APERS AND THE TOWN HALL MEETINGS

Throughout the autumn of 2019, the Arkansas State Legislature's Joint Committee on Public Retirement and Social Security Programs held public meetings across the state with presentations provided by the various public retirement systems of Arkansas.

Representatives for APERS and several other state-supported systems, including those for teachers (ATRS), local police and firefighters (LOPFI), and Highway Department personnel (ASHERS), presented overviews of each system’s fiscal health. All discussed their current funding status, unfunded liability, and other issues of concern.

At each meeting, APERS Executive Director Duncan Baird or CFO Jason Willett gave background on fundamental principles, including fiduciary responsibility and prudent investing, and explained the critical concept of unfunded liability in pension systems. Once these foundations had been laid, APERS explored how money comes into the system (contributions and investment returns) and how it goes out (benefits paid). APERS explained that investments make up a big part of the income side of the equation and discussed the difficulty of projecting future investment returns due to the volatility of the market.

The Joint Committee members stressed how important it is to ensure that a retirement system is adequately funded for the future. They did not discuss any specific plans of action or potential legislation.

We had great turnout at many of the locations, like this first meeting in Hope.

Each of the town hall meetings was approximately two hours long. The first hour was dedicated to the presentations by the various retirement systems, and the second hour was open for questions from the audience. Hearing the concerns of the systems’ active and retired members was a primary reason for holding these town hall meetings.

At every session, audience members asked pertinent questions, raised valid points, and expressed key concerns, which led to some lively conversations. The Joint Committee members and the representatives of the retirement systems made every effort to answer

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**Estimate Your Benefits with MSS**

In our last issue we showed you how to find your APERS ID number and get access to the Member Self-Service portal (MSS) on our website. Today we want to briefly explore one of the most useful tools you will find in MSS -- the Estimate Benefits wizard.

This tool will let you see what your pension payments would be under different conditions. You can choose different retirement dates, benefit options, and amounts for your "FAC" or final average compensation, and the wizard will tell you what your monthly pension would be with those choices. You can do as many estimates as you like as often as you wish.

To access the wizard, log into your MSS account and click the Estimate Benefits link on the Quick Links menu of your Home screen.

The Estimate Benefits wizard will pop up in its own window and prompt you for various choices. For instance, the second screen will ask what retirement date you want to use for the estimate.

Because MSS "knows" your account, it won't let you choose dates when you wouldn't be eligible to retire. However, you can enter a higher FAC than you currently have because you might anticipate changes in your pay in the future (your FAC is the average of your three highest years' compensation).

And don't think you have to be close to retirement for this tool to be useful. The wizard will show you when you will first become eligible for early and normal retirement, and it can help your plan for your future right now. You can also get estimates for participating in the DROP for various lengths of time and for PAW payments in various amounts to see how these options would affect your lifetime pension payments.

If you haven't already activated your MSS account, you will need your APERS ID number to establish a username and password. You will find it on any correspondence from APERS about your individual account, or you can call us and we'll provide it.

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**Pensions a Priority for Public Sector Employees Nationwide**

The National Institute on Retirement Security (NIRS) recently surveyed a representative sample of public employees in pension plans like APERS to determine their attitudes towards their pay and benefits. The respondents overwhelmingly named their pensions as a major reason they chose public service.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: A pension benefit is a major reason I chose a public sector job in the first place.

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Source: State and Local Employee Views on Their Jobs, Pay and Benefits, by Tyler Bond and Kelly Kenneally for the National Institute on Retirement Security, November 2019
Another Seminar Season Closes

On December 6, APERS hosted its final two retirement seminars for 2019, capping another successful year of educational outreach. This year we offered four different programs, each designed to prepare a particular segment of our membership for the challenges of retirement. We conducted seminars in cities across the state, including Jonesboro, Russellville, Arkadelphia, Paragould, El Dorado, Hope, Fayetteville, Fort Smith, Texarkana, and multiple sessions in Little Rock. In all, 640 APERS members attended one of our 2019 seminars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seminar Programs for 2019</th>
<th>Sessions</th>
<th>Total Attendees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Road to Retirement (open to all APERS members)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement Workshop (for members within one year of retiring)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DROP Entry Workshop (for members planning to enter DROP)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DROP Exit Workshop (for members already in the DROP)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APERS’ educational outreach extended far beyond our own seminars. We also had representatives at dozens of conferences sponsored by public employers and employee associations such as the state’s Benefit Fair at the Capitol and several conferences hosted by the Municipal League and by the Association of Counties.

Next year, APERS will expand our outreach even further. For example, instead of visiting each corner of the state once or twice, we will return to several cities multiple times, giving residents of each region a selection of dates they can choose from to attend a seminar nearby. We will be posting the 2020 schedule in a few weeks, so watch your newsletters, the website, and social media for the announcement. Remember that state employees may qualify for paid leave to attend a retirement seminar. Check with your HR department for details.

APERS AND THE TOWN HALL MEETINGS

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all the questions, while making notes for future discussion.

The town halls had good turnouts regardless of the location or the weather. Almost every meeting attracted between two and three hundred attendees. Over the course of the eleven meetings, the Joint Committee got to discuss our state-supported retirement systems with thousands of public employees, most of whom were active and retired members of APERS or ATRS.

We hope you had an opportunity to be part of the discussion. If you could not make it and wish to see the APERS town hall presentation, it can be found on our website at [http://www.apers.org/publications](http://www.apers.org/publications).

Stay informed

You can find the most up to date information on APERS participation in the town hall meetings on the publication page of our website: [http://www.apers.org/publications](http://www.apers.org/publications)
or follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

[www.facebook.com/Arkansas.PERS/](http://www.facebook.com/Arkansas.PERS/)    @ArkansasPERS
Social Media Confidential

APERS shares content on Facebook and Twitter that many enjoy, and we’re delighted when members like, share, or retweet posts and follow us (hint hint). **Please note that we do not converse with members on social media** because those platforms aren’t safe for discussions of personal or financial data. Instead we invite you to use the secure Members Self-Service (MSS) portal on our website at www.apers.org for any confidential communications, or you can use the Contact Us form for general info.

facebook.com/Arkansas.PERS  @ArkansasPERS

Retirement Town Hall Meetings | Estimate Benefits with MSS
Seminar Recap | Pensions a Priority for Public Sector

Visit us online at www.apers.org

### RETIREMENT AND DROP FILING DATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retirement Date</th>
<th>Earliest Filing Date</th>
<th>Latest Filing Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 1, 2020</td>
<td>November 4, 2019</td>
<td>January 2, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1, 2020</td>
<td>December 2, 2019</td>
<td>January 31, 2020</td>
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<td>April 1, 2020</td>
<td>January 2, 2020</td>
<td>March 2, 2020</td>
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<td>May 1, 2020</td>
<td>February 3, 2020</td>
<td>April 1, 2020</td>
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<td>June 1, 2020</td>
<td>March 3, 2020</td>
<td>May 4, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1, 2020</td>
<td>April 2, 2020</td>
<td>June 1, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1, 2020</td>
<td>May 4, 2020</td>
<td>July 2, 2020</td>
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</table>

You can register for retirement seminars online! Go to www.apers.org/seminars