



PENNSYLVANIA ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED STATE EMPLOYEES

State Association Office

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President's Report for Fall 2023

Dear PARSE Member:

I trust all of you had a pleasant summer and are enjoying this early fall season.

I want to bring you up to date on what is new and what has been happening in your organization.

First some highlights:

1. We have crossed the 34K threshold in membership with over 34,500 members for 2023.
2. We held regional meetings this year for the first time since COVID.
3. Over 10,700 members used the on-line dues process; the State Office absorbs the cost for this service.
4. Dues for 2024 will remain at \$20 and no change in the dues is anticipated in the foreseeable future.
5. PARSE finances remain sound, and we finished the fiscal year with a \$80K net income.
6. The Office of Administration did a presentation on the 2024 REHP (Retired Employee Health Plan) and that presentation is on our website (www.parseofpa.org). You should also have received from Aetna a description of some of the new benefits beginning in 2024, hearing aid reimbursement, over-the-counter benefit, and personal safety emergency response system. If you have any questions on these new benefits, contact PEBTF 1-800-522-7279 or Aetna.
7. As you know PARSE has actively been working on a COLA or stimulus check for retirees. There will be more on this in this letter.
8. PARSE now has a contract with "Constant Contact" a provider that can do large email distributions without the concern about spam. The State Office has been testing this service and will implement it in the first quarter of 2024. There will be more on this in this letter.
9. The annual Governing Board meeting was held in September in Gettysburg. Elections were held for the 5 regional vice presidents as well as the state secretary and president. A list of officers will be a separate attachment to this mailing. At the meeting the budget for FY 2023-24 was approved as were some minor changes to the bylaws.

Constant Contact. I have been using that service to send a welcome email to all new members monthly. We also know that many of the email addresses we have on file are no longer in use or not correct. We are developing a process to ask members to review and update their email address. This will be much like the invoice process where you will have the option, at no cost, to go online and confirm or update your email address or you can mail the card you receive back to the State Office with your valid email information. We anticipate beginning this project in January. I also want to assure you that we do not give out this type of information, your email will be used for PARSE business only. We believe it is important to have a method to quickly reach all PARSE members if there is some critical need for action, such as COLA or stimulus legislation. When you receive the mailing about email addresses please review and update as needed and if we don't have an email for you now, please consider providing one to PARSE.

COLA: After the general elections last fall, I approached our Government Relations advisor, NOVAK Strategic Advisors, with what I saw as an opportunity. My idea was to find a way to help retirees particularly those who retired pre 2002 (before the factor change). My proposal was to use some of the Commonwealth surplus funds as a stipend/13th payment or stimulus. As you know the stimulus funds the Commonwealth received, during COVID, by law could not be used for pensions. NOVAK began scheduling meetings for me with some of the new leadership and to date there have been 18-20 meetings. We saw some interest in a COLA for those who retired prior to 2002. There are now 2 bills in the process. We will continue to work to see if we can generate interest in some help for the post 2002 retirees but must keep in mind that the unfunded liability issue has not evaporated. You received a letter from me on the bills in process and I hope that many of you took the time to write or call our elected officials. If you have not contacted your elected officials; it's not too late! We anticipate some action on one of these bills this fall.

Other legislation of interest: SB 423 passed the Senate and the proposed bill amends Title 71 (State Government), in membership, credited services, classes of service, and eligibility for benefits relating to retirement for State employees and officers, further providing for mandatory and optional membership. This bill will permit retirees from the State Employees' Retirement System (SERS) to return to service and work part-time as a state-certified fire instructor without having their benefits stopped. It now goes to the House for vote. PARSE will track this legislation.

As always, I encourage you to attend some of your chapter meetings and volunteer to help. Many chapters are struggling to find members willing to serve as officers. The Chapters are vital to PARSE but can only assist if members are willing to help.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thomas B Judge".

Tom Judge, PARSE President