

# THE KERNEL

A publication of the Kentucky Public Retirees, Inc.

Issue 140

March 2023



## President's Perspective

by Larry Totten

## COLAs and Politics

As you are reading this, most of the 2023 General Assembly will have been completed. I'm writing this during the second week of February, and the festivities are just now beginning again. We await to see just what topics legislators will be debating. There are many of consequence – medicinal marijuana, sports wagering, juvenile justice facilities, teacher shortage, Eastern/Western Kentucky disaster relief, and so on.

Of course, the one that we as retirees have the most interest in is HB 90, the bill that provides for a permanent 1.5 percent COLA. It's not news to anyone reading this that we're pushing twelve years since the last bump in our pension benefits. According to the inflation calculator from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, it now takes over \$1.31 to purchase that which cost \$1.00 in July, 2011. Even with Social Security checks being adjusted each year, not having even a small increase in our pension benefits in that amount of time is tough.

Sadly, the prognosis for HB 90 is not good. I have spoken to representatives and senators from both parties and feel less and less confident that this will be passed out of this Session. The one thing I hear most is that "leadership is not going to open the budget." That's ridiculous, of course – it's inconceivable that legislation will not get passed labeled "emergency" or one that has an appropriation attached that "leadership" supports.

Opening the budget would likely include a transfer of funds from the Budget Reserve Trust Fund to pay for whatever is passed. But, the substantial amount of money in this account needs to stay high as it is part of the computation necessary to continue decreasing the state income tax rate – a definite priority for some. And, 2023 is an election year for the state's constitutional officers, the highest of which is Governor. Being blunt here, politics as always will affect the final verdict for legislation, regardless of merit or need or being "the right thing to do."

The Governor supports our COLAs as well as the pay increases for active employees, which are also contained in HB 90. Of course, we'll continue to advocate for passage of HB 90. By mid-March, it should be pretty clear as to whether this has a chance on passing this year. If not, we will have laid the groundwork for a bill in the 2024 Session that could do the same thing.

The "not opening the budget" argument won't fly then as this will be a budget writing session – each of our legislators will have to decide on this one way or the other, or even if the bill is allowed to move through the legislative process. It's worth noting that 2024 is again an election year for every representative and the senators in odd-numbered districts.

I firmly believe that KPR has an important role to play whether in fighting a challenge to our pension structure/funding or in advocating for benefits for all public retirees. If anything, the past twenty-five years has taught us is that we must remain vigilant. We do this by being "present" – present at KPPA meetings, present at committee meetings of the Legislature, and present in the media when necessary. We have to be advocates for ourselves as we can easily be pushed aside in the noise created by the \$129,473 average (2022) spent by the many other interest groups to lobby each legislator.

I appreciate the dedication of our chapter presidents, state and local committee chairs, and our administrative manager to make KPR work – it just wouldn't without all of you. I also appreciate the continued membership of everyone reading this newsletter. An organization is only as strong as its members, particularly in numbers – it's what makes us credible to legislators. Remember, our public pensions are not a handout – WE EARNED IT!

## Kentucky Public Pensions Authority Update

by Larry Totten

Committee and board meetings for KPPA/KRS/CERS have begun cranking up for 2023 and continue to be available online. You can view these meetings in an area set up at KPPA for this specific purpose, or on Facebook live, or anytime by choosing the meeting from the “About”, then “Meeting Calendar” tabs on the KPPA website.

The Annual Comprehensive Annual Report and the Summary Annual Financial Report for FY22 are available online under the “Publications & Forms” tab. The first report is over 200 pages (containing the full audit and actuarial reports) while the latter is a crisp 28 and provides a quick overview of KPPA as of June 30, 2022. Reviewing this is highly recommended.

Out at KPPA, the newly-created chief financial officer position has been filled. Michael Lamb joined in mid-January and will oversee the Division of Accounting, responsible for financial reporting and compliance, budget preparation and monitoring, cash management, and external coordination with service providers including KPPA’s outside accountants, banks, and actuary.

There is an election that will have just ended as you read this for the trustee representing the State Police. As there is only one candidate, Keith Peercy will continue in that role. The investment returns for December, 2022, although slightly negative, outperformed their benchmarks. All of the plans remain in positive territory halfway through the fiscal year.

