



# Retired Public Employees Council of Washington

## (RPEC) Chapter 46 SEPTEMBER 2023 NEWSLETTER

**Join us at Noon  
Wednesday, September 20<sup>th</sup>  
Family Pancake House 17521 Redmond Way**

### **State Senator Manka Dhingra (D45) Candidate for WA State Attorney General**

*Please plan to arrive right at noon so we can make the best use of Senator Dhingra's time!*

**Senator Manka Dhingra** was first elected to the Senate by the constituents of the 45<sup>th</sup> Legislative District in November 2017—the first Sikh state legislator elected in the nation. Dhingra is currently the Deputy Majority Leader of the Washington State Senate. She brings two decades of experience as a prosecutor and behavioral health expert to her role as Senate Law & Justice Committee. She also serves on the Health & Long-Term Care Committee and the Ways & Means Committee.



She has supported RPEC issues and sponsored and passed legislation addressing a wide range of issue areas including providing property tax relief for seniors, curbing domestic violence and sexual assault, preventing firearm violence, prosecuting financial fraud, and reforming the criminal justice system with an evidence-based approach.

Manka Dhingra has announced her candidacy for Washington State Attorney General. Join us to learn about her plans and qualifications for this role.

***If you are a new member, your first lunch is on us—anything from the menu. After that members pay only \$5 for lunch and the chapter pays the remaining balance.***

#### **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS—Do you know anyone?**

The Council Office has sent us the names of these new members: **Benjamin Girlando** and **Laura Rutledge**. If you recognize any of these folks as **former co-workers** and want to add a personal invitation, let President Frey know and I will put you in touch.

Our chapter has grown by 40 new members over the last few months, and we are looking forward to their participation. **Lunch is free at a new member's first meeting** (after the first meeting there is a \$5 copay, and the chapter pays the rest of the bill plus gratuity).

## IMPORTANT CALL-TO-ACTION

Please take just a few minutes to ask Congress to pass the budget previously agreed upon by the President and the Speaker of the House and avoid a shutdown of the government. You can do this by email or phone.

**BY EMAIL**—go to <https://actionnetwork.org/letters/government-shutdown-threat-08-2023>

1. Click "Start Writing" in the right-hand column.
2. Select your prefix (ex. Mr., Mrs., Ms., Mx.)
3. Select "Government Operations and Politics" as the topic.
4. Click "Send Letter."
5. Pat yourself on the back for making your voice heard.

**BY PHONE** (AFSCME has provided a toll-free number).

1. Call 1-888-866-2561
2. Enter your zip code at the prompt (you will be connected to your Congressperson's hotline)
3. Leave this message at your Congressperson's hotline:  
***Please abide by the default deal between President Biden and Speaker McCarthy to ensure state and local governments have the resources to deliver the services our communities depend on instead of slashing investments that we need for our economy, health, and security of our nation. Americans NEED Congress to invest in Working Families NOW!***
4. Pat yourself on the back for making your voice heard.



## A GOOD TIME WAS HAD BY ALL

Thank you to our gracious hosts, **Marianne and Jay Wilkins**, for hosting our August Chapter 46 Potluck. The salmon was delightful, the food table groaned, and we got lots of time to interact with other members in a less formal setting. The heat did not defeat us! **RPEC President Clair Olivers** spoke briefly about the strategic planning process which the state Officers and Executive Board have been working on based on member input.

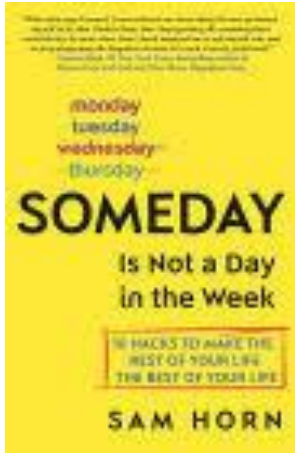
## LIGHT RAIL FOR THE EASTSIDE BECOMES A REALITY

When **Claudia Balducci** met with Chapter 46 in June, she talked about the project she was spearheading to utilize the functional light rail lines to begin a limited service on the Eastside while the defective installation over I-90 was being repaired. This plan is becoming a reality. The East Link Starter Line will light up the tracks from South Bellevue to Redmond Technology Station starting March 2024. Claudia's hard work is paying off for the Eastside community!

