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Retired Public Employees Council Chapter 2 – Olympia Area

“Retired from Work, Engaged in Life!”

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Katrina Wynkoop Simmons – Vice President; RPEC Exec. Board-Dist. 7 Rep
Martin Rollins – Secretary • Pat Mix – Interim Treasurer
Lonnie Johns-Brown – Legislative/Political Action Chair
Diana Finch – Membership Chair • Gary Bruebaker – Finance Chair

May 2023 RPEC CHAPTER 2 NEWSLETTER

**Join us – live and in person @ The Olympia Center
for RPEC Chapter 2’s May General Membership Meeting (5/11/23)**

UPDATES & CALLS TO ACTION – RPEC makes it easy for you:

RPEC Online: www.rpecwa.org

Log on or call into **RPEC’s Monthly Legislative Updates**, the first Friday of every month @ 2 p.m., May-Dec.

Via Computer or tablet: • Direct link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89045365250?pwd=cHYvbU80d08xTXRLTmPOZGF1VW53QT09> • Or, go to:

<https://zoom.us/join> **Meeting ID:** 890 4536 5250 • **Passcode:** 320296

BULLETIN:

**Senior Resource Fair returns to Chapter 2
LIVE & IN-PERSON at our May 11 meeting!**

- **WHAT:** Ch. 2 General Membership Meeting
- **DATE:** Thursday, May 11
- **TIME:** 1:30 – 3:00 p.m.
- **WHERE:** The Olympia Center,
222 Columbia St. NW,
Olympia, WA 98501
Multipurpose Room A, 1st Floor
- **FEATURED:**
 - > **SPECIAL EVENT:**
Senior Resource Fair
 - > **Expanded refreshments table**
Enjoy appetizers, snacks & treats while you take in the fair.
 - > **Door prizes & more:**
Special presentations start after a brief business meeting.

Senior Resource Fair back May 11 after 4-year COVID pause

> Chapter 2’s popular annual Senior Resource Fair is the latest special event to re-open post-pandemic.



Chapter 2’s Senior Resource Fair is back! In its traditional May slot. **Live and in-person** for the first time since 2019. A big event to round out the 2022-2023 meeting cycle before our three-month summer break.

Almost all our 90-minute monthly meeting will be devoted to the fair. Most of it will be self-directed. You’ll seek out the information most relevant to you.

BULLETIN: LEGISLATIVE SESSION WRAP-UP!

The Washington State Legislature adjourned on April 23. What happened regarding pensions, including a cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) for Plan 1 retirees? Health care and HCA/PEBB accountability reform measures? Final updates in the Executive Director’s Report inside on page 5.

And maybe visit with those guests we may not have seen in person since before the pandemic.

And there will be dozens of special guests. Our special guests have prepared a lineup of brief presentations on volunteer, health, and community services that should be of interest to you. These volunteers with our community partners will be on hand at the Fair Booth Tables arranged around our usual meeting space at The Olympia Center: Multipurpose Room A on the First Floor.

So c'mon down to The Olympia Center, Thursday, May 11, 1:30-3 PM for Senior Resource Fair 2023.



Chapter 2's Senior Resource Fair follows RPEC's successful model bringing information and resources to its members and future members. Pictured above and on page 1 is RPEC's April 18, 2018, retirement workshop for state employees in our area who were nearing retirement. It drew a standing room crowd to The Olympia Center. *Photos courtesy of our sister AFSCME Council, the Washington Federation of State Employees.*

A few more details about the May 11 Senior Resource Fair

Many Chapter 2 members joined in the four years since the last in-person fair in 2019. Because it has been four years, the rest of us might need a little recap. Here are a few more details:

- Chapter 2's Senior Resource Fair is "like a box of chocolates." Lots of variety. Informal and informational.
- This special event brings many of our community partners to you in one place at one time. Like any fair, you can visit their tables at your leisure.
- This year we'll have a **keynote speaker** from one of our first-time community partner presenters. **All Aboard Washington** (AAWA) is the only nonprofit organization representing intercity rail passengers in

Washington state. Chapter 2 member Luis Moscoso, a former state legislator, is AAWA's Government Affairs Director. Many other Chapter 2 members are active in AAWA, which is recognized as giving all of us a voice in the discussion of our state's rail planning process. Rail may link us to mega airports in parts of the state such as Yakima and Moses Lake that want new airports there rather than in rural areas of Thurston County for instance.

