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**Retired Public Employees Council
Chapter 21 – Tri-Cities Area**

Robin Rego, President: (253) 370-9899, rarego1213@gmail.com

Meeting Date: Tuesday, May 6th, 2025
Meeting Time: 12:00 PM
Meeting Place: Red Lion Hotel
Meeting Address: 2525 N 20th Ave, Pasco, WA 99301

Dear fellow Chapter 21 members,

At our April 1st chapter meeting, our guest speaker was Jamilynn Lewis, Local Program Coordinator for Aging and Long-Term Care (ALTC).

Jami was there early so she could meet and greet our members. We appreciated her informative presentation. The handouts and slides served her well to deliver her message, replete with so many available resources for our needy community. We enjoyed her easy-going demeanor, which put everyone at ease so they could listen well to her helpful content.

This meeting was held at the at the Red Lion Hotel, 2525 North 20th Avenue, Pasco, WA 99301. Members started arriving around 11 AM, so they could buy lunch and enjoy the Eat, Meet, and Greet before the business meeting at 12 PM. At the end of the meeting, there was a drawing for a \$25 gift card and the lucky person was pleasantly surprised.

Our May 6th meeting will also be at the Pasco Red Lion Hotel, starting at noon with a no host lunch at 11 AM. Our guest speaker will be Bradley Cater, Homebound Coordinator, Mid-Columbia Libraries, Kennewick Branch. Brad will present an overview of their many programs and services - homebound book deliveries, free audiobooks, research databases, and much more. Brad spoke to us about six months ago on this subject. He was so well received and since he was unable to deliver all the content in the allotted time, he was invited back again.

Our annual nominations and elections for our governing Board was held at the April 1st chapter meeting – President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and three Trustees. Since no one chose to run against the incumbents, they were elected by acclamation. We thank the governing Board for their past service and look forward to another successful year. Your dues give you the opportunity to attend this monthly event, meet your fellow members, learn how RPEC is diligently protecting your interests, and perhaps even win the \$25 cash drawing.

Please take the time to read the Executive Director, Laurie Weidner's report in this newsletter. You can well see how your RPEC dues are working to protect what is "near and dear" to you.

Get updated from the comfort of your home computer through many virtual meetings as shown on the Upcoming Events calendar at the end of the newsletter. We are strong in our numbers, but we need to increase our membership to protect our interests.

RPEC is the only organization in the state that represents retirees on the Select Committee on Pension Policy (SCPP), the Washington State Investment Board (WSIB), the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB), the Health Care is a Human Right Coalition, and at the federal level, with lobbyists working to protect Social Security and Medicare.

If you have comments or suggestions, please contact me at 253-370-9899 or rarego1213@gmail.com.

Robin Rego, President, RPEC Chapter 21

Guest Speaker: Brad Cater, Homebound Coordinator, Mid-Columbia Libraries (Kennewick)

My name is Bradley Cater and I'm the Homebound Coordinator here at Mid-Columbia Libraries, Kennewick Branch.

I'm new to the area but have thoroughly enjoyed my time here serving the community, with an emphasis on our Life Experienced members.

I believe in excellent, compassionate customer service and have a passion for bringing services to others that I wish I had when I was younger.



RPEC Meeting Minutes April 1st, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 12:01 p.m. by President Robin Rego. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Rego. After welcome and self-introductions, President Rego introduced our guest speaker, Jami Lynn Lewis, Local Program Coordinator for Aging and Long-Term Care (ALTC).

Jami let us know about the services that are offered by ALTC and that that the Aging and Long-Term Care program covers eight counties. There are programs to help older adults – Tailored Supports for Older Adults (TSOA). This a new program for older adults who need help to live at home. The benefit is for individuals who currently do not meet Medicaid financial eligibility criteria but do meet functional criteria for care. They may or may not have a family caregiver. There is no estate recovery or client participation for this program.