## WHAT WE'VE BEEN READING

### Trustee Annette McCully writes this month's review:

Sam Horn, a recent speaker at a Kauai Writers' Conference series, has presented her concepts to Fortune 500 Companies, National Geographic, and NASA, among others. In **Someday is Not a Day in the Week**, she offers lists of questions to ask yourself, what she calls hacks, that provide insights on how to fit some of the desirable, enriching things into our lives. She starts by asking the reader to list in two columns what you are now doing and what you are not doing. That second list is the one containing all the things you'll get to "someday." There is also a column for what you don't want to do but are doing. This is the beginning of becoming aware of how you use your time, as are the questions about true priorities and time priorities. After answering self-evaluating questions, I found it easier to set aside time to pursue some artwork and photography. Work/life balance is of course a factor, but it's much more than that. She points out how much of time is taken up with often meaningless "ought to dos." Is it really necessary to check email eight times a day? And how much of the time spent in front of the computer is really productive, and winds up getting in the way of say, writing essays? And is there a place designated to do the things you want? This is an engaging, eye-opening book, one of three provoking titles by Sam Horn.



**What have you been reading?** Fiction or non-fiction, serious or just for fun? Let President Frey know at [freybroughton@aol.com](mailto:freybroughton@aol.com) so we can feature it in an upcoming newsletter.

### WANT TO EARN A FREE MEMBERSHIP?

**RPEC is 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. 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 senate hearings, Leadership Trainings and important emerging issues that we sometimes hear about too late to put in the newsletter. If you don't already receive email reminders for each meeting, or receive follow-ups, send an email with your name to our Vice-President Marianne Wilkins at [marianne@msn.com](mailto:marianne@msn.com)

### YOUR 2022-2024 RPEC CHAPTER 46 OFFICERS

Judith Frey, President  
Marianne Wilkins, Vice Pres.  
Linnea Mulder, Secretary  
Herbie Martin, Board  
Barbara Gelslechter, Trustee

Dennis Montgomery, Treasurer  
Armeta Henninger, Board  
Annette McCully, Board  
Charles Gelslechter, Trustee  
Hemingway, Jan, Trustee

### OFFICER OPENINGS

Two Board positions will be open soon. We will be looking for individuals who can attend regular chapter meetings (as specified in our by-laws) and gather to resolve chapter issues which arise between meetings.

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

Judith Frey, President  
[freybroughton@aol.com](mailto:freybroughton@aol.com)

**RPEC FUTURE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTIONS** Please read RPEC Executive Director Laurie Weidner's Report to see what's up on the federal and state levels. You can always get an update on the RPEC website: [www.rpecwa.org](http://www.rpecwa.org).

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## **September 2023 Executive Director's Report**

Thank you for the excellent work you have been doing all summer to strengthen your relationships with state legislators. Summer is the ideal time to work on relationship building – thanking legislators for their support of RPEC's legislative priorities and talking to them about our ongoing priorities for the coming legislative session. We also thank you for taking the time to update the Council Office on your meetings with legislators. After each meeting, please take a few minutes to fill out the Legislator Meeting Report Form. The form is available at [www.rpecwa.org](http://www.rpecwa.org). You can access it through the drop-down under "Other" in the top menu or through this link: <https://rpecwa.org/legislator-meeting-report-form/>.

### **Strategic Planning**

#### **Executive Board completes final strategic planning work session**

The Executive Board convened in person at RPEC headquarters in Olympia from August 20-22 to continue strategic planning. The work session included a review of the data and learnings gleaned from the scientific telephone poll administered in February, the strategic planning listening session which took place in April, and the all-member written survey which was tallied in May and June. The Board used this information to identify member priorities for RPEC and themes relating to communication preferences, areas of interest, etc. This information was used by the Board to identify broad goals that RPEC's professional team will use as the foundation for the draft strategic plan. The Board will review the draft strategic plan at its regularly scheduled November meeting, which will be held via Zoom on November 13<sup>th</sup>. The strategic plan will include short-term and long-term goals and is designed to guide the organization for the next three-to-five years.

### **Federal Relations**

#### **Call-to-Action!**

We recently implemented a Call-to-Action email asking members to sign on to a letter to Congress to pass a budget previously agreed upon by the President and the Speaker of the House, and to avoid a shutdown of the government. Please refer to our last Newsflash which reprinted the Call-to-Action: <https://rpecwa.org/rpec-weekly-newsflash-august-18-2023/>.

