Update

Dear Friends, February 6, 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 February 14, 2024, via Zoom.

PLEASE NOTE THERE WAS A DATE ERROR FOR THE NEXT MEETING ON THE LAST UPDATE

SPECIAL KCPR UPDATE REGARDING THE KCPR, KARSP, KNEA RETIRED LOBBY DAY THURSDAY February 22, 2024

The watch words are "Nothing gets accomplished until someone does it."

PLANNED ACTIVITY FOR FEBRUARY 22nd

"KPERS LOBBY DAY AT THE CAPITOL"

THE GOAL IS TO HAVE AS MANY PEOPLE IN THE CAPITOL TALKING ABOUT THE NEED FOR A COLA AS POSSIBLE. We have a 'staging area' of the Capitol reserved from 8:00 am until noon on this day on the 2nd Floor Rotunda. This does not mean that we will not be available until as late as 3:00 pm in the general assigned area.

To ensure that you receive all the information for this event, go to www.ksretirees.org and sign up to receive the latest KCPR Update. In this way you will receive the latest info in a timely manner. We may well have information regarding the Committee Meeting, etc. up until the last day. Check your email before you leave home for the trip to Topeka.

KCPR WILL PROVIDE:

1. A representative to meet you past the entrance and direct you to our assigned space.
2. A packet having:
   a. Update KCPR/KARSP Brochure
   b. KPERS COLA History
   c. A **'report form'** so we can be made aware of your experiences so we can follow up as well as know what feedback you received.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES, should you choose to attend: 😊

1. Prior to this day, schedule an appointment with your representative, your senator, and any others you know. What hours might be available? (It has been suggested that you start this process directly.)
2. To find your Representative and Senator please use the following method:
   A. If you do not know or are not sure who your Kansas Senator and Representative is, go to OpenStates.org. It will ask you what you are looking for so enter legislators. It will next ask for your address, and your Senator and Representative will pop up!!
   B. SCHEDULE FOR FEBRUARY 22nd:
      a. Most legislators arrive in the building by 8:00 am.
      b. The House goes into session at 11:00 am. The session at this time of year will likely not last more than an hour. This, however, is not a guarantee.
      c. You then have from 8:00 until 11:00 to schedule with your House Member and perhaps after the session when the day concludes.
      d. The Senate goes into session at 2:30 pm. The session at this time of year will likely not last more than an hour. This, however, is not a guarantee.
      e. You will probably be restricted to 8:00 until 2:30 with the Senate. Arrive not later than 11:00 am providing you have later appointments.
   C. If others have appointments with your legislator/senator and could not get an appointment and you have one, you can take them with you.
   D. We would also ask that you drop off a card at the Governor's Office asking for COLA.
   E. Finally return the **'report form'** you were asked to fill out to a KCPR representative.
   F. KCPR representative will provide you with a packet of information as well as be able to direct you where to go and offer advice if wanted on how to present the information provided.

OTHER INFORMATION:

1. Presently there is a nice deli on the first floor and a nice area to eat across the hall. Therefore, one does not need to pack a lunch unless you personally wish to do so.

2. Building Tour Information: (You can turn this into a Capitol Day Trip as well.)
   A. The only entrance to the Capitol is through the North entrance. (You can take any exit to leave, but only one to enter.)
   B. To the left of the entrance is the Capitol Store which is open 9 am to 5 pm.
   C. Just past this on the left is the tour guide/information center. You can pick up a brochure there and follow it for a walking tour of the building.
      a. There is also a guided tour of the building at 9 am, 10 am, 11 am, 1 pm, 2 pm, & 3 pm. You do not need to sign up ahead of time. You are welcome to join a tour at any one of these times. You do not need a reservation!
      b. Also available are 'Dome' tours. These leave the guide station at 9:15 am, 10:15 am, 11:15 am, 1:15 pm, 2:15 pm & 3:15 pm.

3. You can also examine the House and Senate chambers with no one present as well as see both Chambers in session if you like.

