



Washington RPEC Chapter 46 December 2023 NEWSLETTER
HOLIDAY LUNCHEON Join us at Noon
Wednesday December 13th
Family Pancake House 17521 Redmond Way

Our December Meeting is traditionally a social occasion. As a member, your lunch is free! We have only two items of business: signing up members to attend Legislative Day (see following article) and swearing in our new Board Member, Mark Adams.

Marianne Wilkins and **Jean Pass** are planning a **December Frivolity**. Table decorations, Holiday music, special treats and a few sing-a-longs will help us share the Season's Frivolity. Join us – come celebrate! Bring a friend, spouse, or significant other.

LEGISLATIVE DAY – January 22, 2024

Carpool to Olympia, meet up with other RPEC and WEA-Retired members from your Legislative District. Get briefed on our issues and reminded how to lobby, then have a light lunch and bus up to the Capitol for pre-arranged meetings with your district's legislative delegation and legislative assistants. There will be no reception, so you can head back north the same evening. Get information and register on the RPEC website: <http://www.rpecwa.org>. Or, if you would prefer, register at the December Chapter 46 meeting. We will arrange carpools at the December meeting. We have asked whether District 9 can arrange a van or small bus, but have no response at the time we must submit this newsletter.

MARK ADAMS JOINS CHAPTER 46 EXECUTIVE BOARD

Mark Adams stepped up and has been elected to fill a vacated position on our Executive Board. He will be sworn in at the December meeting and will serve until Chapter elections in March.

2024 CHAPTER BUDGET

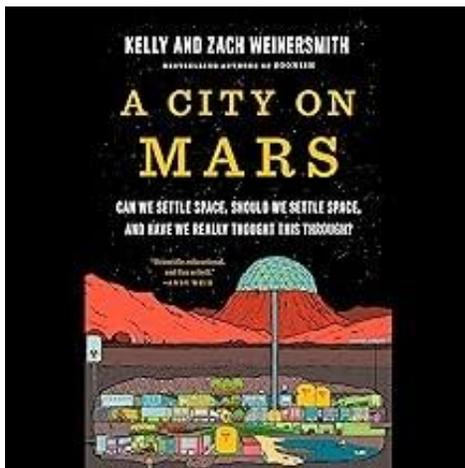
Thanks to Treasurer **Dennis Montgomery's** groundwork, the Chapter Executive Board was able to formulate and present a realistic 2024 Chapter Budget, which was reviewed at the November meeting. Subsequently, we have been invited to a Zoom meeting regarding the costs and handling of chapter newsletters, which might impact our plans. We will report back in January.

RECAP OF NOVEMBER MEETING

President Frey presented information on making the best match between your healthcare needs and available plans, both within the PEBB and those whose choices are not negotiated by PEBB. Although you will have made your health care plan decision by the time you receive this newsletter, those of you who are not within PEBB, and chose a Medicare Advantage plan, do have an opportunity to switch to another Medicare Advantage plan before March. Check with your insurance provider. If you are covered under PEBB, you can only change plans before 2025 enrollment if there has been a major change in your circumstances. Contact SHIBA 1-800-562-6900, or PEBB Customer Service 1-800-200-1004 for personalized information.

LOOKING FORWARD TO OUR 2024 MEETINGS

Circle the dates **January 17th**, **February 21st**, and **March 20th** for the first meetings of the New Year. To line up speakers for next year, when the legislature is back in session, we are working to get speakers on topics members have suggested: the differences in adult living situations, downsizing, and end-of-life planning.



WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

I have always been a science fiction fan and speculated about colonization of the Moon or Mars, even though I know it will not happen during my lifetime. Kelly and Zach Weinersmith, who wrote **A City on Mars**, are self-defined space geeks. They began the book zealous about outer-space colonization, but their research concluded that Mars's surface is covered with toxic substances making it hard to farm. They wonder if space-dwellers will be able to have babies because both conception and birth may prove tricky in low gravity. An interesting take on the space race.

What have you been reading: fiction or non-fiction, serious or just for fun?

Let President Frey know at freybroughton@aol.com so we can feature it in an upcoming newsletter.

WANT TO EARN A FREE MEMBERSHIP?

