



# Retired Public Employees Council Chapter 20 – Cowlitz & Wahkiakum Counties

*Judy DeVoe, President*

**(360) 261-2780 – [judyjod@aol.com](mailto:judyjod@aol.com)**

**Meeting Date:** Wednesday, February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024  
**Meeting Time:** No-Host Lunch: Noon | Meeting: 1 PM  
**Meeting Place:** Longview Country Club  
**Meeting Address:** 41 Country Club Dr, Longview, WA 98632

## OFFICIAL NOTICE OF CHAPTER NOMINATIONS & ELECTIONS

**Nominations:** [March meeting](#) | **Elections:** [April meeting](#)

Members of Chapter 20,

I would like to welcome you to your February Chapter 20 monthly meeting on Wednesday, February 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Reminder: until further notice our meetings will be held on the third Wednesday of the month.**

At this time, we don't have a speaker scheduled yet, but hope to have one by the meeting date. President Judy DeVoe will be updating everyone on legislative details pertaining to our priority's with RPEC. We will also discuss upcoming nominations and elections occurring in the next 2 months. We will meet at the Longview Country Club, 41 Country Club Drive in Longview, with the no host lunch at noon and the meeting at 1 pm. This meeting will be hybrid via Zoom.

### **Join Zoom**

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

### **Meeting ID**

840 9269 8888

### **Passcode**

564704

If any questions, please feel free to call me at 360-261-1038 or President Judy DeVoe at 360-261-2780.

We look forward to seeing you on February 21<sup>st</sup>!

Maurice Garrott  
Secretary, Chapter 20  
RPEC Vice President

## **February 2024 Executive Director's Report**

We are now about 1/3 of the way through the short, 60-day legislative session. Thanks to your individual and collective efforts, our priorities are known by legislators and are moving through the legislative process.

### **Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB) Update**

In response to our budget proviso from the 2023 legislative session, the Health Care Authority (HCA) released the findings of a study highlighting healthcare plan options that would have the same excellent benefits available through the Uniform Medical Plan (UMP) Classic Medicare but would have more affordable premiums. The report will be discussed by the PEB Board at its annual retreat on February 1<sup>st</sup>. HCA is recommending the adoption of a new configuration of UMP Classic Medicare. The medical benefits will remain unchanged in the new configuration. The pharmacy benefit would shift to an employer-managed Plan D pharmacy plan that nearly mirrors what is currently available in UMP Classic Medicare. HCA estimates this change will save retirees upwards of \$200 per month on premium costs. The new configuration is more affordable because the Plan D pharmacy benefit would be eligible for federal pharmaceutical drug subsidies. HCA will be hosting three virtual public forums and one in-person public forum in February to give retirees an opportunity to share feedback on this proposed new configuration. Details about how to register for the public forums will be available at [www.hca.wa.gov](http://www.hca.wa.gov). Information will also be published in the weekly NewsFlash and at [www.rpecwa.org](http://www.rpecwa.org).

### **State Advocacy**

*Legislative Day 2024:* Eighty-three meetings were conducted with legislators and staff. All told, nearly 200 RPEC and WEA-R members participated. We appreciate the excellent meeting summaries provided by attendees. This information will be useful in the spring as RPEC's Political Action Committee (PAC) considers endorsements for those seeking reelection.

*Ad Hoc COLA for PERS/TRS 1:* Thanks to your efforts and meetings that we have also coordinated with top fiscal policy decision-makers, Substitute HB 1985 is poised for a House floor vote. The bill will provide a one-time 3% COLA for retirees vested in Plans 1 with a cap of \$110 per month. Please reach out to your legislators and urge them to continue to support this bill.

*Slightly lower premiums for the priciest PEBB healthcare plans:* Through our efforts with the Office of Fiscal Management and fiscal policy leaders, the Governor provided a \$10 increase to the Medicare Explicit Subsidy in his preliminary operating budget. The state provides the subsidy to lower monthly premium costs. Those who have chosen the more expensive healthcare plans will benefit from the increase. As budget negotiations begin in February, we will be advocating for this increase to remain in the final budget act.

*Weekly Legislative Update & bill tracker:* All members are invited to attend the weekly Legislative Update held each Friday via Zoom from 2-3 p.m. The bill tracker is also updated each Friday. The tracker and Zoom link for the Friday Legislative Update are available at [www.rpecwa.org](http://www.rpecwa.org).

### **Federal Advocacy**

*Fiscal Commission Act of 2023 Moves to House Vote:* Your federal retirement benefits are, again, at risk thanks to legislation that was approved in January in the House Budget Committee and is poised for a full House vote. The [Fiscal Commission Act of 2023 \(H.R. 5779\)](#) will create a 16-member fiscal commission to search for ways to reduce the national deficit and balance the national budget. Retiree and senior advocacy organizations fear the Commission will prioritize Social Security and Medicare funding cuts over other federal expenditures. RPEC is sending official communication to House delegation members urging them to protect Social Security and Medicare benefits. A detailed [position paper](#) about the proposed debt commission is available at <https://retiredamericans.org>.

### **Executive Board Approves Strategic Plan**

The Executive Board approved RPEC's strategic plan at its November meeting. The plan will guide RPEC's priorities through 2027. The plan was informed by research conducted in spring 2023 by AFSCME Retirees and data gathered by the Council Office. A background document, summarizing the strategic plan goals, is available at [www.rpecwa.org](http://www.rpecwa.org).

### **Upcoming Events**

Visit [www.rpecwa.org](http://www.rpecwa.org) for a full calendar of Council Office and chapter meetings.

- Feb. 13 – PEBB UMP Classic Medicare Town Hall (10:00 am, virtual)
- Feb. 15 – PEBB UMP Classic Medicare Town Hall (2:00 pm, virtual)
- Feb. 16 – Legislative Update Call (2:00 pm)
- Feb. 19 – Council Office closed, Presidents' Day
- Feb. 22 – PEBB UMP Classic Medicare Town Hall (2:00 pm, virtual)
- Feb. 22 – Healthcare Workgroup (3:30 pm)
- Feb. 23 – Legislative Update Call (2:00 pm)
- Feb. 26 – Executive Board Meeting (9:00 am)
- Feb. 29 – PEBB UMP Classic Medicare Town Hall, in-person in Olympia (10:00 am)
- Mar. 1 – Legislative Update Call (2:00 pm)
- Mar. 7 – Sine Die (end of Legislative Session)
- Mar. 8 – Legislative Update Call (2:00 pm)
- Mar. 14 – Healthcare Workgroup (3:30 pm)
- Mar. 15 – Legislative Committee Meeting (10:00 am)
- Mar. 15 – Legislative Update Call (2:00 pm)**