- Joining the topic of trains at the fair will be buses and our feet. **Bus Buddies** will take the mystery out of getting from Point A to Point B on city buses. Also confirmed will be the good volunteers from **Volkssport, America's Walking Club**. They were on hand at RPEC's September 2022 State Convention. By popular demand, we invited them to our resource fair.

- Discover health and consumer benefits you get just for being an RPEC member. **Bright Now! Dental and Orthodontics** returns this month after Assistant Director Carrie Magnuson reintroduced us to that benefit at our April meeting. Also on hand: **HEAR IN AMERICA**, with family hearing benefits exclusive to members in Chapter 2 and all of RPEC, and the **Foundation for Working Families** and its grant program of disaster relief and hardship relief.

- Also confirmed for the Senior Resource Fair are:
 - > The Washington State Senior Citizens' Lobby
 - > Random Acts of Kindness
 - > Senior Services for South Sound, including PALS and SHIBA
 - > PALS is the South Sound Pet Assistance for Low-Income Seniors Fund
 - > SHIBA (Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors) provides volunteer counselors to give you one-on-one help with questions about Medicare for new and current enrollees. That program is sponsored in Thurston County by Senior Services for South Sound in partnership with the State Office of the Insurance Commissioner.
 - > Olympia Host Lions Club
 - > And the RPEC office team with a variety of tips and programs to save you time.

- At press time, we were awaiting RSVPs from other community groups.

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QUICK UPDATES FOR YOU:

• Four new officers sworn in to fill vacancies



From left: new board members Sharon Fasnacht, Gary Bruebaker and Pat Mix; and new chapter Treasurer Sandra Groves. --Photo courtesy Richard Swanson.

At its April 13 meeting, the Chapter 2

Executive Board nominated and elected by acclamation four members to fill vacancies. They will serve the remainder of the respective unexpired terms until all terms end in April 2024.

Elected to fill three vacant Executive Board Members-at-large positions were: **Pat Mix**, the chapter's Immediate Past Treasurer who agreed to serve as Interim Treasurer until that vacancy was filled; **Gary Bruebaker**, current chair of the Chapter 2 Finance Committee; and **Sharon Fasnacht**, who served on the chapter's Audit Committee in 2021 and 2022.

Finally, the board elected **Sandra Groves** as Treasurer. She, too, served on the chapter's most recent Audit Committee that met Feb. 16 to audit the chapter's 2022 financial records.

The Chapter 2 Executive Board is now at the full 20 members specified in the chapter's constitution.

• Volunteer for RPEC booth May 10 in Olympia

> **MAY 10:** RPEC booth at the Public Service Recognition Week (PSRW) Celebration Wednesday, May 10, at the Capitol Campus East Plaza Lawn, across Capitol Way from Tivoli Fountain. Shifts available from 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

If you're interested in volunteering, contact RPEC Membership Coordinator Jakob Canup at (360) 352-8262 or by email at Jakob.canup@rpecwa.org

• There is still time to register for an HCA Virtual Listening Session and Public Forums

> The Health Care Authority (HCA) Virtual Listening Sessions continue through May 31. At press time, the virtual listening session dates in May were May 9, 10, 18, 25, 30, and 31.

> HCA Virtual Public Forums are May 17 and May 24.

Find registration information and other details on HCA's website, <https://www.hca.wa.gov/about-hca/news/announcements/register-pebb-medicare-listening-sessions>.

• Chapter 2 General Membership Meeting Schedule, June 2023-May 2024 (Notice required by Ch. 2's Constitution.)

Chapter 2's General Membership meeting schedule for the next 12 months follows the same pattern we're used to – the second Thursday of every month, September-May, 1:30-3 PM, in person @ The Olympia Center.

June 2023/July 2023/August 2023 – No General Membership Meetings (summer break)

Sept. 14, 2023 – 1:30 PM Chapter 2 General Membership Meeting

Oct. 12, 2023 – 1:30 PM Chapter 2 General Membership Meeting

Nov. 9, 2023 – 1:30 PM Chapter 2 General Membership Meeting

Dec. 14, 2023 – 1:30 PM Chapter 2 General Membership Meeting

Jan. 11, 2024 – 1:30 PM Chapter 2 General Membership Meeting

Feb. 8, 2024 – 1:30 PM Chapter 2 General Membership Meeting

March 14, 2024 – 1:30 PM Chapter 2 General Membership Meeting

April 11, 2024 – 1:30 PM Chapter 2 General Membership Meeting

May 9, 2024 – 1:30 PM Chapter 2 General Membership Meeting

• After the summer break, we'll resume regular General Membership Meetings on Sept. 14

• The Chapter 2 Executive Board is still scheduled to meet the morning before every monthly General Membership Meeting at 10:00 AM in person at The Olympia Center. Virtual options may continue at the board meeting.

