



Update

Dear Friends,

March 13, 2024

Since my election to the KPERS Board of Trustees, I have a new disclaimer that I must include in these updates from now on: "The views expressed in this update represent my views and/or the views of the Coalition. They do not in any way represent the views of KPERS Board of Trustees nor do I speak for them." (Ernie Claudel)

The next meeting of KCPR will be held on Wednesday, April 10, 2024, via Zoom. This meeting will be held on Wednesday as usual UNLESS we have a committee conflict like this month.

KCPR March 13, 2024, UPDATE

"We need personal contact in the Capitol!"

Some of our discussions and actions at today's meeting were as follows:

1. Everyone was brought up to date as much as possible. Things are moving very fast at the Capitol. It has been suggested that the end is near. Kansas law prohibits campaigning while the Legislature is in session. Some may want to get it over for this reason.
 - A. There are several possibilities that might be good for the retired.
 - a. The elimination of State Tax on Social Security might still be somewhat alive.
 - b. Increasing the death benefit may or not be passed, but apparently not totally dead yet. (No pun intended. 😊)
 - c. Increasing the minimum salary allowed from \$25,000 to \$40,000 on Working After Retirement may not be dead.
 - d. Anything to do with Tier III, for those of you who are interested, is probably not going anywhere. The reason is likely the cost.
 - B. *My opinion and some 'semi-informed guesstimate' if KPERS were fixed, the following would need to be done.*
 - a. *Provide a benefit increase for the KPERS Retired.*
 - b. *Fix Tier III – Hopefully move all Tier III into Tier II.*
 - c. *Place all fulltime firefighters and law enforcement in KP&F*
(A third of the state's law enforcement officers are not in KP&F. A number of full-time firefighters are not in KP&F. This was caused at the inception of KPERS, the local units of government had a choice to put their 'first responders' in KPERS or KP&F. Many of the local units of government chose KPERS because the employer contribution was less.)
 - d. *Place all Corrections officers in KP&F.*
 - e. *I believe a safe estimate of the cost to initially do this would be \$750 million.*
(All but a would have a continuing annual added cost.)

- f. *You will recall that the main reason for the huge unfunded liability is the legislature's failure to fund KPERS at the actuarial calculated annual rate for 25 years is the primary reason for this debt.*
 - g. *So....it appears that we of KPERS are not being taken care of because there is more interest in cutting taxes than making things right for the citizens.*
 - h. *Incidentally, for those of you who are educators the record number of reported Kansas teacher vacancies of 1,810, only counts special ed, elementary, English Arts, Math, and Science teachers. The legislature has a true concern about teacher shortages in particular but also other public employee needs. The problem is they are having trouble finding solutions that don't cost the big bucks and/or solutions that don't interfere with their policy goals.*
2. Please read closely number 1 in the next section: What Can I Do?
 3. We continue to hold lobby days and/or rallies to provide 'boots on the ground' in the Capitol. Our lobby day was a success to a degree, but we need to increase this attendance. We also need to place retirees in the seats at the committee meetings.
 4. Being able to achieve the committee attendance is going to require more Topeka area attendance because the schedule requires being available on short notice.
 5. Much time was spent on how to develop a plan particularly for Lobby Day.
 6. Preliminary discussions were held on the legislative strategy for 2025.

What Can I Do?

Please note: Some of the information and suggestions listed below are repeated for your convenience. NUMBER 1 is NEW!

1. As you have an opportunity to talk with legislators personally or attend town halls this election year, be sure you ask them their position on support of a KPERS benefit increase.
 - *Their response may well be cost. Help them recall that the cost is their predecessor's problem [25 years of underfunding] not the employees, and we are paying for their failure to address the problem.*
 - *If they blame leadership and they are of the majority, ask them if they voted for the present leadership and if so why.*
 - *Finally tell them that to secure your vote they will have to support and push for a benefit increase.*
 - *We are 'crowding' 30 years without a permanent KPERS Benefit increase. When the benefit committee filed its report on legislative raises, one of the rationales of the need that was used was that they have not had a raise since 2008. This is 17 years! Why can't KPERS Retirees have one after 30?*
2. *Further caution: The oft-asked question, "Where do we get the money?" The answer to this is, 'that is your problem' as we as employees have always done (and contributed) what was needed, the legislature has not! (This may seem harsh, but in the past when we have suggested the source, the idea has been used to fund something else!)*
3. KEEP your 'cards and letters' flowing.

4. *When you communicate with your legislators, remind them that we are in the 27th year without a permanent benefit increase.*
5. *REMEMBER, the excuse that KPERS cannot have a COLA because it is a defined benefit is inaccurate. I have gone as far as to say that that 'excuse' is an insult to my intelligence.*
6. The Governor will be active in the State. Express to her at every opportunity that we need to have her put a 'Benefit Increase' in her budget.
7. We need to continue writing to the Governor as well and demanding action on a benefit increase. To do this you are going to have to go online and follow the directions, as the security protocols are understandable, but you just need to follow them on the Governor's website.

Our Discoveries

1. Another disappointment is that our writers (communicators) are not receiving replies to their emails, especially from leadership. Sadly, I am informed by many that the 'no-reply' position is WAY too common for most all the legislators. *Please do not use this as an excuse to stop communicating.*
2. The thought of the KCPR Steering Committee is that we all need to make a request regularly and repeatedly to the legislative leadership for a benefit increase.
3. Their contact information is as follows:
 - a. Speaker of the House: Topeka Phone 785-296-2302, dan.hawkins@house.ks.gov
His home address is 9406 Harvest Ln., Wichita, Ks 67212, phone 316-722-7307.
 - b. President of the Senate: 785-296-2419, Ty.Masterson@senate.ks.gov
Home: PO Box 324, Andover, Ks 67002, phone 855-255-2446
4. You might, if you live in their area and can vote for them, tell them that you are not planning to vote for anyone who does not support a KPERS Retiree Benefit Increase.

Have a wonderful Week!!!!

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