later date. Because of this, funds are not allocated to pay for the one-time COLA in the House budget proposal.

RPEC, as well as our partner organizations, prefer the language found in the Senate budget proposal, which prioritizes the full funding of the pension plans. We aim to make sure the Senate's proposal moves forward. Your advocacy for the adoption of the Senate's language will help House fiscal leaders understand how high a priority this is for all public

sector retirees. When you reach out, be sure to also cite the need to allocate the funding for HCA, which does not appear in the House's budget. (See above).

All-member written survey – Please complete the survey and mail it back!

In April, all RPEC members will receive a written survey (with a postage paid return envelope) via U.S. mail. The survey should arrive in your mailbox soon. Gleaning your insights and understanding the priorities and needs of our members is the first step in the strategic planning process for the Executive Board. Please take the time to complete the survey when it arrives at your home and mail it back right away, so that your input can be used to help shape the Board's priorities.

Register Today for the Health Care Authority's (HCA) Virtual and In-person Listening Sessions and virtual public forums – Space is limited!

All RPEC leaders and members who receive their healthcare benefits from the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB) are asked to register today to take part in virtual and in-person listening sessions hosted by HCA. Registration is required. Space is limited.

<https://www.hca.wa.gov/about-hca/news/announcements/register-pebb-medicare-listening-sessions>

Retirees and their spouses or partners who are covered under UMP Classic Medicare, a Kaiser Permanente plan, UHC, or Plans F or G are eligible to participate. The listening sessions and public forums are your opportunity to share insights with HCA staff about your healthcare plan and quality of services you receive from HCA. All virtual and in-person listening sessions will be held from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Each session will be capped at 12 participants. HCA will follow-up with registrants via email and provide the questions, background information, and Zoom log-in information (for the virtual sessions) and/or the location/directions (in person sessions).

Three **in-person listening sessions** are also available – one each in Cheney, Bothell, and Yakima. (The Tumwater session was held March 29th). The specific location for the remaining in-person sessions will be posted one week prior to the scheduled date. These sessions are also capped at 12 participants and will be held from 10 a.m.-12 p.m.

<https://www.hca.wa.gov/about-hca/news/announcements/register-pebb-medicare-listening-sessions>

In addition, HCA will also host **virtual public forums**. The virtual public forums will be held on April 26, May 17, and May 24 via Zoom from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Unlike the listening sessions, the public forums will function like a public hearing. Participation will be limited to 30 participants who will each have 3 minutes to speak about whatever issue, challenge, or suggestion they want to convey to HCA staff.

<https://www.hca.wa.gov/about-hca/news/announcements/pebb-medicare-retirees-participate-virtual-public-forum>

If you cannot attend a virtual or in-person listening session, the virtual public forum is another opportunity to share insights about your healthcare plan and the quality of service you receive from HCA. The virtual public forums are also open to those who have already

participated in a listening session. You can also use your 3 minutes to offer suggestions to HCA regarding how they can improve communications and service to retirees.

Interested in Learning More About RPEC? Register to Attend the Two-part Leadership Training Sessions on June 26 & June 30

All members-at-large who want to learn more about RPEC or who may be interested in serving in a leadership role within their chapter or the Council are welcome to register for the two-part annual Leadership Training , taking place on June 26 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and June 30 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Part 1, held on June 26, is designed for those who have been elected to serve as chapter officers or are serving in elected or appointed chapter chair positions. The training will cover everything you need to know about the organization, our mission, the Council Office, how to work with our professional team, legislative affairs, building chapter member engagement and more.

<https://rpecwa.org/2023-leadership-training/>

Part 2, held on June 30th, is the AFSCME Financial Standards Code Training. This training session is designed for all chapter leaders. The training will take place from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

<https://rpecwa.org/2023-leadership-training/>

Blogs & Weekly E-Blast

Are you receiving the *RPEC Weekly Newsflash*? It is the best way to keep apprised of our weekly news and to learn about our legislative and government affairs priorities. Sign up on the RPEC homepage at www.rpecwa.org.

Upcoming events

Visit www.rpecwa.org for a full calendar of Council Office and chapter meetings:

April 11: HCA In-person Listening Session, Cheney

April 12: HCA In-person Listening Session, Yakima

April 13: Healthcare Workgroup

April 14: Strategic Planning Listening Session

Legislative Update Call

April 17: Senior Lobby

April 18: HCA Virtual Listening Session

April 20: HCA Virtual Listening Session

April 21: Legislative Update Call

April 24: Sine Die (end of Legislative Session)

April 25: HCA Virtual Listening Session

Membership Committee Meeting

April 26: HCA Virtual Public Forum

April 27: Healthcare Workgroup
HCA Virtual Public Forum

Best,
Laurie