Roll Call - President Robin Rego - present, Vice President Susan Leschinski - present, Secretary Carol Travis - present, Treasurer Steve Gamble - present, Trustees Dave Hopper and John Lawson - present, Dave Hanson - excused.

Minutes were approved as presented.

Moment of Silence for Deceased members was observed.

Nominations and Election of Officers were presented by Carolyn Lawson, Election Judge. All incumbent officers have agreed to continue in their positions. Carolyn declared that all the Officers were elected by acclamation. Carolyn proceeded to administer the Oath of Office.

President's Report: Robin went over ways for members to engage in advocacy. He told us to stay informed by reading the weekly Newsflash that is sent via email each Friday. RPEC hosted the members-only Washington State Investment Board Educational Webinar on March 28th. RPEC will host a webinar on Universal Health Care on April 4th.

Susan Leschinski, Vice President, spoke on bills of interest in the 2025 Legislative session. There are quite a few on health care, Plan 1 COLA pensions, benefits/housing recreation and a number of other topics.

Treasurer's Report: Steve reported that for March 2025, there was a beginning balance of \$12,827.59, a deposit of \$329.46, debits of \$50.00 and \$39.20, for an ending balance of \$13,067.85. It was moved and seconded to accept the report. Steve moved that he be given permission to transfer \$10,000.00 to a CD at 3.25 percent for 11 months. That would result in an additional \$297.52. John Lawson made an amendment that if we needed to do so again in the future, that Steve be able to withdraw funds when needed. The original motion was amended, moved, seconded and passed.

It was announced that Melinda Sommerlund was taking John's Lawson's place as Chair on the Chapter 21 Legislative Committee.

Old Business - Melinda reported on places that might be right for a Potluck Picnic this summer, to include members and their families. August 5th was the date chosen, in place of the monthly chapter meeting. The location is Howard Amon Park. Melinda will finalize details and get back to us at the next chapter meeting.

New Business - none

Good of the Order- It was again mentioned about people getting a spam call regarding unpaid toll charges even though they had not traveled on any roads that required tolls.

Steve Gamble won the \$25.00 cash drawing.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, May 6th at the Red Lion in Pasco with Brad Cater as our guest with a Part Two of his previous Library presentation.

Meeting adjourned at 2:25 p.m.

Carol Travis, Secretary

APRIL 2025 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Why did you join RPEC? Most of our members tell us that they joined RPEC because they recognize the need to have an organization as their advocate for retirement security with state legislators, state policy leaders, members of Congress, and on federal issues.

RPEC is a non-partisan organization. We exist to advocate for your retirement security. Thus, we actively work to expand relationships with all state and federal legislators, regardless of their party affiliation. When state legislators, Congressional leaders, and state or federal agency heads or leaders take steps to harm your retirement security, we act on your behalf. Sometimes that action takes the form of meetings with key policy makers. Other times it translates into a formal letter of concern. We also ask our members to mobilize with us through "calls to action", which come to you through the weekly NewsFlash.

When you receive an email from us or from AFSCME Retirees about taking action, it is because we believe that proactive engagement is needed to stop potentially detrimental policies from being enacted into law. This April report includes an example of our work to prevent a potential policy decision from negatively impacting your retirement security. Every action we take together aligns with the Legislative Priorities, which have been crafted and approved by members. Our sources for information, which frame the content of the emails to you, are drawn from insights provided by our state and federal lobbyists and from reputable retiree organizations and unbiased news sources.

Thank you for joining us in preserving your retirement security at state and federal levels. We stand together to ensure your hard-earned benefits are available to you and future generations of retirees.

