

PSERS Retired Member Newsletter

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A publication of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Public School Employees' Retirement System

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We want to hear from you!

PSERS is seeking your advice to help your fellow school employees who have not yet retired. Share your tips and insights with us so others can benefit as well.

Based on what you know today, what do you wish you would have known about retirement when you were working?

Scan the QR code or visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RetiredNewsletter> to tell us your thoughts!



PSERS Board of Trustees Elects Chair and Vice Chair

PSERS' 15-member Board of Trustees is an independent administrative board of the Commonwealth. The Board stands in a fiduciary relationship to the members of PSERS and oversees the operational and investment activities of the funds.

PSERS Board of Trustees elected Richard Vague as Chairperson and retired teacher Susan Lemmo as Vice Chairperson at the annual public organizational meeting on January 5, 2024. The chair and vice chair lead the 15-member PSERS Board, and their terms are for one year.

Mr. Vague, a Philadelphia resident, is Governor Josh Shapiro's Board appointee and until recently served as the Board's Vice Chair. From 2020 until 2022 he served on the PSERS board in his previous capacity as Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Banking & Securities as a member of the Wolf Administration.

Ms. Lemmo, a Clearfield resident, is in her first 3-year term representing annuitants and Class DC participants. Prior to retiring from a 32-year career as an art teacher in the Curwensville Area School District, she served three terms (2014 to 2022) on the PSERS Board representing Active Certified Members and Participants. During that time, she earned the Certified Public Pension Trustee accreditation from the Pennsylvania Association of Public Employee Retirement Systems. Ms. Lemmo has also held leadership roles with the Pennsylvania State Education Association, the National Council on Teacher Retirement, and the Clearfield, Cameron, Elk, and Jefferson Central Labor Council.

(Continued on next page)

PSERS Board of Trustees Meetings

Board Meeting Schedule:

- January 5, 2024
- February 1, 2024
- March 21-22, 2024
- May 30-31, 2024
- August 15-16, 2024
- October 24-25, 2024
- December 19-20, 2024

Visit PSERS' website for the detailed schedule of Board and Committee meetings.

PSERS Board meetings are held in Harrisburg at PSERS, located at 5 N 5th Street.

In addition to Board meetings, Committee meetings are held throughout the year. All PSERS Board meetings are live streamed and open to the public.

For exact meeting times or if you would like to attend and require an accommodation to participate, please contact Tivia Danner, PSERS Executive Office at tidanner@pa.gov.

Shared Risk/Shared Gain Contribution Rate Does Not Impact Retired Members

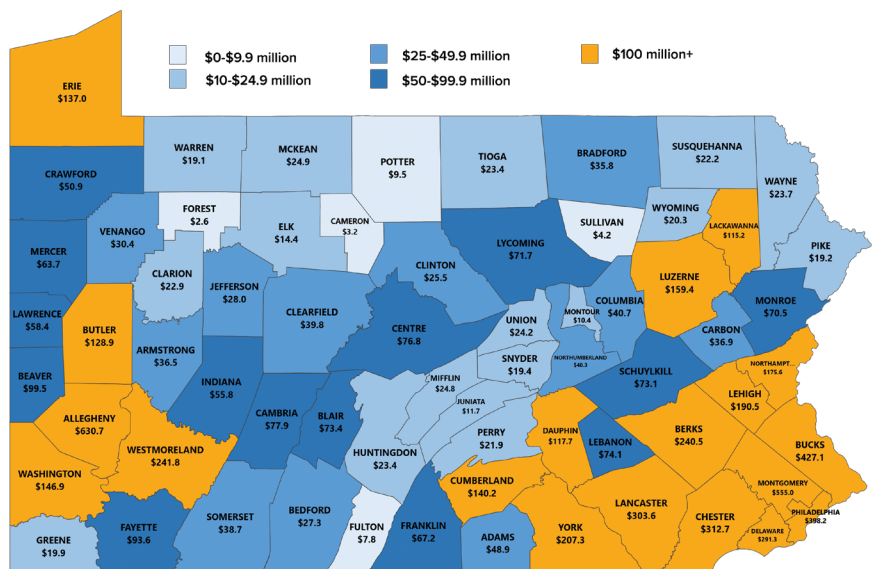
With a “shared risk/shared gain” contribution rate, some active members can benefit when PSERS’ investments are doing well and share some of the risk when PSERS’ investments underperform. **This does NOT impact PSERS’ retiree pensions.**

Because PSERS’ investment performance met the shared risk target range for the ten-year evaluation period ending June 30, 2023, the Defined Benefit member contribution rates for Class T-E, Class T-F, Class T-G, and Class T-H members will decrease starting July 1, 2024.

