



October 28, 2022

The Honorable Steve Conway
Chair
Select Committee on Pension Policy
PO Box 40429
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Senator Conway:

This letter is not about the topics under consideration by the Select Committee on Pension Policy (SCPP). Instead, we are writing on behalf of the members of the Retired Public Employees Council of Washington and the Washington Education Association – Retired to express our concern regarding the ever-changing sign-in procedures that are hindering our members from actively participating in SCPP meetings. Together RPEC and WEA-R, represent nearly 20,000 public service retirees. Our members range in age from 60-102. The Plan 1 permanent COLA is the top legislative priority for both our organizations. There are dozens of members who have been unable to participate and share their support for this policy priority due to the lack of continuity in the procedures for participation and/or inconsistencies on the website.

We implore you to immediately direct the staff of the Office of the State Actuary (OSA), who support the SCPP, to identify and adhere to specific, clear, and consistent procedures for registering to provide verbal testimony, registering a PRO position on specific agenda items, submitting written testimony, and attending the November 15th meeting. Both Mary Lindsey and I testified about the problems that our members have experienced since September. We were both disappointed in the dismissive tone directed at Mary by OSA staff when she raised her concerns on behalf of her members. I echoed these concerns in my testimony at the October meeting.

Please consider making the following immediate requests of OSA:

- Provide RPEC and WEA-R with a one-to-two page easy to follow Word document or PDF that clearly outlines how to register for verbal testimony (and the procedure during the meeting), how to register a PRO position on an agenda item, how to submit written testimony (and the deadline to do so), and how to attend the meeting. It is not good enough to point us to the website. The website content has been flawed and inconsistent. We would appreciate clarity through clearly written instructions. Please also have OSA post this file on the website for all to use.

- Provide the document to Mary Lindsey and me via email by November 3, so that we can provide it to our members in a timely manner to actively participate in the November 15th meeting.
- Report, at the beginning of the November 15th meeting, the number of individuals who have registered to provide verbal testimony on the Plan 1 COLA agenda item. Cite the number of those who have signed in with a PRO position. This is public information that should be shared with Committee members and all those in attendance.

Here is a list of the problems we have encountered since September. We are sharing this information in the hope that OSA will specifically address these items right away so that they do not hinder public engagement in the November 15th meeting.

- The process to register a PRO position continues to change with each meeting. In September, our members were able to cite a PRO position on the Plan 1 COLA agenda item through a drop-down menu. No such agenda item was cited for the October meeting, forcing our members to sign in as PRO on “public comment.” There was no drop-down menu allowing them to specify an agenda item. This caused confusion and many of our members did not sign in after all because they did not find the Plan 1 COLA agenda item.
- The process to register to provide verbal testimony continues to change with each meeting. In September, after registering online, each person received a customized log-in link via email. That occurred with the October meeting too, but OSA changed the procedure during the meeting, requiring attendees to raise their hands to testify even though they had already registered to do so. I almost missed my opportunity to testify because I didn’t understand that my link was no longer relevant because OSA was only calling on those with raised hands. As a footnote, not all who participate in these virtual meetings are familiar with the “reactions” feature in Zoom. Remember, Plan 1 retirees are among the oldest and most vulnerable retirees in the state. Some of my members wanted to raise their hands but did not know how to use that feature. Again, by being inconsistent, our members missed the opportunity to share verbal testimony. Perhaps the best way to proceed for future meetings is to call upon all those who have registered and then call upon those who raise their hands.
- The link, posted in advance on the website to attend the September meeting, was flawed. None of us could get into the meeting using that posted link. While a new link was made available shortly before the meeting, a percentage of our members did not receive the new link and therefore did not participate in the September meeting even though they had planned to do so. A new process was instituted for the October meeting, even though it was not cited on the agenda nor on the website. Our members were able to register their attendance and received a confirmation email with the meeting link. It would be helpful to know if the latter will be the procedure for the November meeting. We hope the procedure will be clearly cited in the document we have requested.

Thank you for your consideration of our requests. If you have questions, please feel free to reach out to me or Mary. My contact information is: laurie.weidner@rpecwa.org and 360-352-8262, ext. 101. Mary's contact information is: wearetired@washingtonea.org and 360-739-6484.

Sincerely,



Laurie Weidner, APR, M.A.
Executive Director
Retired Public Employees Council of Washington



Mary Lindsey
President
Washington Education Association – Retired

Cc: Clair Olivers, president, RPEC
Office of the State Actuary
Lisa Won
Michael Harbour
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