

# APERS *perspective*

Spring 2010

Volume 14, Issue 2

**A Newsletter for Members of the Arkansas Public Employees Retirement System**

## You Got Questions? We Got Answers

The Call Center at APERS exists to help members, retirees and beneficiaries get answers to questions about their retirement system.

However, we see that many calls at certain times of the year are about the same issue or topic. With that in mind, APERS has developed a list of the most frequently asked questions callers ask when they do contact us.

Reading this article may give you the answer to questions you may have and save you a call. However, as always, if you're still unsure about a topic and need to call, feel free to do so. That's what we're here for.

The Call Center can be reached by calling either (501) 682-7800, or 1-800-682-7377 if you're outside Pulaski County.

***Once I separate employment with an APERS agency, what are my options in regard to the contributions I put into the system?***

**Answer** - You have two options: (1) you can leave the contributions in the system and retain your accrued service credit. (2) You can request a Termination of Employment Refund Request and forfeit your accrued service credit (within this paperwork you may ask for a "Paid to Me" option or "Paid in a Direct Rollover" option).

***How can I find out how much I have contributed?***

**Answer** - If you are still working for an APERS employer, request the amount in writing. Include your name and

social security number. If you terminate employment with an APERS member agency, submit a Request for Refund of Contributions. Once the request is submitted the member will receive a Confirmation Letter stating the member's contributions to date.



***I am member of the contributory system under APERS. Am I eligible to receive a contributory refund?***

**Answer** - You are eligible for a refund of the contributions you have made into the system when you terminate employment with an APERS agency. Upon termination of employment, you can choose to leave your contributions in the system and retain your accrued service, or you can choose to receive a contribution refund and forfeit your accrued service in the system.

***Can I borrow money from the contributions I've paid into my retirement account?***

**Answer** - No. Contributions paid to APERS during employment are invested to provide for your retirement once you become eligible for a benefit.

## Director's Corner

APERS is pleased to announce the investment results of the first six months of Fiscal Year 2010. For the period July 1, 2009 through December 31, 2009 the fund earned just over 16%; the calendar year return came in at 22.4%. This strong showing put APERS in the top 28 percent of all public funds. While this is certainly a great step in the right direction, it is just that – one step among the many we must make to again attain the fiscal strength we enjoyed as recently as 2008. The APERS Board of Trustees and staff continue to work diligently to guide the retirement system around the potholes and speed bumps that litter the path toward sustainable investment returns.

There has been much noise lately in the national press about Defined Benefit plans and the untenable drag they create for state budgets. While that is certainly true for states that indulged in extended "contribution holidays" during the bull markets of the 1990's it is NOT true here in Arkansas. Because the state has faithfully made its required contributions each and every year, the recent market washout was a blow, not a death knell. What about the state's contribution? Are taxpayers actually underwriting the retirement benefits of public employees? In fact, just 52 cents of every benefit dollar paid comes indirectly from taxpayers via the legislatively approved compensation package that state employees receive. The remaining 48 cents comes from a combination of employee contributions and investment gains. Have those taxpayers simply handed over 52 cents for some unknown public servant? No! For instance, if that taxpayer is a small business owner in Smackover, he will see that 52 cents return to him as retirees in his

Continued on page 3

Continued on Page 3

**APERS PROFILE**

**Allison Woods**



Allison Woods is Manager of the Member Records Section of the Arkansas Public Employees Retirement System. In this role, Allison supervises a staff of eight which enrolls new members and employers, reviews and corrects member's records and establishes delinquent service. When she joined APERS in 2004, Allison brought to the agency over 7 years experience in the private sector administering health and welfare and employee retirement benefit plans. Allison said she enjoyed working retirement benefit processes the most, which is why she joined APERS.

Allison first worked in APERS as a Retirement Counselor in the Member Services Section, and later served as supervisor of the Benefits Unit before she was promoted to her current position. Allison is excited about upcoming plans this year to make Member Records information more clear and accessible to members and employers.

A self-described workaholic, Allison said she also enjoys such pursuits as shopping, reading, art and being outdoors, and her New Year's Resolution is to spend more time enjoying these hobbies and a little less time being a workaholic.