For more information, visit PSERS' website.

\$6.7 Billion Paid to PA Retirees in FY 2022-23

PSERS provides a stable source of revenue for local economies throughout Pennsylvania. Each year, PSERS pays out billions in pension benefits to retired members who reside in the Commonwealth. In fiscal year 2023, PSERS pension benefits to retirees totaled approximately \$7.46 billion. Of this amount, 90%, or \$6.7 billion, went directly into state and local economies. These pension benefits are a significant driver that continue to have far-reaching benefits to Pennsylvania’s economy.



Visit our website to stay up to date on upcoming board meetings and to see who is on the PSERS Board of Trustees, view the meeting schedule, and view minutes and resolutions from previous meetings.

Moving outside of Pennsylvania?

If you've recently moved outside of Pennsylvania – or have been thinking about it – there is some important information you should know regarding your pension and benefits provided by the PSERS.

❑ Update your PSERS account.

Did you know that if your address is not valid, your retirement benefit may be suspended? Whether you are moving out of the state, country, or just across the street, remember to update your address with PSERS by logging into your PSERS Member Self-Service (MSS) account.

To change your address without an MSS account, submit your address change to PSERS in writing. Be sure to include your signature, your PSERS ID or last four digits of your social security number, and the effective date of the change when you write to us.

Don't have an MSS Account? Register today!

You only need the following to get started:

- PSERS ID
- Social security number
- Date of birth
- A valid email address

Need Your PSERS ID? If you do not have your PSERS ID, you can connect with PSERS at 1.888.773.7748 to have your ID mailed to you.

❑ Research state tax implications.

Your PSERS benefit is exempt from state and local taxes in Pennsylvania. If you move to another state, you should check with your state and local authorities to determine the taxability of the PSERS annuity.

❑ Maintain a U.S. bank account for direct deposit.

If you are moving outside of the U.S., you must maintain a U.S. bank account to continue receiving your PSERS benefit via direct deposit. If you no longer have a U.S. bank account, your monthly benefit will be mailed to you. You should confirm that your check can be negotiated internationally as PSERS cannot issue your monthly benefit by any other means.

❑ Check your medical, vision, & dental Insurance.

PSERS Health Options Program (HOP) Pre-65 Medical Plan, HOP Medical Plan, the Value Medical Plan, and the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Options provide coverage and benefits in all 50 states. The Medicare Advantage Plans and pre-65 Managed Care Plans are offered across the country as well. Premium assistance is also available provided you are eligible and have an out-of-pocket premium expense from the Health Options Program or a Pennsylvania school district (employer) plan.

Coverage through HOP is limited to U.S. residents.

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Join PSERS Member Self-Service (MSS) Portal

Over 250,000 members have registered for PSERS Member Self-Service (MSS) Portal since its launch in 2018. Those MSS members have completed over 500,000 transactions online instead of filling out a paper form. The most common actions taken are creating their own retirement estimates, updating their address, updating their beneficiaries, and generating their own income verification.

Saving Money with Paperless Delivery

As of February 29, 2024, PSERS has sent more than 6.7 million pieces of correspondence electronically! PSERS has saved more than \$2 million in printing and mailing costs through MSS' Paperless Delivery option.

If you do not receive your correspondence electronically, PSERS encourages you to register for an MSS account and select Paperless Delivery. You can change your Paperless Delivery preferences at any time.

Future Enhancements

PSERS continues to enhance the MSS Portal to improve user experience and offer new functionality. Work is underway to enable members to submit a refund application online, expediting the process and reducing the need for manual intervention.

PSERS is also in the process of moving to a cloud-based pension administration system which is anticipated to enhance system performance and provide the opportunity for improved services to our members and employers.