State facing multi-year budget deficit

On March 20th, the Office of Financial Management unveiled the updated state fiscal forecast. Estimates place the overall deficit at \$12 to \$15 billion. The state's revenue collections have not recovered since the pandemic. Collections from sales, business and occupation taxes have dropped but are expected to be offset, somewhat, from capital gains and estate taxes. Governor Ferguson has called for cuts to state agency budgets and has recommended that state employees be furloughed one day per month to reduce state costs. Our union family, including the Washington Federation of State Employees (WFSE), is deeply opposing balancing the state's budget on the backs of state employees. We stand in solidarity with WFSE in opposing the reduction of salaries of state employees through a monthly furlough.

In the fiscal budget hearings on the proposed Senate and House budgets on March 25th, the state's deficit was the "elephant in the room." Both branches have recommended deep cuts, while also proposing some revenue-generating strategies.

Proactive advocacy: RPEC helps to stop a reduction in the Medicare Explicit Subsidy

News about the looming state deficit was first reported publicly in June 2024. RPEC immediately conducted meetings with Governor Inslee's staff and policy decision makers about our policy priorities, which are set by members through the Legislative Priorities. (Those meetings resulted in Governor Inslee maintaining the Medicare Explicit Subsidy at \$183. He also included funding for a one-time cost-of-living adjustment for PERS/TRS 1 retirees.)

In late January, Governor Ferguson asked all state agencies to freeze hiring and travel, and to make recommendations on budget cuts. The Health Care Authority (HCA), which manages the medical plans for the public sector retirees who earn their healthcare benefits from the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB), recommended cutting the Medicare Explicit Subsidy. This subsidy is used to make healthcare premiums more affordable. The subsidy is currently \$183 per month or up to 50% of the monthly premium, whichever is less.

HCA recommended cutting the subsidy to \$90 per month. Fortunately, through RPEC's advocacy efforts, Governor Ferguson rejected this budget reduction!

This example illustrates why RPEC engages in proactive advocacy on potential policy decisions. The recommendation to reduce the subsidy would have harmed our members. When we are proactive, we stand a greater likelihood of influencing policy. RPEC wields political clout. When RPEC expresses concern about a policy decision under consideration, we fulfill our commitment to you. We owe it to you to step in and communicate why a potential policy decision is a bad idea.

Senate's Proposed Budget is Better for RPEC

On March 24th, the Senate and House unveiled their proposed biennial budgets. As expected, they are radically different. The Senate's proposed budget, [PSSB 5167](#), funds a recurring one-time cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) in 2025 and a recurring COLA in 2026 for PERS/TRS 1 retirees. The House's proposed budget, [PSHB 1198](#), includes no COLA. Both proposed budgets fully fund the Medicare Explicit Subsidy as noted above, thanks to our advocacy. President Clair Olivers offered strong testimony in the House Appropriations

Committee on March 25th, expressing disappointment in the House's budget. David Koenig, Legislative Committee Chair, offered thanks in the Senate Ways & Means Committee for composing a budget that considers the needs of public sector retirees. The Ways & Means Committee also met on March 25th.

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 during the legislative session; see details on the calendar at www.rpecwa.org), and read your chapter newsletter.

Important Dates

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

- April 4: Universal Healthcare Webinar (10:00 a.m.)
Legislative Update Call (2:00 p.m.)
- April 10: Healthcare Workgroup (3:30 p.m.)
- April 11: Legislative Committee (10:00 a.m.)
Legislative Update Call (2:00 p.m.)
- April 14: Finance Committee (10:00 a.m.)
- April 18: Legislative Update Call (2:00 p.m.)
- April 21: Senior Lobby (10:00 a.m.)
- April 24: Healthcare Workgroup (3:30 p.m.)
- April 25: Strategic Plan Special Task Force (10:00 a.m.)
Legislative Update Call (2:00 p.m.)
- April 27: End of the Legislative Session
- May 2: Strategic Plan Special Task Force (10:00 a.m.)
Legislative Update Call (2:00 p.m.)
- May 5: Executive Board Meeting (10:00 a.m.)
- May 6: Executive Board Meeting – Strategic Plan Evaluation (9:00 a.m.)