For a very limited time RPEC is still offering a free annual membership to anyone who recruits two new members. Do you know someone who recently retired from a state, city, or county position? Tell them about RPEC. Bring them to a meeting. The most active new members in our chapter seem to be those recruited directly by members. **Until the end of 2023**, as an incentive to recruit new members, you can earn a free annual membership by recruiting two new members. Get a membership for your spouse and one former co-worker and your membership for next year is Free.

WHY DO WE NEED YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS?

Things happen after this newsletter has gone to press. Members with email addresses on file receive notices of emergent events such as senate hearings, special actions, and updates. **We only have email addresses for about half of our members.** The Council Office is asking chapters of our size to send newsletters out over the Internet. If this is imposed on us, it will

cost much more to send out the balance of the newsletters first class (as there will not be enough to qualify for bulk rate) to members who do not have email addresses. We will speak out to retain a print newsletter, but if you don't already receive email reminders for each meeting, or receive follow-ups, it would help to send an email to our Vice-President Marianne Wilkins at marianne@msn.com

YOUR 2022-2024 RPEC CHAPTER 46 OFFICERS

Judith Frey, President
Marianne Wilkins, Vice Pres.
Linnea Mulder, Secretary
Dennis Montgomery, Treasurer
Mark Adams, Board
Arnetta Henninger, Board
Katie Kerfonta, Board
Annette McCully, Board
Barbara Gelsleichter, Trustee
Charles Gelsleichter, Trustee
Jan Hemingway, Trustee

If you have questions about contents of the Chapter 46 Newsletter or ideas for upcoming meetings, contact me.

Judith Frey, President
freybroughton@aol.com

December 2023 Executive Director's Report

Thank you for all your hard work this past year to move our legislative priorities through the Legislature, Select Committee on Pension Policy, and Public Employees Benefits Board. All the recognition that RPEC has garnered this year for our advocacy work and legislative victories, including earning the Washington State Labor Council's top award, is due to our members' engagement with legislators and the legislative process, our policy leadership, and our collective advocacy work with partner organizations. We have a lot to be proud of with more important work ahead at both federal and state levels in 2024.

As you consider how you will contribute to RPEC in the year ahead, start by registering today to participate in the annual Legislative Day on January 22nd. If you are new to RPEC, this is the perfect way to learn about our legislative priorities, meet other members from your chapter and legislative district, and meet your state legislators and their staff.

On behalf of the professional team at the Council Office, we wish you a joyful and safe holiday season.

We Thank Our Extraordinary Leaders

As a member-run organization, we are grateful for the service of our Executive Committee, Executive Board, chapter presidents and officers, those serving on RPEC Standing Committees and Workgroups, and all those who serve at a chapter level. Thank you for giving your time and talents to us over the last year.

RPEC is the only retiree organization that has volunteer leaders serving on key statewide committees and boards that impact retirement security. We are also grateful for the

leadership, advocacy, and service of: **Bev Hermanson**, Select Committee on Pension Policy (RPEC Political Action Committee Chair, Chapter 2); **Yona Makowski**, State Investment Board (Chapter 2); **Gwen Rench**, Healthcare Is a Human Right (Chapter 3); **Elyette Weinstein**, Public Employees Benefits Board (Chapter 18); and **Carol Dotlich**, Washington Federation of State Employees Executive Board (President, Chapter 12; RPEC Executive Board, District 8).

Federal Relations

Fiscal Stability Act Poses Threat to Social Security and Medicare Funding

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Retirees and the Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA) have concern about a new piece of bi-partisan legislation introduced in the Senate in November. The Fiscal Stability Act (S. 3262) would purportedly create a fiscal commission that will produce a plan to improve the nation's fiscal trajectory and decrease the national debt. Retiree organizations fear the real agenda is to slash funding for Social Security and Medicare for seniors. RPEC will work, in concert with other AFSCME Retiree chapters nationwide, to oppose the bill and the companion legislation (H.R. 5779) introduced in the House. A detailed [position paper](#) about the proposed debt commission is available at <https://retiredamericans.org>.

Keep apprised of RPEC's work at a federal level by reading the weekly NewsFlash and visiting www.rpecwa.org.

