

THE KERNEL

A publication of the Kentucky Public Retirees, Inc.

Issue 150

August 2025



President's Perspective

By Larry Totten

2049

Yes, the year 2049 seems like a long way away and it is - almost a quarter century. Why talk about it today? For those of us in one of the pension plans sponsored by the Kentucky Public Pensions Authority, this is the year targeted to achieve full funding across all five pension plans. Full funding, as the term implies, is the point at which the assets in any of the pensions matches or exceeds the liabilities of that plan.

This is a 30-year journey that began in 2019. If you recall, the KERS NH fund had reached a nadir of 12.9% funding, after almost twenty years of steady decline, and the lowest of the five pensions managed under KPPA. The other plans were funded a bit better but KRS (as it was known at that time) was considered one of the worst funded – if not the worst – public pension systems in the country.

Fortunately for us, those responsible for plan management, oversight, and funding stepped up and made the conscious decision to “right the ship.” Actuarially defined employers’ contributions were established, based on realistic assumptions, and have been made each and every year since. Additional billions have been provided for KERS NH and SPRS, the two worst funded plans.

Today, or at least as of June 2024, the Fiduciary Net Position across the pension and insurance plans has increased by some \$9 billion since then. Four of the pensions exceed or are within striking distance of a 60% funding level. Although the KERS NH pension sits at 24.8% funded, it’s a huge improvement over 2019, increasing each subsequent year. We’ll see numbers for fiscal 2025 later this year. Considering investment performance through May, all of this should once again improve.

Now, why is this important? For many of us, other than signifying the Commonwealth’s renewed commitment to our pensions, it kind of isn’t. The sad truth is that many of us won’t be here then. Those who are will reap the benefits of a thirty-year process of proper funding and diligent management. However, we can all be proud of our part over the past decade in getting our pensions the attention they deserve. And who knows, in 2049 the nasty restrictions on COLAs might even be lifted.

So, while 2049 is a far-off year, let’s celebrate the goal – at one time not too long ago, there wasn’t one.

I want to again express my appreciation for the dedication of our chapter presidents, state and local committee chairs, and our administrative manager who together make KPR work – it just wouldn’t without all of you. I also appreciate the continued membership of everyone reading this newsletter. Our predecessors were correct years ago when they said an organization is only as strong as its membership – it’s what makes us credible to legislators. Remember, our public pensions are not a handout –

WE EARNED IT!



To keep up to date with current activities affecting our retirement sign up for our email bulletins at kentuckypublicretirees.org.

Also, follow our Facebook page and webpage for information about issues of concern to all KPR members.



Kentucky Public Pensions Authority Update

by Larry Totten

Investment returns through May have been released. All of the plans have year-to-date returns above eight percent. We will likely not see the June fiscal year close-out numbers until late August, but they should be okay. As a side note, and considering this money will eventually come our way, the excise tax from online gambling activities has reached over \$71 million for the Sep 23 – May 25 time period.

There will be an election for two KERS trustees for the KRS Board of Trustee next year, serving from April 2026 – March 2030. The KRS Board will select six candidates at its September Board meeting from those who applied. These names will appear on the ballot when voting begins in mid-January.

All active and retired KERS members will be able to vote either online or by mail in this election. If KPPA has an email address for you, you will receive a link to an electronic ballot. If you wish to vote via paper ballot, **you must request a paper ballot by November 30, 2025.**

If Voting Online: Go to MyRetirement.ky.gov and verify your email address.

If Voting by Mail: There are three ways to request a paper ballot by the November 30, 2025, deadline:

1. Online: Log in to your account at MyRetirement.ky.gov and check the box at the top of the page after you log in.
2. In Writing: Mail your request to 1260 Louisville Road, Frankfort, KY 40601. Include your name, Member ID or last 4 digits of SSN, and signature.
3. By Phone: Call 1-800-928-4646 with your KPPA-issued four-digit Personal Identification Number (PIN).

Access to the “MyRetirement.ky.gov” page requires you to have a Member Self Service account established. Information on how to do that is here: <https://www.kyret.ky.gov/Retirees/Pages/Self-Service.aspx> . Consider setting up your account if you have not already done so. It’s useful.

Please note the November 30 date to make this request If you want a paper ballot, don’t wait until the election is open in January – you won’t get one. Recent trustee elections across CERS/KERS/SPRS have had a dismally low number of ballots returned, especially considering there are tens of thousands eligible to vote. Let’s change that with this election.

Committee and board meetings for KPPA/KRS/CERS may be viewed live via Facebook Watch or in an area set up at KPPA offices for this specific purpose as they occur. They can also be viewed anytime on the KPPA website by choosing the meeting from the “About”, then “Meeting Calendar” tabs. My summaries of all KPPA, CERS, KRS, Public Pension Oversight Board, and any other pertinent meetings are posted on the KPR Facebook page shortly after they occur. I hope these provide you with some benefit.