And as always, my summary of all KPPA, CERS, KRS, and Public Pension Oversight Board meetings are posted on the KPR Facebook page.

## Legislative Chair Update

by Larry Totten

As this is being written, the second part of the 2023 Legislative Session has just begun. While there are a few pension-related bills, the one on everyone’s mind is HB 90. This is essentially the “Governor’s bill” in that it includes two items in particular for which he has advocated – a pay raise for active employees and a COLA for retirees.

The pay raise for active employees would be a 6 percent increase, but also would allow for increases due to grade changes and the conversion of all 37.5 hours per week employees to 40 hours. It remains to be seen whether or not this is passed as is or with changes. An employee pay raise had been more or less implied by the Legislature in the budget (HB 1 22RS). Of course, for retirees, the COLA is the thing – a permanent 1.5 percent increase in current benefits being received as of July 1, 2023.

We are told this is getting the most pushback from majority party leadership as it would require the FY24 budget to be “re-opened,” and they have been adamant that they are not going to do this. As you read this, the fate of the COLA will be pretty much decided.

In other legislation, HB 49, is a “housekeeping” bill, annually requested by KPPA to clarify operations and statutes. Two sports wagering bills, HB 106 and SB 73, would have proceeds being deposited into the Kentucky Permanent Pension Fund from which it could be drawn later for pension-support purposes. HB 114 would close the Legislators’ Retirement System to new members and transfer those participating in the cash hybrid plan to KERS NH. At a PPOB hearing, the sponsor also suggested the same for the Judicial Retirement System, but we’ll have to see if this proposal has any support. HB 236 would put into statute the fiduciary duties owed to state-administered pensions and specifically forbid investing on the basis of ESG (Environment, Social, Governance) principals. It is worth noting that this is already contained in the Investment Policy Statements of both the KRS and CERS Boards.



To keep up to date with current activities affecting our retirement sign up for our email bulletins at [kentuckypublicretirees.org](http://kentuckypublicretirees.org). Also, follow our Facebook page and webpage for information about issues of concern to all KPR members.





## Membership Update

By Betty Hawkins

As I write this article (February 12, 2023), I am pleased to report that we have recruited 127 new members since our membership contest began (June 1, 2022). We have only three months remaining in the contest which ends May 31, 2023. Winners will be recognized at the Annual Business Meeting which will be held in Bowling Green at 9:00 a.m. on June 16, 2023. You do not have to be present to win a prize.

Again this year we have some very nice cash prizes for individuals who recruit the largest number of new members. The first place winner will receive \$125; second place - \$100; third place - \$75; and fourth place - \$50. At the present time, the lead person has recruited a total of 10 new members. If you recruit more than 10 new members, you could be eligible to win that first place \$125 prize or one of the other cash prizes offered.

There are also three \$20 random drawings. Any member who recruits one new member is eligible to participate in the random drawings. Please keep in mind that spouses are also eligible for membership. If your spouse is not already a member, please convince her or him to join. Most likely, your spouse is the beneficiary of your retirement benefit, and retaining or increasing this benefit is just as important to them as it is to you.

When you recruit that new member, please be sure that your name is included on the membership application as the referral so you will receive credit for recruiting the new member.

Don't forget to check the latest Martha's Membership Graph below to see how your chapter is doing in the contest. The chapter which recruits the largest number of new members will receive \$70; the chapter which has the largest percentage increase in new members will also receive \$70.

I am reminding and encouraging those members who have not already done so to pay their 2023 dues. Second notices will be sent in March. Those members who haven't paid their 2023 dues will be removed from the membership roll on May 31, 2023. Dues can be paid online on our website at: [www.kentuckypublicretirees.org](http://www.kentuckypublicretirees.org) and clicking on the Membership tab. You can pay online with a personal credit card. You can either make a one-time payment or subscribe to have dues deducted automatically each year. You can also mail a personal check for \$15 to our KPR Business Office, P. O. Box 4062, Frankfort, Kentucky 40604. Should you have a question regarding the status of your dues payment, please contact Administrative Manager Floyd Parrish at 502-437-9408, or send an email to: [kprmanager@gmail.com](mailto:kprmanager@gmail.com).