For those who do not have email or are unable to take part in our letter campaign, there is another option. Please call 1-888-866-2561, enter your zip code at the prompt, and you will be connected to your Congressperson's hotline. Leave the following message:

*Please abide by the default deal between President Biden and Speaker McCarthy to ensure state and local governments have the resources to deliver the services our communities depend on instead of slashing investments that we need for our economy, health, and security of our nation. Americans NEED Congress to invest in Working Families NOW!*

## **RPEC Leaders to Meet with Washington Delegation Healthcare Policy Staffers**

The week of September 25<sup>th</sup>, President Clair Olivers, Secretary Nancy Heley (also chair of the Legislative Committee), and I will be in Washington, D.C. for the AFSCME Retirees annual meeting. To ensure that our federal lawmakers are aware of our concerns about the escalating premium cost for Uniform Medical Plan (UMP) Classic Medicare and the need to expand existing federal prescription drug subsidies to include healthcare plans, like UMP Classic Medicare, our RPEC delegation will be meeting with the healthcare policy staffers for Senator Maria Cantwell, Representative Kim Schrier, Representative Marilyn Strickland, and Representative Dan Newhouse. In addition to seeking the expansion of the federal subsidies (which will require a legislative change by Congress), the delegation will also be urging the Washington State Congressional delegation to advocate for the expansion of Medicare benefits to include hearing, vision, and dental benefits.

Requests have also been made for virtual meetings with other healthcare staffers who support the other members of the Washington delegation. In June, RPEC leaders met with the Washington State Director for Senator Patty Murray regarding these issues.

## **U.S. Announces First 10 Drugs for Medicare Price Negotiations**

Ahead of its September 1<sup>st</sup> deadline, the [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services](#) released a list of the first 10 prescription drugs that Medicare can negotiate prices with the drug manufacturers. This historic precedent was the result of the Inflation Reduction Act passed into law last year. This law finally allows Medicare to negotiate prices on some of the more costly drugs that seniors use, just as the Medicare Advantage program has been able to do since its inception. This is one small step in making traditional Medicare equitable with its competing Medicare Advantage plans. The drugs selected for this first round of negotiations are as follows:

- Eliquis – blood thinner
- Enbrel - rheumatoid arthritis
- Entresto – heart failure
- Farxiga - diabetes, heart failure, and chronic kidney disease
- Fiasp and NovoLog- diabetes
- Imbruvica - leukemia
- Januvia – diabetes
- Jardiance – diabetes
- Stelara – arthritis, psoriasis, and Crohn's disease
- Xarelto – blood thinner

The drugs listed above accounted for approximately 20% of total cost of drugs in the Medicare Prescription drug program (Part D). The new prices are scheduled to go into effect in 2026. This will benefit about 9 million seniors who currently pay as much as \$6,497 in out-of-pocket costs for these prescription medications. Another 15 drugs will be selected in 2027 for price negotiations, followed by another 15 drugs in 2028 and 20 more in each subsequent year. Many drug manufacturers are reluctant to comply but face stiff penalties or removal from the Medicare prescription drug program if they do not agree to the negotiations.

To learn more, read the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services press release on our website at: <https://rpecwa.org/hhs-selects-the-first-drugs-for-medicare-drug-price-negotiation/>

## **State Relations & Advocacy**

### **Executive Board approves resolutions for consideration at the WSARA annual convention**

At the August meeting of RPEC's Executive Board, the Board took unanimous action to approve two resolutions for consideration by delegates attending the September 12<sup>th</sup> annual convention of the Washington State Alliance for Retired Americans (WSARA). The first resolution, modeled after the resolution unanimously approved last summer at the annual convention of the Washington State Labor Council (WSLC), calls for the restoration of an annual cost-of-living adjustment for retirees vested in Plan 1. The second calls for the

Legislature to remove the \$183 cap on the explicit subsidy that the state provides to Medicare-eligible retirees to lower healthcare premiums for plans offered and overseen by the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB). The current statute states that the explicit subsidy is either 50% of the premium or up to \$183. While that monthly offset is helpful, plans like the Uniform Medical Plan (UMP) Classic Medicare have soared by 46% over the last two years with the single-payer amount exceeding \$500 in 2024. The resolution calls for the removal of the \$183 cap and an equal cost-sharing between employers (the state, counties, cities, and municipalities) and retirees. Maurice Garrott, RPEC Vice President, and I will speak in favor of both resolutions at the WSARA Convention, as will other RPEC delegates.

