



Update

Dear Friends,

February 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, March 13, 2024, via Zoom. This meeting will be held on Wednesday as usual UNLESS we have a committee conflict like this month.

KCPR February 13, 2024, UPDATE

"We need personal contact in the Capitol!"

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

- I. We had many wide-ranging discussions today about what has been going on under the Dome. For your information one of the hottest topics among the legislators is the teacher shortage. It is our understanding that the number of public-school teachers needed has reached 1,800. That has led to primary interest in two areas:
 - A. 'Fixing Tier III' – Numerous bills have been introduced and carried over on this subject. The recent report from the Post Audit Committee was that of the 6 programs compared to Tier III, Tier III was decidedly the worst. They were also able to determine that the poor system was negatively impacting retention. They of course weren't able to survey the not yet hired, because they don't know who they are. The latest bills, one from each side of the building, are asking that at least the teachers in Tier III be moved to Tier II. What seems to be an area of concern is apparently still being blocked by leadership.
 - B. The other area is WAR, [Working After Retirement]. The introducer of the bill to raise the earning limit from \$25K to \$50K was promised a hearing, but it doesn't look like that will happen unless the bill gets blessed.
 - C. The bill asking for a one-time bonus of \$500.00, if you had been retired for 10 years, also received no hearing. I know some of the back story on this which I can't share, but apparently someone in high places shut it down as well.
 - D. The bill I am guessing will pass is a bill raising the KPERS death benefit from \$4,000 to \$6,000 which may pass. This was the subject of much discussion this morning in our meeting. The consensus was that we need a benefit for the living. Some of the areas of concern are:
 - a. The legislature will call it a benefit.... some already have!
 - b. It costs virtually nothing. We are losing approximately 3,400 retirees a year and the cost is \$2000 annually, times the number of us that pass away.

- c. While the increased cost proposed legislative raise is under \$5 Million annually, this is at a minimum of a 77% raise. [Some have called it a 93% raise. See the AP article attached.]
 - d. The committee who was charged with making these recommendations used the rationale that the legislature hasn't had a raise since 2009. The last KPERS retired permanent benefit increase was in 1997.
 - e. The plan by the legislature was set up in such a way that the raise was not to be voted on by the legislature, and the President of the Senate has refused to allow it to be even discussed.
- II. We have further planned the lobby day. The event is planned for Thursday, February 22nd from 8:00 until NOON.
- III. *We are attaching the following to these documents:*
- A. *The Planned activities release, which many of you have and is on the website.*
 - B. *The parking and logistics document. This document is also on the website, www.ksretirees.org*
 - C. *A brief version of the above information can also be used as a poster or brochure if you like.*
 - D. *The addresses of two committees: [These are the main committees in both houses that are charged with looking at KPERS.] (If you wish to expand your reach, even though the legislators are not your district legislator, it would certainly not be a waste of time to visit with them.)*
 - a. *The House Committee on Financial Institutions and Pensions*
 - b. *The Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Insurance*
 - E. *February 8, 2024, Associated Press article on Legislative Raises.*

**IF AT ALL POSSIBLE, PLEASE JOIN US IN TOPEKA ON THURSDAY
FEBRUARY 22, 2024.**

The following is information previously provided. We include it as you may still find it helpful!

What Can You Do?

1. I have often included the following caution in my writings (#2 below). Now I have an answer for the legislators who ask this. I have a good source of information that has indicated that the state has close to \$4 Billion in excess this year. I think they can afford to provide us with a COLA!!
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 required, 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. There was only one committee member change in the two committees that impact KPERS most directly. House Member Mike Thompson is new to the House Committee and there are only a couple of room changes on the Senate Committee. The other change is the Committee meeting room for the House. The contact information for both committees is attached.
4. If you go to www.kslegislature.org the information is provided. Go to standing committees. You are looking for Senate Financial Institutions and Insurance. In the House, the committee is Financial Institutions and Pensions. The House committee meets on Monday and Wednesday at 9:00 AM and will more often take up KPERS related bills.
5. The Kansas Secretary of State is posting the candidates for the 2024 primary election. Remember that all the Kansas Senate and House are up for re-election. It will still be helpful if you can provide me with any inside information you might have from your local areas.
6. *It has been suggested that we need to collect as many letters as we can that express the need for a benefit increase. We will then determine which can be put together to provide the legislature with an idea of the need. If you could do that or help us, find folks in real need and help them state that need. If you can collect them handwritten, mail them to me. These need to express a real need: There is no need for perfect punctuation, high quality paper, etc. Several folks have contacted me through KPERS, and I will ask them to provide something handwritten.*
7. KEEP your 'cards and letters' flowing as stated above.
8. *When you communicate with your legislators, remind them that we are in the 27th year without a permanent benefit increase.*
9. *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.*
10. 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.
11. We need to start 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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