**Moving?**

When you move, please inform APERS in writing. You can use the Change of Address form at: [www.apers.org](http://www.apers.org). Or you may notify us by sending a handwritten letter with your signature stating your new address. Remember to post your Social Security number on all correspondence you mail to APERS.



**RETIREMENT SEMINARS!**

**Upcoming Retirement Seminars - Now through June**

Date & Time	City/Seminar Type	Location
<b>March 31</b> 9 a.m.-noon	<b>Little Rock</b> <b>Financial Planning</b>	<b>State Police HQ-Classroom C,</b> <b>1 State Police Plaza Drive</b>
<b>April 14</b> 9 a.m.-noon	Wynne Morning	Wynne Fire Station-Trng. Room 1111 North Falls
<b>April 21</b> 9 a.m.-4 p.m.	<b>Little Rock</b> <b>Full Day</b>	<b>State Highway Dpt. Auditorium</b> <b>10324 Interstate 30</b>
<b>April 28</b> 9 a.m.-4 p.m.	<b>Prescott</b> <b>Full Day</b>	<b>Prescott Library</b> <b>121 West Main Street</b>
May 12 10 a.m.-1 p.m.	Eureka Springs Morning	Cornerstone Bank 152 East Van Buren Street
May 19 9 a.m.-noon	Sheridan Morning	Grant County Emergency Mgmt. 130 Grant No. 74
June 9 9 a.m.-noon	Ashdown Morning	Ashdown Public Safety Building Training Room, 745 South Locust

*For additional information on these seminars, go to [www.apers.org](http://www.apers.org)*

**← Using leave for seminars**

In September 2003, the state Office of Personnel Management issued a memorandum to clarify if state workers must use personal annual leave to attend APERS retirement seminars. The memorandum states that employee attendance at APERS seminars “will be treated as any other type of employee benefit presentation, providing those attending the seminar are within one year of retirement eligibility and have at least a minimum of 4 years credited service in a state sponsored retirement system.”

Employees not meeting the above criteria would have to use personal annual leave. A state worker must also use personal annual leave for individual sessions with counselors outside of the scheduled seminar, or if the worker chooses to attend an additional APERS retirement seminar. As always, we suggest state workers obtain approval from their supervisor and agency before attending any APERS seminar during the employee's scheduled work hours.

**Parking at APERS**

Customers of APERS may be able to get free parking in the Union Plaza parking deck if space is available. When heading southward on Louisiana Avenue, the parking deck will be on the driver's left-hand side in the APERS building at 124 West Capitol. After parking and conducting your business, have the APERS receptionist on the fourth floor validate your parking ticket.

## Director's Corner

Continued from page 1

area buy his goods or services. In fact, in 2009 alone, \$3.5 million was paid to retirees living in Union County. With the average monthly APERS benefit paid at approximately \$915, it is highly likely that those benefit dollars are almost immediately spent into the local economy. Looking at the statewide retiree payroll, nearly \$300 million was paid out last year, thus replicating this example in all 75 counties of the state. APERS retirement benefits play a hugely important role in the economy of Arkansas.

On the other side of the equation, it is so important that we keep a watchful eye on the benefit program. All Arkansans deserve a secure retirement, but we must ensure that statutory loopholes don't allow for some to benefit disproportionately. It is bad public policy and bad public relations. As the next legislative session approaches APERS will be looking for ways to plug those gaps.



I am constantly surprised at the number of APERS members who put off thinking about life after retirement until the very last minute. This is the rest of your life we're talking about! It is crucial that you consider things like whether your APERS benefits will allow you to maintain your current quality of life, whether you have enough personal savings tucked away for unanticipated emergencies, whether and how to provide for a spouse or dependent children, and so on. Putting the puzzle pieces together in a way that best suits your situation takes time and thought. You're going to have to live with the results!

If you are thinking about retiring within the next year, call us to set up a counseling appointment soon. You'll be glad you did.

## Questions

Continued from page 1

You can only withdraw contributions before retirement when you terminate employment and request a refund.

**Where do I get a form to request a refund?**

**Answer -** You can download this form or others from the APERS website at [www.apers.org](http://www.apers.org). Or call us, and once we've verified your identification, we can mail you this or other requested forms.