Membership numbers matter when retirees lobby their specific legislators. If you are undecided about renewing your 2023 KPR membership, you might want to do your part to keep our membership number as high as possible. Franklin County Representative Derrick Graham and Representative Cherlynn Stevenson representing Scott and Fayette Counties have sponsored HB 90 which will grant a 1.5 percent increase for retirees. Retirees haven't had an increase since 2011. All retirees are urged to contact the legislators in their districts as well as other legislators whom they know.



# Chapter News

**Barren River** - The November meeting of the Barren River Chapter was held at the BRADD Office on Monday, November 21, 2022, at 10:00 a.m. The guest speakers were Lily Forseth and Madison Sackella from the Center for Applied Science in Health and Aging at Western Kentucky University. Ms. Forseth is a graduate assistant, and Ms. Sackella is an undergraduate student at the university. Both speakers are involved with Bingocize, a program that combines exercise, health information, and the game of bingo. The program has proven to be a great and fun way to get seniors moving and socializing. Some of the exercises focus on falls prevention which is an area of concern for the senior population. The Bingocize program is approved by the National Council on Aging for its many health benefits. The members in attendance were treated to a session of Bingocize by our speakers.

President Carol Douglas and Christine Hanshaw attended the Humana meeting on October 25 at the Bowling Green Holiday Inn University Plaza for KPR member recruitment. Six meeting attendees completed a KPR membership application. The state chapter provided a \$25 gift card for a random drawing among those who joined KPR at the meeting. The prize was won by Brenda Buckingham, one of our new members. Jack Wright made a motion to only have meetings on the even-numbered months starting in 2023. The motion was seconded by Geri Guerin, and the motion passed. President Douglas updated members on the Annual Meeting to be held in Bowling Green in June 2023. She is still attempting to finalize speakers for the event. The chapter agreed in October to conduct a food drive at the November meeting, and it was approved to take our donation to the Kentucky Veteran's Brigade, an organization that helps veterans in the Barren River area.

The December 19 meeting of the Barren River Chapter was also held at the BRADD Office. The guest speaker was Rhondell Miller, executive director of HOTEL INC, in Bowling Green. HOTEL INC is an acronym for "Helping Others Through Extending Love in the Name of Christ." The organization has existed for over 40 years working to ensure people have safe, affordable housing; health care; and nutritious food through advocacy, education, and empowerment. Ms. Miller stated that they have partnered with over seven hundred people this year, including many individuals affected by the 2021 tornadoes. The organization's work centers in the Delafield area of Bowling Green where the poverty rate is very high. Ms. Miller talked about the Delafield Co-Op Market which allows households in the area, as well as others, to shop for fresh, locally grown food. Residents in the Delafield area receive a free Co-Op membership and discounted food prices. Ms. Miller addressed several questions from attendees at the meeting.

President Douglas discussed the Annual Meeting scheduled for June 2023. She is attempting to finalize speakers for the event. An FBI representative has been secured as a speaker and will discuss scams and fraudulent activity. Gary West, author and acclaimed speaker, has also agreed to attend the conference. Kevin Jackson, newly elected state representative from Bowling Green, will be one of the legislative speakers at the conference. Representatives from Anthem and Humana will also be present at the conference to present information and address retiree insurance issues. President Douglas will provide more conference information as finishing touches are put on the event. She also reported there is still a need for a chapter vice president and secretary.

**Bluegrass West** - We held our Christmas meeting December 20 with the wonderful Bonnie Reeves performing Christmas music and some of the crowd's favorites that were requested. We had a big crowd. Her partner was unable to attend due to sickness.

KPPA Liaison Larry Totten reported that the Humana Drug Formulary was posted on the KPPA website and that everyone should check to see if any medications being taken had changed in tier, prior authorization, quantity limits, etc.

Membership Chair Betty Hawkins stated BW current membership is 884, and we still need to work on getting more new members. We had four members pass away since our last meeting: Jo Stratton, Lois Marston, Carl Holbrook, and Margaret Elliott.

