



Retired Public Employees Council Chapter 20 – Cowlitz & Wahkiakum Counties

Judy DeVoe, President

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Meeting Date: Wednesday, February 19th, 2025
Meeting Time: No-Host Lunch: Noon | Meeting: 1 PM
Meeting Place: Longview Country Club
Meeting Address: 41 Country Club Dr, Longview, WA 98632

Welcome to everyone,

I hope the New Year is going well for you. Our February meeting will be on Wednesday, February 19th, at the Longview Country Club – 41 Country Club Dr, Longview. Our speaker will be Andre Stepankowsky, a long-time local journalist. The no-host lunch will start at noon, followed by our meeting at 1:00 pm. Reminder to Chapter 20 trustees, we are meeting at 11:00 am to do our annual chapter audit prior to lunch and the meeting. President Judy DeVoe will provide legislative updates at the meeting. The meeting will be hybrid as normal. Here is the sign in information:

Join Zoom
<https://zoom.us/join>
or 253-215-8782

Meeting ID
893 8402 8431

Passcode
893057

Looking forward to seeing everyone.

Maurice Garrott
Secretary, Chapter 20
RPEC Vice President
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FEBRUARY 2025 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Our union is powered by your talents and involvement. We need all members involved to keep RPEC's state legislative and policy priorities visible with state legislators as proposed bills move through the legislative process. Through our all-member survey, members have told us that they joined RPEC because they want to stay engaged in issues that impact their retirement security. This month's Report covers how you can become involved.

Your Involvement Beyond Legislative Week

RPEC's Virtual Legislative Week is February 3-7. The Council has coordinated over 80 virtual legislator meetings for more than 200 RPEC and Washington Education

Association-Retired (WEA-R) members. The timing of our legislative efforts is critical because many of our key bills are or are about to have public hearings in their “house of origin” (House bills start in House committees/Senate bills start in Senate Committees). It is important that legislators hear from you, their constituents, at the beginning of the legislative session, so that they are reminded of our priorities. Our work next week is only the beginning of our multi-faceted advocacy efforts, which will intensify as the legislative session progresses.

So, what is next? We urge all our chapters to schedule follow-up meetings with their legislators in late February and March. We hope you will participate in these meetings. By late February, approved bills will have passed out of their “house of origin” (i.e., approved House bills will transition to the Senate; approved Senate bills will transition to the House). The meetings that your chapter coordinates in late February and March will help to ensure that our key bills continue to move through the legislative process.

We also encourage all members to respond to the “Calls-to-Action,” coordinated by the Council Office, which are included in the weekly NewsFlash, as well as in separate emails. The “Calls-to-Action” relate to priority bills that are poised for public hearings. These “Calls-to-Action” require your immediate action. When we send these emails to you, we are attempting to ensure our priorities are communicated en masse to key policy decision makers. Based on your support in the month of January, an average of about 125 to 200 RPEC members are signing in PRO on our key bills through the “Calls-to-Action” initiated by the Council Office. That’s outstanding! However, we have 13,000 members. I think we can do better than 1% – don’t you? Let’s challenge ourselves in the month of February to double that number of sign-ins for RPEC’s “Calls-to-Action.”

When we fight together, we stand a greater likelihood of succeeding. We have more work to do together over the next few months. So, please read your emails, attend your chapter meetings, and learn how you can make a difference.

What are RPEC’s legislative and policy priorities?

Delegates to the biennial Convention (held in September 2024), confirmed RPEC’s short- and long-term policy and legislative priorities. This legislative session, we are hyper focused on ensuring that the pension bills, particularly those that fund a recurring cost-of-living adjustment for PERS/TRS 1 retirees, move through the legislative process. We are advocating in earnest for a number of healthcare affordability and accessibility bills. These bills benefit all RPEC members, including those who do not have employer-sponsored healthcare plans. One bill that we are advocating for will increase affordability for our younger retirees who are not yet eligible for Medicare. You can stay informed by reading the weekly NewsFlash, sent each Friday via email, and by visiting our website at www.rpecwa.org. The website includes a list of the bills we are tracking and RPEC’s position, as well as our legislative priorities for 2025-2026.

How do we identify our positions on bills?

All bills are reviewed using RPEC’s Legislative Priorities. We have a responsibility to advocate for these priorities, which have been crafted and vetted by members. Having a clear policy agenda from our members enables us to move quickly when

bills are filed and immediately scheduled for public hearings. We also check in with partners – retiree groups, healthcare-related coalitions, and labor partners, including the Washington Federation of State Employees (WFSE) and AFSCME Council 2, to exchange information and share insights. Many times, partners provide us with additional insights that help to inform whether we take a position on a bill. That said, there are times when the priorities of partners differ from those set by our members through our Legislative Priorities. All information gleaned on potential priority bills is passed along to RPEC's president, the co-chairs of the Legislative Committee, and the chair of the related RPEC workgroup(s) for decisions to be rendered. Our organizational position, if any, emerges through this process. The legislative session is a fast-moving, hectic time. As you will see by looking at our bill tracking document at <https://rpecwa.org/legislative-bill-tracker/>, the number of bills that we are assessing continues to grow. Currently, we are monitoring 30 bills. We generally take positions on top priorities only. As bills move through the legislative session, they may be amended. If we have taken a position on a bill that has been amended, the review process, noted above, is revisited to affirm, or modify RPEC's position.

Stay informed!

The best way to stay informed is to read the weekly NewsFlash (sent via email each Friday), participate in the weekly Legislative Update Calls (held weekly at 2 p.m. on Fridays, see details on the Calendar at www.rpecwa.org), and read your chapter newsletter.

RPEC On Air – Tune in and learn!

Do you enjoy listening to podcasts? Have you listened to any of the wonderful episodes archived at www.rpecwa.org and available on Spotify, Audible, and other sites where podcasts are available? Check it out. Our next episode will feature a special guest to discuss the threats facing Social Security. Stay tuned!

Important Dates

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

- Feb. 7:** Legislative Update Call (2:00 p.m.)
- Feb. 13:** Healthcare Workgroup meeting (3:30 pm)
- Feb. 14:** Legislative Update Call (2:00 p.m.)
- Feb. 17:** Council Office Closed (President's Day)
- Feb. 27:** Legislative Update Call (2:00 p.m.)
- Feb. 28:** Legislative Committee (10:00 a.m.)
- March 7:** Legislative Update Call (2:00 p.m.)
- March 14:** Legislative Update Call (2:00 p.m.)

Photos from the Chapter 20 Holiday Gathering



RPEC President Clair Olivers