• Other chapter committees will schedule meetings as needed.

• Chapter 2's monthly newsletter will not have any schedule changes.

Important Chapter 2 Dates for May-September

See Executive Director's Report for other key dates.

May 11, 2023 – 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Chapter 2 May 2023 Executive Board Meeting

(In-person) The Olympia Center, Room 102

May 11, 2023 – 1:30 PM

Chapter 2 May 2023 General Membership Meeting

(In-person) The Olympia Center, Multipurpose Room A

SPECIAL PROGRAM: Chapter 2 Senior Resource Fair

(in-person for first time in 4 years!)

May 29, 2023

Memorial Day Holiday (State Holiday)

June/July/August 2023

No scheduled Ch. 2 General Membership or Board meetings; regular meetings resume after the summer break on Sept. 14, 2023.

June 12, 2023

Women Veterans Day

June 19, 2023

Juneteenth (State Holiday)

July 4, 2023

Independence Day (State Holiday)

July 5, 2023

Voters' Pamphlets mailed

July 12, 2023

Start of the Primary Election voting period (through Primary Election Day). Ballots are mailed out; completed ballots can be mailed back or deposited in one of the 30 ballot drop boxes throughout Thurston County.

July 13, 2023 – 11:30 AM

Chapter 2 ANNUAL SUMMER PICNIC

In-person @ Tumwater Historical Park

(Hold this date; more details coming in the mail as we get closer to the date)

July 18-20, 2023

Washington State Labor Council Convention, SeaTac

To be considered for one of Ch. 2's 3 delegate positions

contact Ch. 2 Pres. Tim Welch: timw98513@gmail.com. • (360) 481-5092

Aug. 1, 2023

Primary Election Day *(ballots can still be deposited in an official drop box until 8 p.m. on Aug. 1).*

Sept. 14, 2023 – 1:30-3:00 PM

Chapter 2 September 2023 General Membership Meeting

NOTE: For in-person meetings, full meeting agendas, draft minutes and other documents and resources will be available on-site at the General Membership meetings at The Olympia Center on May 11. During this transition to in-person meetings, Chapter 2 members can still get relevant documents electronically. Contact Chapter 2 President Tim Welch by email at timw98513@gmail.com or call/text/voicemail at (360) 481-5092.

May 2023 Executive Director's Report

Dear RPEC Leaders:

Congratulations! Sine Die, the end of the legislative session, occurred on April 23, and, due to your advocacy efforts, RPEC's top legislative priorities were passed by the Legislature. Read the full end-of-session legislative report in the spring edition of the membership newsletter, which will be in your mailboxes by the end of this month. It will also be posted later this month to RPEC's website at www.rpecwa.org.

All-member written survey – Please complete the survey and mail it back!

The Executive Board embarked on a strategic planning process earlier this year that began with information gathering from members. One piece of that process is asking all members to complete a written survey. Your input will help the Executive Board identify our strategic direction and goals to carry the organization for the next 5 years. Your feedback matters. You should have received the survey by now. If you have not yet filled it out, please do so, and mail it back to the Council Office right away.

Two key legislative victories

Throughout the legislative session, RPEC leaders and members advocated for SB 5350. This bill unanimously passed the Legislature after a battle over amendments that were concerning for RPEC. Ultimately, our Senators prevailed, and the bill passed without the alarming amendments. In July, PERS 1 and TRS 1 retirees will receive a one-time 3% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) not to exceed \$110 per month. That bill also requires the Select Committee on Pension Policy (SCPP) to study and recommend a proposal to the Legislature for a recurring COLA.

We also prevailed in ensuring greater accountability for the Health Care Authority (HCA) through a proviso that Senator June Robinson fought hard to secure in the final budget act. The proviso provides funding to HCA to report to the Legislature their findings from the stakeholder engagements with retirees (see below) to improve services. The proviso also requires the agency to identify additional government self-insured plans, like the Uniform Medical Plan (UMP) Classic Medicare, that offer great benefits but have more affordable premiums for retirees.

Stay tuned! Our advocacy work will begin soon. We have work to do together this summer and fall with the SCPP. And, we have more work to do with HCA so that the agency provides better service to retirees. Again, look for the full end-of-session legislative report in the spring edition of the membership newsletter.