Our January speaker was James B. Seaver, Ph.D. from the Kentucky Historical Center. Mr. Seaver, spoke about the history of the state's Historical Marker Program which was founded in the mid-1930s in Lexington. Today there are over 2,400 roadside historical markers, and they are located in every county in Kentucky. They are a common sight around Frankfort since Franklin County has the fourth highest concentration of historical markers in the state. If you would like to learn more about the topics covered on the markers, he recommended the Kentucky Historical Marker Database on the KHS website.

Legislative Chair Shirley Clark reported about HB 90 introduced January 4, 2023, by Representative Derrick Graham from Franklin County and Cherlynn Stevenson from Fayette and Scott Counties. This bill gives retirees a 1.5 percent increase for a one-time payment each month beginning the next fiscal year which will continue, but no additional increase will be given until other legislation is passed during future sessions.

**Bluegrass West (Cont'd)** The increase applies to KERS non-hazardous and hazardous duty retirees and the Kentucky State Police. There is no funding provided for the CERS retirees as their pension plans do not receive state funding. Other items in the bill include many features dealing with payments for current and past state employees. There is also \$100,000,000 to be applied to the unfunded pension liability of the KRS non-hazardous pension fund and the same to the teachers' pension fund.

Messages for legislators by phone can be left at 1-800-372-7181 or 502-564-8100. Legislators can also be looked up and contacted by email at the following address:

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/legislators/contact.legislator.html>

**Covered Bridge** - Our guest speaker in November was Heather Clary of the Better Business Bureau. She informed the group to be on guard for scammers. We had 15 in attendance which is still not back to our pre-COVID times, but hopefully it will increase.



Betty B. Reynolds, Heather Clary, and June Pugh

The Covered Bridge Chapter continues to gain some new members, though few in number. The group enjoyed having Connie Pettyjohn from KPPA at our December meeting. We continue to stress the importance of new members, and we continue to keep our members informed through email and newspaper publications. Our attendance for the last two months has been around 20 with some new retirees attending as well. The question that seems to come up at each meeting is whether members can expect a raise and, if so, will it include CERS retirees.

At the request from an out-of-the-county member, we invited the new Fleming County Sheriff, Tim Smith, to speak at our January meeting. Mr. Smith was very knowledgeable about the current crime problems in Fleming County and surrounding area. He was very informative and gave members some insight on what to question, whether on phone or in person.

**Cumberland Valley** - We met December 20, 2022, at David's Steak House in Corbin Kentucky. The guest speaker Representative Nick Wilson had to cancel his appearance. In January, the guest speaker was 82<sup>nd</sup> District State Representative Nick Wilson.

**Green River** - The January chapter meeting was held at noon in the Briarpatch Restaurant. The speaker was Cindy Sheriff, who is a behavioral health consultant. She gave an interesting and informative presentation on warning signs of Alzheimer's Disease and noted that there is progress being made on finding a cure for the disease.

Lewis Jean discussed HB 90, which was introduced on January 4, 2023. It would prefund a one-time, 1.5 percent increase in pension benefits beginning July 1, 2023. We must contact our legislators to encourage them to support the bill. Lewis also mentioned that we do not pay state tax on pension benefits and should use Schedule P when doing taxes.

**Lake Cumberland** - The guest at our January meeting was Kentucky Senator Rick Girdler. He talked about a one-time raise. He also talked about raising taxes and getting rid of the income tax.



John Engle, Senator Girdler, and Bruce Brown

**Lincoln Trail** - In December, fellow member and professional standup comedian Jim Roberts provided the program. For four years, he was the Kentucky Country Music Association's Comedian of the Year. He has opened for many country music stars. He has performed on cruise ships and at various events throughout Kentucky. Jim kept the group laughing and entertained throughout his performance. As a chapter benefit, the cost of the December lunch was paid for members.

In January, our guest speaker was Nate Fowler who spoke on the "Needs of the Homeless with an Emphasis on Homeless Veterans."