Common transactions on MSS:

 **241,386**
Retirement Estimates

 **104,514**
Address Changes

 **78,333**
Income Verifications

 **36,929**
Nominations of Beneficiaries

As of 2/29/2024

Paperless Delivery:

Nearly 91% of all members on MSS elected to receive information from PSERS electronically. This has generated **more than \$275k/annually and \$2 Million in cumulative savings** since inception in 2018.

Medicare Rx Q&A Corner

Have questions about prescription drug coverage? The Health Options Program has answers, plus helpful tips to get the most out of your Medicare Rx Options. If you are not enrolled in the **Enhanced Medicare Rx Option, Basic Medicare Rx Option, or the Value Medicare Rx Option** under the Health Options Program, you should contact the plan you are enrolled in with your specific questions on its prescription drug coverage.

Is my medication covered?

Consult the formulary to find out. All prescription drug plans have a formulary, which is a list of prescription drugs the plan believes are a necessary part of a quality treatment program. Visit [HOPbenefits.com](https://www.hopbenefits.com) and select the **Find a drug or pharmacy button** then scroll down to the **Find a drug or pharmacy** section to download the abridged or comprehensive formulary for your HOP plan. You can also access the online Part D Formulary Lookup Tool for the MedicareRx Options from this webpage.

How much will my prescription cost?

There is no quick answer for this. The plan deductible, Medicare coverage stage, and medication tier level all factor into what you'll pay for a medication at a given time. If you are enrolled in a Medicare Rx Option through the Health Options Program, use the Optum Rx drug pricing tool to help you determine costs. Visit [HOPbenefits.com](https://www.hopbenefits.com), and select the **Find a drug or pharmacy** button on the home page. Scroll down the page for the Drug Pricing Tool lookup tool for your MedicareRx Options and select the link for your Medicare Rx Option.

I see the letters "PA" and "ST" after the name of a drug in the formulary. What do they mean?

If a prior authorization (PA) is required for a drug, you and your doctor will need to get approval from the plan prior to filling the prescription. Otherwise, the medication won't be covered.

If a medication requires step therapy (ST), it means you must first try certain drugs to treat a medical condition before the plan will cover another drug. For example, if drug A and drug B both treat a medical condition, the plan may not cover drug B unless you try drug A first. If drug A does not work for you, the plan will then cover drug B. The formulary will indicate whether these rules apply.

Do I have to use a retail pharmacy?

If you are enrolled in one of the Medicare prescription drug options under the Health Options Program, you can visit a retail pharmacy or use one of these convenient options listed below from OptumRx for your medication delivery. To find a retail pharmacy near you, visit [HOPbenefits.com](https://www.hopbenefits.com), and select the **Find a drug or pharmacy** button on the home page. Then scroll down the page for the Pharmacy Locator Tool for your MedicareRx Option.

- **OptumRx Home Delivery.** Get a three-month supply of your medication delivered to your home at no additional cost with standard shipping. There are also flexible payment options. Go to [optumrx.com](https://www.optumrx.com) or call the number on your member ID card to sign up.
- If you are on the go, use the **OptumRx app** to refill a prescription, get an ID card, or check on whether something is covered.
- If you are taking a specialty medication, get it filled online or by phone. **OptumRx's Specialty Pharmacy** will deliver it to your door.

Are vaccines covered?

The Medicare Rx Options under the Health Options Program cover most Part D vaccines at no cost, even if you haven't met the annual deductible (if applicable). Examples of covered vaccines include RSV, shingles, tetanus, and travel vaccines. Influenza, COVID-19, pneumonia, and hepatitis B vaccines are covered under Medicare Part B.

Review the Evidence of Coverage for your plan for more information about coverage and any plan limitations. If you are enrolled in the **Enhanced, Basic, or Value Medicare Rx Options**, visit [HOPbenefits.com](https://www.hopbenefits.com) to find a copy of the Evidence of Coverage. Otherwise, contact the insurance company for the Evidence of Coverage for your plan.

What if my local pharmacy closes?

You may have heard in the news about some of the larger retail chains closing certain stores. So far, this has had minimal impact on PSERS members enrolled in the **Enhanced, Basic, and Value Medicare Rx Options**. If a network pharmacy serving these plans closes, the closing pharmacy will automatically transfer the prescriptions to another store. Enrolled members will also receive a letter from OptumRx with more information.

