



Retired Public Employees Council SPOKANE AREA – CHAPTER 13

March Newsletter 2026

RPEC Olympia Office: 1-800-562-6097 www.rpecwa.org

Attention RPEC Ch. 14 (Medical Lake) members: Chapter 14 has merged into Chapter 13, so you are all Chapter 13 members!

Official Call for Delegates: RPEC 2026 Convention

This serves as your official notice for Delegate and Alternate Nominations (March 12, 2026) and Elections (April 9, 2026) for the upcoming 2026 Convention.

Convention Details:

The convention will be held September 22–24 at the Wenatchee Convention Center in Wenatchee, WA. Please note that hotel confirmations and specific event schedules are not yet available. Once the Council provides these details, we will forward them to all delegates and there will be posted updates on the RPEC Website.

Call for Delegates:

We are looking for approximately 37 delegates to represent Chapter 13. The Chapter will pay for your expenses such as mileage, room and meals. These delegates play a vital role in making decisions that shape the future direction of RPEC. If you cannot attend the March 12th meeting in person but wish to make a nomination, you may submit it via note, text, or email to any member attending the meeting.

Join Us via Zoom:

Chapter 13 now offers a hybrid format for our General Membership meetings! We held our first successful hybrid meeting on February 12 with five members participating remotely.

Email Updates: The Zoom link is sent via email prior to each meeting. If you did not receive the link for the last meeting, please contact me or the Council office at (360) 352-8262 to update your email address.

Consistency: For your convenience, the Zoom link will remain the same for every meeting. If you need technical assistance with Zoom, feel free to call me.

Next Meeting:

Date: March 12, 2026

Time: 11:00 AM (Socializing) | 12:00 PM (Meeting Starts)

Location: Longhorn BBQ, Airway Heights (7611 W Sunset Hwy, Spokane, WA 99224)

I hope to see you there!

In Solidarity,

Cindy Hall

President, RPEC Chapter 13

(509) 844-3277 | Banditsgirl@gmail.com

MARCH 2026 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

With just two weeks left of the 2026 Legislative Session, the Capitol is a flurry of activity with final bill hearings and the beginnings of budget negotiations between caucuses and between chambers. More than half of the bills RPEC was tracking are no longer in play.

You were outstanding in swift and massive response to RPEC Calls-to-Action that were issued during this session – several hundred signing in support of the COLA bill as it moved through committees, and hundreds signing in support of voter rights and healthcare legislation. All very impressive numbers and in most cases, caused RPEC to be rightfully noticed in our advocacy efforts by both members of the legislature and other labor and retiree organizations. Kudos to you all!

FEDERAL RELATIONS

Act Now - Say “NO” to Artificial Intelligence in Medicare!

[H.R. 6361](#) – “Ban AI Denials in Medicare Act” (Landsman-OH) – We are working with AFSCME to garner cosponsors across the nation. We need you to reach out to YOUR U.S. Representative.

H.R. 6361 would prohibit the Secretary of Health and Human Services from implementing or testing the WISeR (Wasteful and Inappropriate Services Reduction) Model and amend the Social Security Act to prevent the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) from developing or testing any future payment or service delivery models in Medicare Parts A or B that involve prior authorization - particularly those using AI or algorithmic decision-making.

The U.S. Congressional Switchboard can be reached at **202-224-3121** to connect you directly to any House Representative's office. **Please ask your U.S. Representative to sign on as a cosponsor to H.R 6361 - “Ban AI Denials in Medicare Act”.** **OR**, use this link to send a

pre-formatted message directly to your U.S Representative - <https://act.afscme.org/letters/tell-your-representative-co-sponsor-hr-6361-the-ban-ai-denials-in-medicare-act/>.

STATE RELATIONS

Legislative Week Recap

With just shy of 200 RPEC and WEA-Retired members registered for our annual Legislative Week, held January 26-30, almost 140 of those members attended the Kickoff Training to learn of our issues and talking points. They also spent time in breakouts with other members of their respective legislative districts to strategize their limited, but valuable time with their legislators.