**Lincoln Trail (Cont'd)** - Mr. Fowler is an avid friend and aide to homeless vets, with many skills and much community involvement, including being a talented song writer. He provided an interesting and entertaining program regarding his remarkable journey in aiding homeless vets. He said they needed "angels" and members were just that today, with our generous donations of socks (as requested), plus much more.

Mr. Fowler is a veteran with a calling to bring awareness to our homeless veteran situation. He shared about visiting Wayside Christian Mission in Louisville and how the director was an inspiration to him. He told of travelling with the director to river camps along the Ohio River and explained these camps were "way off the beaten track" so as not to be found. It was dangerous, and they had to be careful to announce themselves. As they walked along the way, they had to chant, "We are friendly, we have food, we have water."

He related that the homeless are from all walks of life and have experienced a series of losses – first, with the loss of a job, then their home, then their family – and they have no network or "angel" as he explains, to help them through. Many times, they self-medicate and the situation gets worse. He stated the veterans do not blame anyone but struggle on. He played a song he had written entitled, "Tear Drops in Heaven."

Mr. Fowler is available to bring his "Needs of the Homeless with an Emphasis on Homeless Veterans" presentation to community organizations and can be reached at [nate-fowler1@live.com](mailto:nate-fowler1@live.com).

Chapter President Wickersham introduced Betty Pendergrass, CERS Board of Trustees chair and LT Chapter member who had volunteered to be our chapter's audit chair. With a motion from Martha Turner and seconded by Gabriele Hunter, members voted to elect Ms. Pendergrass to this position. Welcome Betty, and thank you!

The February meeting has been cancelled. The March 13, 2023, meeting will feature Rebecca Acres speaking about the various programs and opportunities that are offered at the Hardin County Public Library. The Lincoln Trail Chapter generally meets the second Monday of each month, currently at 11:30 a.m. at Shoney's Restaurant, 1046 Executive Drive, Elizabethtown KY.

**Northern Kentucky** - The Northern Kentucky Chapter met on January 9 and had as guest speaker Jim Dahmann. He spoke about police, mental health training, and preparedness to deal with those with mental health issues. First responders more and more must be able to deal with mental health issues.

## **KPR 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting**

By Carol Douglas

As we celebrate the 40-year anniversary of Kentucky Public Retirees in 2023, I'd like to invite you to join us for our first Annual Meeting since 2019. This year's event will be June 15-16, 2023, at the Holiday Inn University Plaza in Bowling Green. The quarterly meeting of the KPR Board will be held on Wednesday afternoon, June 14, 2023.

A block of rooms has been reserved at a group rate of \$103.95 per night, plus taxes. The cutoff date for reservations is Monday, May 15, 2023. It is important that each guest contact the hotel by the reservation due date and identify themselves as part of the KPR group to get this special rate. For reservations, call 1-800-HOLIDAY and mention block code **KPR**. The hotel will provide two breakfast vouchers per room to be used at the Hartland Café as part of the group guest room rate.

The conference registration fee is \$25, but a \$5 early-bird discount will be offered for registrations made through May 31, 2023. You may also register at the door on the morning of June 15, 2023, but registering now, prior to the event, greatly helps us in the planning process. Complete the registration form on page 7 and return it to us.

Our program for the conference includes a legislative panel discussing highlights from the 2023 Kentucky legislative session. Other speakers include Kentucky author Gary P. West, former State Climatologist Stu Foster, FBI Special Agent William Kurtz, and a panel discussion from WebMD and Go 365. The dinner buffet is \$30 per person, and a cash bar will be available prior to the dinner. Following the banquet will be the presentation of the Harry Lee Waterfield Awards.



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KENTUCKY PUBLIC RETIREES



**Annual Conference Registration Form**

**2023 Kentucky Public Retirees 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**

**June 15 - 16**

Holiday Inn University Plaza, 1021 Wilkinson Trace, Bowling Green, KY

Hotel Reservations: Call 1-800-HOLIDAY - Use Group Code **KPR**

Room Rates: single or double - \$103.95 plus taxes (includes 2 breakfast vouchers for Hartland Café per room)

Hotel Reservation deadline is May 15, 2023

Conference Reservation Deadline is June 1, 2023

Fees must be paid to attend the meeting and the banquet. Please enclose a check payable to "KPR" with this form.