State Relations & Advocacy

Register today for RPEC/WEA-R Legislative Day – January 22, 2024

RPEC's annual Legislative Day, held in concert with the Washington Education Association-Retired (WEA-R), will take place on January 22nd in Olympia. The event is open to all RPEC members. Legislative Day gives RPEC members a chance to meet with their state legislators from their respective districts in their offices on the Capitol campus. Register at <https://rpecwa.org/2024-rpec-wea-retired-legislative-day/>. Registration closes on January 3. Please register soon.

Two anticipated bills will benefit RPEC members

Through the advocacy efforts of RPEC and our retiree organization partners, the Select Committee on Pension Policy will advance a bill next legislative session that not only provides another one-time cost-of-living adjustment to retirees vested in Plans 1, but also expands the maximum cap to \$125 per month.

Moreover, RPEC, in concert with the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB) Stakeholders' Medicare Coalition (which RPEC formed and leads), has initiated both a policy bill and potential budget proviso that will increase the Medicare Explicit Subsidy provided to Medicare-eligible retirees who obtain their healthcare benefits from the Health Care Authority (HCA)/PEBB. The Medicare Explicit Subsidy reduces the monthly premium costs for the most expensive healthcare plans offered and managed by HCA/PEBB.

Both bills will be introduced sometime soon and will be leading priorities for RPEC during Legislative Day and the legislative session.

HCA Update

In the last legislative session, RPEC, in concert with the PEBB Stakeholders' Medicare Coalition, initiated a proviso requiring the HCA to hold listening sessions with retirees to ascertain their needs and to use this information to inform policy and to improve communication and services. The proviso also required the agency to report the findings to

the Legislature. The report will be available on the HCA website on December 1st at www.hca.wa.gov. The report will be available under About HCA, Data/Reports. The Coalition will study the report and will be referencing it throughout the 2024 legislative session to ensure HCA honors the input of retirees moving forward.

Legislative Update Calls Begin Weekly in January

This month marks the end of the monthly Legislative Update Calls. Starting on January 12th, the calls will be held weekly each Friday at 2 p.m. and will extend through the end of the legislative session in late March.

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 five goal areas relate to: organizational sustainability, member recruitment, member retention and engagement, member communications, and federal advocacy. The plan was informed by research conducted in Spring 2023 by AFSCME Retirees and data gathered by the Council Office.

The Board also appointed the Strategic Plan Ad Hoc Committee to begin to outline potential next steps for the Board to implement the plan. The Committee is chaired by **Maurice Garrott**, Vice President and Chair of the Membership Committee, and includes President **Clair Olivers**, District 1 Representative **Cheryl Moser**, District 3 Representative **Kandy Kraig**, District 9 Representative **Alma-jean Marion**, and me.

A backgrounding document will be available at www.rpecwa.org by January. Executive Board members will be sharing more information about the plan in the coming months.

Upcoming Events

All meetings below will be held virtually on Zoom. Visit www.rpecwa.org for a full calendar of Council Office and chapter meetings.

- Dec 8 – Legislative Committee Meeting, 10 a.m.
- Dec 11 – Executive Board Meeting (Continuation of agenda from November 13th meeting), 10 a.m.
- Dec 11 – Meeting with Presidents/Officers of Large Chapters, 1:30 p.m.
- Dec 12 – Select Committee on Pension Policy, 9 a.m.
- Dec 13 – Healthcare Is a Human Right, 5 p.m.
- Dec 14 – Healthcare Workgroup, 3:30 p.m.
- Dec 18 – Senior Lobby, 10 a.m.
- Dec 25-Jan 1 – Council Office closed for Holiday Break
- Dec 28 – Healthcare Workgroup, 3:30 p.m.
- Jan 2 – Council Office opens
- Jan 3 – Deadline to register for Legislative Day
- Jan 8 – First Day of the 2024 Legislative Session
- Jan 11 – Healthcare Workgroup, 3:30 p.m.
- Jan 12 – Legislative Committee meeting, 10 a.m.
- Jan 12 – Beginning of weekly Legislative Update Calls, 2 p.m.
- Jan 15 – Senior Lobby, 10 a.m.
- Jan 19 – Weekly Legislative Update Call, 2 p.m.
- Jan 22 – Legislative Day, 9 a.m.
- Feb 1 – PEBB Retreat, 9 a.m.

Best,
Laurie