Health Care Authority's (HCA) Virtual and In-person Listening Sessions and virtual public forums wrap up this month

All RPEC leaders and members who receive their healthcare benefits from the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB) are asked to register to take part in virtual and in-person listening sessions hosted by HCA. All stakeholder engagements will conclude this month. There is still space available in all sessions. <https://www.hca.wa.gov/about-hca/news/announcements/register-pebb-medicare-listening-sessions>.

Retirees and their spouses or partners who are covered under UMP Classic, Kaiser Permanente NW Senior Advantage, Kaiser Permanente WA Medicare plans, Premera Blue Cross Medicare Supplement Plan G, UnitedHealthcare PEBB Balance, or United Healthcare PEBB Complete are eligible to participate. The listening sessions and public forums are your opportunity to share insights with HCA staff about your healthcare plan and the quality of services you receive from HCA. All virtual and in-person listening sessions will be held from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. HCA will follow-up with registrants via email and provide the questions, background information, and Zoom login information (for the virtual sessions) and/or the location/directions (for in-person sessions).

An **in-person listening session** will be held in Bothell on May 16th from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. The location will be posted soon on the HCA website. HCA staff will follow up with directions and details. Space is still available. <https://www.hca.wa.gov/about-hca/news/announcements/register-pebb-medicare-listening-sessions>.

Two more **virtual public forums** are also available on May 17th and 24th from 10-11:30 a.m. The public forums function like a public hearing. Registrants will have 3 minutes to speak about whatever issue, challenge, or suggestion they want to convey to HCA staff. Space is still available. <https://www.hca.wa.gov/about-hca/news/announcements/pebb-medicare-retirees-participate-virtual-public-forum>.

If you cannot attend a virtual or the last in-person listening session, the virtual public forum is another opportunity to share insights about your healthcare plan and the quality of service you receive from HCA. The virtual public forums are also open to those who have already participated in a listening session but have more to share or say. You can also use your 3 minutes to offer suggestions to HCA regarding how they can improve communications and service to retirees.

Interested in learning more about RPEC? Register to attend the two-part Leadership Training Sessions on June 26 & June 30

All members-at-large who want to learn more about RPEC or who may be interested in serving in a leadership role within their chapter or the Council are welcome to register for the two-part annual Leadership Training taking place on June 26th from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and June 30th from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Part 1, held on June 26th, is designed for those who have been elected to serve as chapter officers or are serving in elected or appointed chapter chair positions. The training will cover everything you need to know about the organization, our mission, the Council Office, how to work with our professional team, legislative affairs, building chapter member engagement and more. <https://rpecwa.org/2023-leadership-training/>.

Part 2, held on June 30th, is the AFSCME Financial Standards Code Training. This training session is designed for all current chapter leaders. The training will take place from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. <https://rpecwa.org/2023-leadership-training/>

Legislative Update Calls are held monthly from May through December

With the legislative session now over, the Legislative Update Calls will move to a monthly schedule from May through December. The next call will take place on May 5 from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. That day, the Legislative Committee will also meet from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. If you are interested in learning more about our advocacy efforts or have interest in getting more involved, please plan to attend the Legislative Committee meeting and the Legislative Update Call. Visit www.rpecwa.org for the login information and more details about both virtual meetings.

May is Older Americans Month

Through the adoption of the Older Americans Act of 1965, the month of May became the federal monthly observance of Older Americans Month. This month is a time for us to continue to speak out and collectively act to protect Social Security, Medicare, and efforts here in Washington to restrict access to quality healthcare. RPEC is the state's premiere advocacy organization for public sector retirees like you. We are focused on the priorities that matter most to you in retirement, including protecting pension and healthcare security. Older Americans Month is the perfect time to reach out to your state legislators to thank them for their support of RPEC's legislative priorities and to remind them that public sector retirees are a valuable resource and constituency.

Upcoming events

Visit www.rpecwa.org for a full calendar of Council Office and chapter meetings:

- May 8: Executive Committee
- May 9: HCA Virtual Listening Session
- May 10: HCA Virtual Listening Session
Public Service Recognition Week (Capitol campus)
- May 16: HCA In-person Listening Session, Bothell
- May 18: HCA Virtual Listening Session
- May 19: Monthly Leadership Call (open to all leaders and members)
- May 22: Executive Board Strategic Planning Work Session
- May 23: Executive Board Meeting
- May 25: HCA Virtual Listening Session
Healthcare Workgroup
- May 30: HCA Virtual Listening Session
- May 31: HCA Virtual Listening Session

Best,
Laurie