**How long will it take to process my refund request?**

**Answer -** It can take up to 90 days.

**Is there any way to expedite my refund?**

**Answer -** No.

**Will my refund be taxed?**

**Answer -** If you do not elect to have the payment paid as a direct rollover, by law our agency must withhold taxes from Contributory Refunds that are \$200 or more - 20% for federal taxes and 5% for state taxes.

**When I request my refund will I get the contributions that my employer put into the system as well as mine?**

**Answer -** No. You are not eligible to receive contributions your employer made to the system.

**What happens to my service credit when I receive a contributory refund?**

**Answer -** When you receive a termination refund, you will forfeit (lose) the contributory service that you accrued. To restore the lost service credit, you must become re-employed by an APERS-participating employer and repay the refunded contributions and any refunded interest. In addition, you must also pay interest from the date that you received the refund until the date that you repay the refund.

**Although I am non-contributory, can I receive a contributory refund?**

**Answer -** No.

**My husband/wife or boyfriend/girlfriend would like to check on the status of my refund request. Is this possible?**

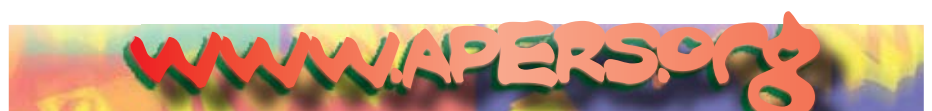
**Answer -** We are not allowed to give anyone but the member information concerning their refund request. If there is an issue of Power of Attorney, please inform APERS.

**I need to give you a Change of Address. Can you take it over the phone?**

**Answer -** No. We cannot take a change of address from a member who calls. The member must complete and mail APERS a Change of Address Form, or you can send APERS a handwritten note listing your new address, as long as you include identifying information, and include your Social Security number and a daytime phone number in case we need to contact you.

**Can you give me information about my health insurance benefits?**

**Answer -** No. APERS isn't the agency that answers questions about health or life insurance. For questions on Health Insurance, call the Employee Benefits Division at (501) 682-9656, or at 1-877-815-1017. For questions on life insurance, call Minnesota Life service center at 1-888-826-2734. For USAble life insurance, call 1-800-370-5856.



***In this issue...***

*Got Questions? We've Got Answers!  
 New 2010 Retirement Seminars! Using Leave For  
 Seminars! The Director's Corner! Retirement Filing  
 Dates! And more!*

## IMPORTANT FILING DATES

### *Retirement Filing Dates*

<b>Retirement Date</b>	<b>Earliest Filing Date</b>	<b>Latest Filing Date</b>
June 2010	March 3	May 3*
July 2010	April 2	June 1
August 2010	May 3*	July 2
September 2010	June 3	August 2
October 2010	July 6*	September 1
November 2010	August 3	October 4*
December 2010	September 2	November 1

\* For retirement applications only - if a Filing Date falls during a weekend or on a holiday, the filing deadline becomes the next working day.

### *DROP Filing Dates*

<b>DROP Enroll Date</b>	<b>Earliest Filing Date</b>	<b>Latest Filing Date</b>
June 2010	February 26	April 30
July 2010	March 31	May 28
August 2010	April 30	June 30
September 2010	May 28	July 30
October 2010	June 30	August 31
November 2010	July 30	September 30
December 2010	August 31	October 29

\* The Filing Deadline for DROP applications is always the last working day of the 2nd month before enrollment, **not the last calendar day of the month!**

APERSpective is a publication of the Arkansas Public Employees Retirement System and is distributed for the information of APERS active members.

#### ***APERS EXECUTIVE STAFF***

Gail H. Stone, Executive Director  
 Michele Williams, Deputy Director

#### ***APERS BOARD OF DIRECTORS***

Mr. Artee Williams, Chair  
 Mr. Maurice Henry, Vice Chair  
 Mr. Richard Weiss  
 Hon. Martha Shoffner  
 Hon. Jim Wood  
 Ms. Ouida Wright  
 Mr. Don Zimmerman  
 Mr. Bill Gaddy  
 Mr. Mike Jacobs

#### ***Arkansas Public Employees Retirement System***

124 W. Capitol Avenue, Suite 400  
 Little Rock, AR 72201  
 501-682-7800 • 1-800-682-7377

**WWW.APERS.ORG**