Member(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter \_\_\_\_\_

Member(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter \_\_\_\_\_

Guest(s) \_\_\_\_\_

	Number	Total
Registration, if mailed by June 1, 2023 (\$20 each)	_____	_____
Registration, if mailed after June 1, 2023 (\$25 each)	_____	_____
Banquet (\$30.00)	_____	_____
Totals	_____	_____

Complete this form and mail it with your check to KPR, P.O. Box 4082, Frankfort, KY 40604

For additional information or questions contact:

Carol Douglas – [douglas\\_353@msn.com](mailto:douglas_353@msn.com) phone 270-535-4023

Larry Totten – [lptotten53@gmail.com](mailto:lptotten53@gmail.com) phone – 502-226-0273



**Kentucky Public Retirees**  
 P. O. Box 4082  
 Frankfort, KY 40604  
 kprmanager@gmail.com



<p><b>Barren River</b>          10 a.m. (CT), 3rd Monday          (Alternate months – F,A,J,A,O,D)          BRADD Center          177 Graham Avenue          (off Plum Springs Rd)          Bowling Green, KY          Contact Carol Douglas</p>	<p><b>Big Sandy</b>          11:30 a.m., 2nd Thursday          New meeting location pending          Contact Larry Totten          (502) 226-0273</p>	<p><b>Bluegrass East</b>          11:30 a.m. (ET), 2nd Wednesday          Pasta Garage          962 Delaware Ave.          Lexington, KY          Contact Larry Totten          (502) 226-0273</p>	<p><b>Bluegrass West</b>          11:30 a.m. (ET), 3rd Tuesday          VFW Franklin County Post 4075          104 E. Second St.          Frankfort, KY          Contact Jean Henning          (502) 682-6996</p>
<p><b>Covered Bridge</b>          11:00 a.m. (ET), 2nd Thursday          Double 'S' Bowling          150 Foster St.          Flemingsburg, KY          Contact June Pugh          (606) 849-2651</p>	<p><b>Cumberland Valley</b>          11:30 a.m. (ET), 2nd Tuesday          Meeting locations vary          Contact David Cornett          (606) 260-0490</p>	<p><b>Fivco</b>          11:30 a.m. (ET), 3rd Monday          Belle Fonte'          1320 Carter Avenue          Ashland, KY          Contact Morris Wells          (606) 465-5784</p>	<p><b>Green River</b>          12:00 p.m. (CT), 2nd Wednesday          Briarpatch Restaurant          2760 Veach Road          Owensboro, KY          Contact Agnes Barron          ((270) 298-7151</p>
<p><b>Kentucky River</b>          3rd Friday of each month          Meeting locations vary          Contact Paul Bailey          (606) 884-6280</p>	<p><b>Lake Cumberland</b>          11:30 a.m. (ET), 3rd Monday          The Mellow Mushroom          2520 Monticello St          Somerset, KY          Contact Bruce Brown          (606) 305-9960</p>	<p><b>Lincoln Trail</b>          11:30 a.m. (ET), 2nd Monday          Shoney's          1406 Executive Drive          Elizabethtown, KY          Contact Theresa Wickersham          (270) 300-2453</p>	<p><b>North Central</b>          11:30 a.m. (ET), 2nd Wednesday          Jumbo Buffet          2731 S. Hurstbourne Pkwy          Louisville          Louisville, KY          Contact Suzanne Bernert          (502) 641-7720</p>
<p><b>Northern Kentucky</b>          11:30 a.m. (ET), 2nd Monday          Golden Corral          4770 Houston Rd (KY 842)          Florence          Contact Asom Ponananta          (859) 371-4833</p>	<p><b>Pennyrile</b>          11:30 a.m. (CT), 4th Thursday          Country Cupboard Restaurant          518 McCoy Avenue          Madisonville, KY          Contact L. Peyton Adams          (270) 871-9295</p>	<p><b>Purchase</b>          10:30 a.m. (CT), 1st Thursday          Pizza Inn          Joe Clifton Drive          Paducah, KY          Contact Tom Moore          (270) 898-7289</p>	