

## President's Message

*Here's a recent email message about a possible ERS pension increase. To stay updated about these and other RSEA activities, please be sure we have a recent email address for you. Contact the office at 512-451-0087 or [office@rseaofTX.org](mailto:office@rseaofTX.org). We will keep you informed.*

*Bill Hamilton, RSEA President*

## MEMORANDUM

May 9, 2023

RE: 13th Check Activities – A Call to Action

Dear RSEA Members,

Since we last reported to you on April 11, 2023, we have continued our efforts promoting a “13th Check” for all ERS retirees.

Our recent focus has been directed toward the Conference Committee on Appropriations and the attached letter (*See next page*) was sent to the ten legislator conferees: House Members Greg Bonnen, Mary Gonzalez, Gary VanDeaver, Jacey Jetton, and Amando Walle; and Senate Members Joan Huffman, Robert Nichols, Brandon Creighton, Charles Schwertner, and Lois Kolkhorst.

You will see the letter was signed by eight state retiree and employee organizations who comprise the informal coalition of which RSEA has been a part during the last two legislative sessions.

Also, on May 3, coalition representatives, including RSEA Board members, assembled at the Capitol and visited the offices of the conferees and other offices of legislators whose districts include significant numbers of ERS retirees and state agency employees.

As of this writing, the conference committee continues to meet, and we have no news as to whether a 13th check has been added to the bill. We do believe the committee is nearing the end of its work, at which time word about its decisions will become public.

Recommendation to RSEA Members –

### **A Call to Action**

If you would like to influence the conference committee’s work in the short time remaining, I encourage each of you to do the following ASAP:

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Contact any of the ten conferees (Google on "Texas Legislature Online," for contact information), and/or, a more direct, better option would be to make a personal phone call to Lt. Governor Dan Patrick (512-463-0001) and/or House Speaker Dade Phelan (512-463-1000).

The best and most simple message should be this: "Please support a 13th check for ERS state retirees. It's overdue and doable."

Please know that legislators generally keep track of the volume of constituent contacts and the subject matter, and it is often used to influence decisions.

To conclude this brief message – I hope this information is helpful to you. Thank you for any outreach you can make at this critical point in time. FYI, this regular session will end at midnight, Monday, May 29. As always, thanks for your membership in RSEA.

Sincerely,  
William C (Bill) Hamilton, President  
Retired State Employees Association

### **Letter from coalition organizations**

May 3, 2023

As the members of the HB1 conference committee prepare to begin budget negotiations, we are reaching out on behalf of eight statewide organizations that represent thousands of the 122,000 retired state workers and their beneficiaries who receive ERS pensions and live in every district in the state.

We are deeply concerned that the budget does not include a 13th check, Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA), or any other immediate relief for retired State of Texas employees. They dedicated their careers to our state and are struggling to keep up with record inflation. A secure retirement has been vital, as deferred compensation, to keep good workers providing essential services to the citizens of Texas.

ERS retirees have not received a COLA, or a pension increase, or a 13th check since 2001. In that time, the cost of living has increased by 37%. These retirees protected public safety and served vulnerable children and the elderly in every county and legislative district. They built the infrastructure that allowed Texas to grow and prosper.

Providing a pre-funded 13th check for all State of Texas retirees would cost only \$250 million in a \$308 billion budget. A 13th check would go to all retired employees and could be distributed within months without negatively affecting ERS's actuarial soundness.

Some of your legislative colleagues have told us they believe the budget already "takes care" of retirees through an existing COLA. But that's not the case. State law allows for a very limited COLA, but ERS estimates that can't happen for at least another 18 months. And even when it does happen, it would be limited to only 30% of our most senior retirees and provide just a maximum of \$100 a month.

With this historic budget surplus, we call on you to take urgent action to provide ERS retirees some immediate financial relief, remember their contributions, and recognize their challenges.

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We appreciate all you have accomplished over the past few months through dozens of budget hearings, hundreds of witness testimonies, and countless hard conversations about priorities. As you finish that work, please remember our retirees. For years, they willingly earned less than they could have in the private sector to serve our state.

Please let us know if we can provide additional information or answer any questions.

Sincerely,

- Lt. Richard Jankovsky, Department of Public Safety Officers Association
- Lt. Billy Shelton, Texas State Troopers Association
- Jeff Ormsby, AFSCME Texas Correctional Employees Council
- Larry Young, Texas Game Warden Peace Officers Association
- Bill Hamilton, Retired State Employees Association
- Joe "Dan" Maxwell, Texas Public Employees Association, Retirees Chapter
- Luther Elmore, AFSCME Texas Retirees
- Judy Lugo, Texas State Employees Union



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### **Election of New Trustee for ERS Board**

If you haven't already, you will soon be receiving a mailing from the Employees Retirement System concerning the election of a new trustee to the Board. The candidates are : (in ballot order)

- James (Jimmy) Jackson, Retiree  
formerly with Texas Department of Public Safety
- Suzy Whittenton, Retiree  
currently with DPS; formerly with numerous other state agencies (return-to-work retiree)
- Stuart Greenfield, Retiree  
formerly with Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts
- Chris Nelson, Active Employee  
currently with Texas Workforce Commission
- Ilesa Daniels, Retiree  
formerly with Health & Human Services Commission

ERS sponsored a candidate forum on May 11, 2023. During this forum, each candidate provided an opening statement and answered questions about issues affecting ERS members and retirees.

Go to <https://youtu.be/P4cXIY4Jst8> to view this candidate forum.

The Election timeline is:

- Friday, May 12            Voting begins.
- Friday, June 16        Voting ends at 5:00 p.m. CT.
- Thursday, July 20      ERS certifies election results.
- Friday, September 1    New trustee begins their term.

Visit <https://ers.texas.gov/about-ers/ers-board-of-trustees/trustees-election-and-appointments> for more information.



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**SAVE THE DATES  
FOR THE 2023  
RSEA ANNUAL MEETING!**

We will soon set a date for the 2023 RSEA Annual Membership Meeting.

Baring anything unforeseen, we are planning to hold this as an in-person event,  
as well as probably broadcasting it to those at home.

The dates we are looking at are:

**September 26, 27, 28**

or

**October 3, 4, 5**

We look forward to seeing you and celebrating Retired State Employees!