4. *We cannot predict this early whether there will be committee meetings of interest you might attend. This information will be available as late as the morning of the 22nd.* (You may have heard the humorous country tune by Don Williams, "Tulsa Time." The legislature runs on 'legislative time.' 😊)

5. Unless your group or organization has a designated T-Shirt or other desired apparel, we would ask that you wear black.

TALKING POINTS

The organizers disclaimer follows:

You don't have to be an expert on all the KPERS talking points or information. We provide you with this information because we think that it is valuable for you to know and understand. The following is what the legislators need to learn from you:

1. *That you are here today to advocate for the Cost of Living for KPERS retirees and how long you have been retired.*
2. *If you have a personal story of being retired and have seen prices increase and your KPERS benefit remains the same, how has it affected you?*

- 88% of KPERS Retirees have never received a benefit adjustment.

- 87% of the KPERS Retirees reside in Kansas.

- The Kansas Legislature has not provided KPERS Retirees with a permanent increase since 1997.

- The average KPERS monthly retirement benefit is $1,376.00.
  - ($1,376.00 X 12 = $16,512.00)
  - The Average KP&F monthly retirement benefit is $3,396.00.
  - ($43,396.00 X 12 = $40,752.00)
  - [Note both the employer and employee contribute more and
  - retirement age is sooner.]

- Under Tier I & II the benefit is equal to approximately 51% of the retiree's final average salary.

- The employees are required to contribute their designated amount. It is estimated that if the legislature had contributed what they needed to, KPERS would be over 80% funded. Therefore, because of the 25 years of underfunding, the employees are not realizing any added value for their earnest contributions over the years.

- All state employees, which includes school staff, local, state, and county employees must become part of KPERS when hired.

- The employees with options are Elected State Officials.

- Elected officials can refuse the offer.

- None of these employees can enhance their KPERS retirement if they are already drawing KPERS retirement benefits.

- Legal finding showed that if you are drawing retirement from KPERS or are a beneficiary of a retiree, you must receive the promised benefit. Any vested member of KPERS falls in this category as well.

- These legal rulings refer to contract law and the fact that KPERS is a retirement plan approved by the IRS.

- Since all employees must be a part of KPERS by law, and their contributions are contributed through payroll deduction, all employees contributed the required amount to KPERS throughout their employment.

- Local government entities are also legally required to contribute their employers share to remain in KPERS.

- Because of legislative funding practices for KPERS State and Schools, the employer funding for KPERS State and Schools have been short funded.

- When the original Kansas School Retirement System (KSRS) was combined into KPERS in 1971, it was not fully funded. When the two pension systems were combined the new actuarial calculated amount was not contributed for 25 years. Since 1997, the employees have not received any of the added value from investment returns that would have been available if the KPERS Trust Fund had been fully employer funded. (The actuarial calculated contributions were not met for 25 years. This underfunding continues to be the primary cause of the present Unfunded Actuarial Liability.)

- Calculations show that if the actuarial calculated amount had been contributed, the funded level of the KPERS Trust Fund would be over 80%. Additionally, the UAL (Unfunded Actuarial Liability) would be at a minimum, 50% less than it is today.

- <u>The understanding of these facts is particularly important when the recent excuses for no COLA have been that KPERS is not funded at an 80% level.</u>

- The recent rhetoric saying that no COLA can be given because Defined Benefit Pension Plans do not have COLA's is inaccurate. (The Kansas Legislature since 1972 has granted 16 COLAs, 5 bonus payments and authorized a 13th check. As reported by the National Association of State Retirement Administrators, a selection of 100 public sectors plans (state and municipal) showed that 72 plans included an automatic COLA of some kind in the benefit plan design and 28 plans (including Kansas) utilized ad hoc COLAs.)