Plan 1 COLA Resolution

[https://rpecwa.org/wp-content/uploads/WSARA\\_Resolution\\_2023\\_Plan\\_1\\_COLA.pdf](https://rpecwa.org/wp-content/uploads/WSARA_Resolution_2023_Plan_1_COLA.pdf)

PEBB Resolution

[https://rpecwa.org/wp-content/uploads/WSARA\\_Resolution\\_2023\\_Increase\\_Employer\\_Support\\_to\\_PEBB\\_Retiree\\_Health\\_Care\\_Costs.pdf](https://rpecwa.org/wp-content/uploads/WSARA_Resolution_2023_Increase_Employer_Support_to_PEBB_Retiree_Health_Care_Costs.pdf)

### **RPEC is non-partisan**

Some years ago, in a conversation with a long-time friend, I recall touting the record of a state legislator and praising his ability as a statesman. As she listened, she became terribly angry with me. As a lifelong advocate for public education, I was only referencing the legislator's record on public education priorities. Whereas my friend's focus was on his voting record on law enforcement and crime. I'm sharing this personal story to underscore a point ... legislators take positions (and do not take positions) on a variety of issues. You might like a legislator's stance on one issue and disagree with others. Please remember as we inch toward 2024, which is a pivotal election year in Washington, that RPEC is non-partisan. We support candidates, regardless of party, who are pro-retiree and support our legislative priorities. We do not consider their stances on other issues of importance. Our Political Action Committee (PAC) relies on input from our chapters, legislators voting records, feedback gleaned at Legislative Day, and other criteria to inform endorsements and contribution rates. In addition, we also consider the endorsements rendered by the Washington State Labor Council, the Washington Federation of State Employees, and AFSCME Council 2. Ultimately, we endorse candidates who support and will advocate for our legislative priorities. Read more about RPEC's legislative priorities at [www.rpecwa.org](http://www.rpecwa.org). The legislative priorities are approved on a biennial basis at RPEC's convention. They focus exclusively on retirement security, healthcare access and affordability, and other issues of importance to retirees and seniors.

### **Thank you for supporting RPEC's Political Action Committee (PAC)**

As noted above, 2024 is going to be a pivotal election year in Washington state. In addition to many important seats in the State Legislature, all statewide elected officials will be up for election, including the Governor. The RPEC PAC will support pro-retiree candidates by making endorsements and campaign contributions. RPEC members have stepped up to help RPEC make a difference in these races by responding to a recent fundraising mailing.. Between July 15<sup>th</sup> and September 1<sup>st</sup>, 386 members signed up to automatically contribute a collective \$2,121.58 per month to the RPEC PAC via pension deduction. Moreover, an additional 70 members made one-time contributions totaling \$5,978.00. PAC contributions can be of any size. Most members donate through a monthly pension deduction. The PAC is also happy to receive one-time contributions through personal checks or cash. To learn more about RPEC's PAC or to donate, email [Emmett.mills@rpecwa.org](mailto:Emmett.mills@rpecwa.org).

## Recurring COLA for PERS 1/TRS 1

Efforts continue to urge the Select Committee on Pension Policy (SCPP) to pursue legislation to fund an ongoing cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for Plan 1 retirees. RPEC President Clair Olivers, Government Affairs Coordinator Emmett Mills, and I have been meeting with legislators who serve on the SCPP about RPEC's priorities. We also recently met with David Schumacher, Director of the Office of Financial Management (OFM), and OFM staff about the need for a recurring COLA and RPEC's healthcare priorities for the next legislative session. The SCPP has tabled the recurring COLA/one-time COLA agenda item until its October meeting. If you would like to attend, details are on the RPEC calendar at [www.rpecwa.org](http://www.rpecwa.org).

We applaud the efforts underway by Executive Board members and chapter presidents to secure support for a recurring COLA by city council and county commissioners. Special thanks to Don Boxford (Chapter 27 president), Johanna Standish (RPEC Treasurer, Chapter 18 president), Claude Burfect and Alma-jean Marion (Executive Board members, District 9), Judith Frey (Chapter 46 president), and others who are actively working to secure letters of support and/or resolutions on this top RPEC legislative priority. If your chapter is interested in getting involved with this effort, please contact Emmett Mills, Government Affairs Coordinator, at [Emmett.mills@rpecwa.org](mailto:Emmett.mills@rpecwa.org).