The COLA bill we urged lawmakers to pass, HB 1474 from 2025 which provided a one-time 3% COLA with a \$110 cap and had been endorsed by the Select Committee on Pension Policy, never made it out of House Appropriations where it was reintroduced.

The DRS requested legislation HB 1312/SB 5114 which would have paid retirement benefits through the end of month in which the retiree or beneficiary passes away never made it out of initial committee meetings.

The same went for HB 1603 (requires that Medicare supplemental policies be issued without medical underwriting to individuals who voluntarily switch from Medicare Advantage to traditional Medicare during designated open enrollment periods) and HB 1754 (requires Medicare supplemental policies to be issued without medical underwriting to individuals enrolled in traditional Medicare during any open enrollment period for traditional Medicare or Medicare Advantage), which also never saw the light of day this session.

Plan 1 Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)

The vehicle being used this session that shows promise of a 2026 one-time 3% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for PERS/TRS Plan 1 retirees is SB 5862 (Dozier). This bill was elevated prior to the initial round of committee cutoffs by the Senate Ways & Means Committee. It was amended by that committee during executive session on the bill to include a \$110 cap. It passed the Senate with a unanimous 48-0 vote and is currently in House Appropriations.

Healthcare

The Governor's proposed supplemental budget maintained the Medicare Explicit Subsidy at its current level of \$183/mo, which is applied to Medicare premiums for those who obtain their healthcare benefits through the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB).

However, we recently learned that the Senate may be proposing a cut to this subsidy in its proposed supplemental operating budget by way of amendment. Upon learning of this proposal, we sent a letter to the chairs of the fiscal committees requesting they maintain the subsidy at its current level, and asked members through a Call-to-Action to express the same via submitted written testimony.

Session Wrap-up

The 2026 Legislative Session will wrap up before next month's Executive Director's letter. We are currently preparing the next RPEC quarterly newsletter and it will contain our annual End of Session Report. Final outcomes for high priority issues such as the PERS/TRS Plan 1 COLA and the Medicare Explicit Subsidy will be covered in that report. The newsletter should be hitting your mailboxes towards the end of March. The newsletter and End of Session Report will also be published on the RPEC website.

YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

Please watch your email as we move through the 2026 Legislative Session. As important bills move into committee hearings and progress to floor votes, we will need you to lend your voice to move our agenda forward.

TUNE IN AND STAY INFORMED!

2026 Convention Call

It's Convention year and the Council Office is gearing up! The 2026 Convention Call is being mailed to all chapter officers on March 2nd. Please watch your mail and let us know if you, as an officer, do not receive the Convention Call. The Council Office will be holding a Zoom meeting and Q & A session on Friday, March 13th from 10am-12noon to answer any questions you may have regarding convention and to educate chapter leaders on the process of resolution and amendment preparation and submittal. Meeting information will be available on the RPEC website calendar, the RPEC website Convention page and will be emailed to chapter leaders ahead of the meeting.

Legislative Update Calls

Only a couple more weeks of our weekly Legislative Update Calls are left before we move back to a monthly meeting schedule. See the Calendar at <https://rpecwa.org/>. Each week we will apprise you of the events in the Washington Legislature and those on Capitol Hill in D.C. affecting you and your retirement security. Come join us!

IMPORTANT DATES

Visit the RPEC website at www.rpecwa.org for the full calendar:

- Mar. 2 – Convention Call packets mailed to chapters
- Mar. 2 - Legislature, Fiscal Committee Cutoff
- Mar. 6 - Legislature, Opposite House Cutoff
- Mar. 6 – Weekly Legislative Update Call (2:00 pm)
- Mar. 12 – Membership Committee meeting (10:00 am)
- Mar. 12 – Healthcare Workgroup meeting (3:30 pm)
- Mar. 13 – Convention Q&A Zoom meeting for chapters (10:00 am)
- Mar. 13 – Sine Die (Last Day of 2026 Legislative Session)
- Mar. 13 – Weekly Legislative Update Call (2:00 pm)
- Mar. 20 – Legislative Committee meeting (10:00 am)
- Mar. 26 – Healthcare Workgroup meeting (3:30 pm)
- Mar. 27 – Political Action Committee meeting (10:00 am)