REVIEW OF RALLY LOGISTICS

1. KPERS Day at the Capitol is scheduled for 8:00 am to 12 noon on Wednesday, February 8, 2023. The reserved 'staging area' will be located on the 2nd Floor Rotunda. Representatives of KCPR and KARSP will be available in the area until 3:00 pm. (This is a reserved 'staging area' with no formal gathering planned.)

2. There is now a circle drive into the Capitol off SW 8th Street, with the only entrance to the building on the north side of the building at ground level. This, of course, means there are no more stairs to enter the building! ☺

3. Ample parking is available at the Topeka Expo Center at 19th & Topeka Avenue. This lot is on the East Side of the Expo Center. The pick-up point is in the SE portion of the parking lot which will likely have "0" cars prior to our arrival. It is a huge lot. A shuttle (van) will run from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm from this location. (This shuttle is provided courtesy of the Topeka Fire Fighters.) It will be equipped with a sign indicating it is from the fire fighter's union. Parking in the immediate area of the Capitol is limited to the Capitol underground parking, which is free, **BUT** will fill up very early on the 8th. Very limited handicap parking may be available in the Capitol parking garage. Past these two options, metered parking on the streets is about the only other option available, but it is also very limited. We cannot over emphasize the challenge you will face if you are not bussed or carpooled to the Capitol, and then the drivers "shuttled" to the Capitol from the Expo Center. Ernie has used this service in the past and found it very satisfactory and easy to use. The driver of the van will be **Dennis Weikel.** He is now one of us. He is now retired. He has been driving for us for several years. He keeps track of the cars and the names of the people he takes to the Capitol so that no one is left behind!

4. The Good News and Bad News: There is also plenty of free parking across the street from the Capitol and South of the Docking Building which is being worked on. The good news is that there is plenty of free parking there, however, it is a city block to the present Capitol entrance. We believe that entrances to the building using the steps is no longer available for security reasons. This parking lot may have time limits. Check the signs.

5. We suggest that for those carpooling have your driver deliver you to the north entrance off the circle drive, then take the carpool vehicle to the shuttle area (see above) and have the shuttle return you to the Capitol. Buses may park or wait here also.

6. If you are lucky enough to park on the street, choose the parking meters with the yellow post. They allow for longer parking at a cheaper price. To use these meters you would need a 'Passport Parking Mobile App.' This is why we suggest using the Expo Center parking and the shuttle.

7. The entry, which we have described above, is truly beautiful. You enter the building, and past the security check point is a Visitors Center, and then there are some 30 yards of exhibits as you move toward the elevators. This path will lead you to an office referred to as "The Document Room." To gain access to the elevators, you move straight ahead until you come to a T (The Document Room). Turn right a few steps for the elevator. This elevator will take you to all five

floors! You will also find an elevator to your left. There are steps in this area leading to the first floor. You may want to take those if you are able bodied. Our gathering area is on the second floor Rotunda.

8. We suggest you plan to wear black. While it would be nice to give everyone a free t-shirt, our budget does not allow for this type of expenditure. (If your organization has matching t-shirts which identify you as a group, wear them!!)

9. Our friends at security have once again emphasized, no signs or banners are allowed in the Capitol!

10. **The matter of security:** There will be two metal detectors at the one entrance. To pass through this entrance, it is in everyone's best interest to bring a minimum of items that may set the "alarm" off and require delays for all. It is suggested that you have all items that will "set off the bells" in one container so that all will pass through the scanner at once. Any metal will set off the machine! Some of the items which are a problem are cell phones, other electric equipment and of course keys. Since the law no longer prohibits guns in the building, passing through the detectors is much less complicated.

- Remember to send me your updated email address...also if for any reason you should no longer wish to receive this update, let me know at the address listed at the end of this "update," and I will contact you and remove you from the official mailing lists.
- Just a reminder that this email is an official report of the Kansas Coalition of Public Retirees. If I editorialize, I will indicate that fact.
- Remember that I want you to forward this to other retirees and the "working" who will benefit from this information.
- The KCPR website is www.ksretirees.org

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