## Healthcare

As noted in the membership newsletter you received in your mailboxes in August, all healthcare plans managed by the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB) will have premium increases in January 2024.

### 2024 PEBB Medicare retiree single subscriber premiums

\*These premiums are **already** reduced by the legislatively mandated Medicare subsidy of \$183 per month (or 50% of the monthly premium, whichever is less) and include the HCA administrative fee of \$5.96 per month for 2024. November 1-30 is open enrollment, the monthlong time when retirees, who earn their healthcare benefits through PEBB, may change healthcare plans. The Health Care Authority (HCA) will cover details about open enrollment in the PEBB October newsletter, which you will receive in the mail by mid- to late-October. HCA is also preparing website pages on open enrollment, which will be "live" on November 1<sup>st</sup>. In the meantime, information is available at this link to help you prepare for open enrollment. [PEBB and SEBB members: Prepare for open enrollment | Washington State Health Care Authority](#). In addition to offering information and videos on the website, HCA will host in-person benefits fairs in November. More details about the in-person benefits fairs will be available on the HCA website later this month. As of the publishing of this letter, the proposed dates/locations include:

Medicare Retiree plans	Single subscriber premium*	
	2023	2024
Kaiser NW Senior Advantage	\$176.13	\$193.95
Kaiser WA Medicare Advantage and Original Medicare	\$174.59	\$188.62
UMP Classic Medicare	\$438.34	\$532.94
UnitedHealthcare PEBB Complete	\$145.63	\$160.58
UnitedHealthcare PEBB Balance	\$122.94	\$135.65
Premera Medicare Supplement Plan F (Retired)	\$115.16	\$119.05
Premera Medicare Supplement Plan F (Disabled)	\$196.69	\$207.45
Premera Medicare Supplement Plan G (Retired)	\$98.53	\$101.99
Premera Medicare Supplement Plan G (Disabled)	\$164.05	\$169.20

- November 1: Vancouver and Spokane
- November 2: Centralia and Cheney
- November 3: Olympia/Lacey and Pullman

- November 6: Bellingham and Pasco
- November 7: Everett and Yakima
- November 8: Shoreline/Seattle and Ellensburg
- November 9: Tacoma/Lakewood
- November 14: Port Angeles and Bremerton

Finally, as noted in previous letters to our members, RPEC anticipates providing videotaped information from SHIBA to help our members to better understand Medicare, the PEBB plan options, and how to navigate the PEBB open enrollment period with the least amount of stress. More details will be available in the October member letter.

### **Monthly Legislative Update Calls Extend through December**

The Legislative Update Calls will be held monthly through December. The next calls will take place on September 1<sup>st</sup> and October 6<sup>th</sup> from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. Visit [www.rpecwa.org](http://www.rpecwa.org) for the login information.

### **Membership**

#### **Recruit 2 Members, Get a Check for the Cost of Your Dues**

For a limited time, RPEC is offering members a chance to earn one year's free membership. For every two new members you recruit, you will receive a check for \$84! To get credit, your name must appear in the "Recruited by" field on the new members' membership applications. Associate members do not count until they become full dues-paying members. Checks will only be issued to current members in good standing. If you recruit just two new members, you receive a check worth a year of dues! In August, Robert Devlin (Ch 10 president) earned a 'Recruit 2, Get Your Dues' reward.

#### **Partner organization events**

RPEC is fortunate to work with various retiree and senior organizations on shared policy and legislative priorities. Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action (PSARA) is hosting a webinar called "We Can Reclaim Medicare from Greedy Profiteers," on September 13<sup>th</sup> at 5 p.m. Contact [organizer@psara.org](mailto:organizer@psara.org) for more information.

#### **Upcoming Events**

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

- Sept. 12 – WSARA Convention, Federal Way (10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.)
- Sept. 13 – PSARA webinar (5:00 p.m.)
- Sept. 14 – Healthcare Workgroup Meeting (3:30 pm)
- Sept. 15 – Monthly Leadership Call (1:00 pm)
- Sept. 18 – Senior Lobby (10:00 am)
- Sept. 19 – Select Committee on Pension Policy Meeting (10:00 am)
- Sept. 22 – Pension Policy Workgroup Meeting (10:00 am)
- Sept. 28 – Healthcare Workgroup Meeting (3:30 pm)

Best,  
Laurie