Join the Health Options Program. Most members enroll within the three months before or the three months after they turn age 65; otherwise, you may be able to enroll when you have a Qualifying Event. Qualifying Events can apply to you, your spouse, and your dependents. Learn more at [HOPbenefits.com](https://www.hopbenefits.com) > **Eligibility and Enrolling**.

10 Tips to Protect Your Nest Egg

First the Bad News:

As a retiree, you are unfortunately the target of financial exploitation. The files of state securities agencies are filled with tragic examples of seniors who have been cheated out of savings, windfall insurance payments, and even the equity in their own homes.

Now the Good News:

You can avoid becoming a victim by following 10 self-defense tips developed for seniors by the North American Securities Administrators Association, Inc.



1 Don't be a Courtesy Victim

Con artists will not hesitate to exploit your good manners. Save your good manners for friends and family members, not strangers looking for a quick buck!

2 Check out strangers touting strange deals

Trusting strangers is a mistake anyone can make when it comes to their personal finances. Say “no” to any investment professional who presses you to make an immediate decision, giving you no opportunity to check out the salesperson, firm, or the investment opportunity itself. Extensive background information on investment salespeople and firms is available through the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority’s BrokerCheck®.

3 Always stay in charge of your money

Beware of anyone who suggests investing your money into something you don’t understand or who urges that you leave everything in his or her hands.

4 Don’t judge a book by its cover

Successful con artists sound and look extremely professional and have the ability to make even the flimsiest investment deal sound as safe and sound as putting money in the bank. The sound of a voice, particularly on the phone, has no bearing on the soundness of an investment opportunity.

5 Watch out for salespeople who prey on your fears

Con artists know that you worry about either outliving your savings or seeing all of your financial resources vanish overnight as the result of a catastrophic event, such as a costly hospitalization. Fear can cloud your good judgment. An investment that is right for you will make sense because you understand it and feel comfortable with the risk involved.

6

Don't make a tragedy worse with rash financial decisions

The death or hospitalization of a spouse has many sad consequences - financial fraud shouldn't be one of them. Ask a con artist to describe his ideal victim and you are likely to hear the following two words: "elderly widow."

If you find yourself suddenly in charge of your own finances, get the facts before you make any decisions. Talk to state or provincial securities regulators for advice on locating a financial professional and checking their background. An insurance settlement may help with expenses, but it also makes you an ideal target for fraud. Arm yourself with information and your confidence will send con men running.

7

Monitor your investments and ask tough questions

Don't compound the mistake of trusting an unscrupulous investment professional or outright con artist by failing to keep an eye on the progress of your investment. Insist on regular written reports. Look for signs of excessive or unauthorized trading of your funds. Don't let a false sense of friendship or trust keep you from demanding a routine statement of your accounts.

8

Look for trouble retrieving your principal or cashing out profits

If a stockbroker, financial planner, or other individual with whom you have invested stalls you when you want to pull out your principal or profits, you have uncovered someone who wants to cheat you. Some kinds of investments have certain periods when you cannot withdraw your funds, but you must be made aware of these kinds of restrictions before you invest.

9

Don't let embarrassment or fear keep you from reporting investment fraud or abuse

Con artists know that you might hesitate to report that you have been victimized in financial schemes out of embarrassment or fear. Con artists prey on your sensitivities and, in fact, count on these fears preventing or delaying the point at which authorities are notified of a scam. Every day that you delay reporting fraud or abuse is one more day that the con artist is spending your money and finding new victims.

10

Beware of "reload" scams

If you are already the victim of an investment scam, don't compound the damage by letting con artists "reload" and take a "second bite" of your assets. Con artists know you have a finite amount of money.



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF BANKING
AND SECURITIES

**Information provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Banking and Securities.
It is not legal advice or regulatory guidance.**

Reference: <https://www.dobs.pa.gov/PaMoneyTalks/Pages/Article.aspx?post=44>

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**Important Information from the
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Public School Employees' Retirement System**



Website
www.psers.pa.gov

Register for PSERS' Member Self-Service (MSS) Portal to access your retirement account online, anytime!



Call or Fax

Toll-Free: 1.888.773.7748

Local Calls: 717.787.8540

FAX: 717.772.3860



**Send us a Secure Message
through your MSS Account!**

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website.

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