Annual Meeting Update

by Larry Totten

A reminder that the Annual Meeting is changing formats this year. This event will now take place on Thursday, September 18 with the afternoon business meeting via Zoom beginning about 12:30 p.m.

Our Board will have its regular meeting in the morning and, after lunch, we will launch the Zoom portion with the Waterfield Awards, a presentation from KPPA’s executive director, and ending with our standard business meeting. More information as well as the Zoom link will be available as we get closer to the event.





Membership Update

By Betty Hawkins

Martha's Membership Contest will end soon - August 31, 2025. You still have approximately one month to recruit new members. As of this date, we have recruited a total of 172 new members.

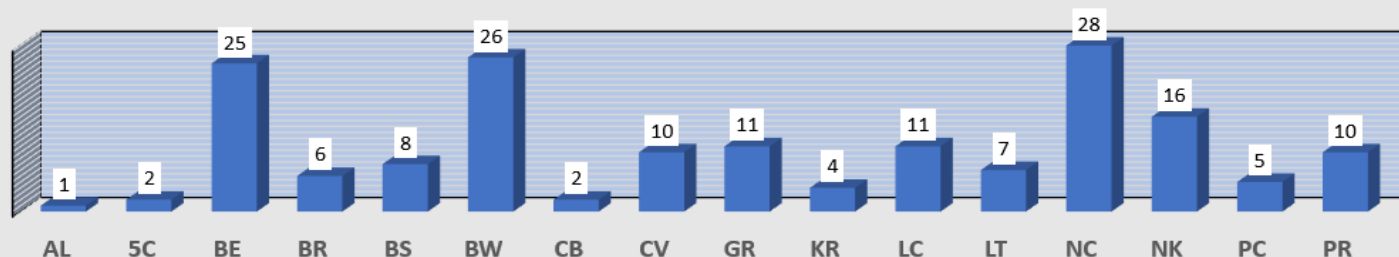
The individual who has the largest number of new recruits has recruited eight new members. This is the number you would have to beat to win first place at the time this article was being prepared. Any application postmarked or entered electronically by August 31, 2025, will be counted. Please ensure your name is on the referral line. You can also take advantage of using our online new member application. Go to the KPR website at: www.kentuckypublicretirees.org and click on the new member application. You can also download and print a copy of the new member applications for your personal use.

Cash prizes for the contest are: first place - \$125; second place - \$100; third place - \$75; and fourth place - \$50. We will also be having three \$20 computer-generated random drawings. All you need to do to be eligible for the drawings is to recruit one new member. I also want to remind you that spouses are eligible for membership. Recruit your spouse so you can be eligible for one of the random drawings. All contest winners will be recognized at the Annual Business Meeting which will be held on Thursday, September 18, 2025, at The Clarion Hotel and Conference Center, 1950 Newtown Pike, Lexington, Kentucky.

Individual chapters are also competing for recognition. The chapter with the largest number of new members will receive a cash prize of \$70. The chapter with the largest percentage increase will also receive a cash prize of \$70. Please do your part to help your chapter win recognition for one of these categories.

Membership numbers are so important to our organization and to you personally as we continue to lobby for a pension supplement increase. Please do your best to recruit new members. I am available to help with the paperwork if needed. Please email me at: betty.hawkins49@gmail.com, or you may call me at 502-321-0649. We need everyone working to recruit new members.

Martha's Membership Contest June 1, 2024 - Aug. 31, 2025 New Members July 20, 2025 = 172



Chapters

AL - Unaffiliated
SC - FIVCO
BE - Bluegrass East
BR - Barren River

BS - Big Sandy
BW - Bluegrass West
CB - Covered Bridge
CV - Cumberland Valley
GR - Green River
KR - Kentucky River

LC - Lake Cumberland
LT - Lincoln Trail
NC - North Central
NK - Northern Kentucky
PC - Purchase
PR - Pennyrite

Chapter News

Barren River - At our June meeting Chapter President Carol Douglas introduced the guest speaker, Scott Stivers, director of business development, for the Hospice of Southern Kentucky. Stivers stated that their hospice has been providing end of life care for residents of Bowling Green and the surrounding area for over 40 years. In his presentation, he gave an overview of both hospice and palliative care services. All services are tailored to the situation and needs of each patient. Stivers addressed several questions from the members in attendance.



Carol Douglas and Scott Stivers

President Douglas reported that KPR President Larry Totten, lobbyists, and other interested parties, met with Representative Jason Petrie, chairperson of the Appropriations and Revenue Committee, on April 24 to discuss a possible "13th check" for retirees. Since state legislators cannot allocate monies for CERS retirees, CERS officials are working to prepare a proposal to cover their share of any potential action taken by the legislators in the 2026 budget session.

Romanza Johnson, long-time Barren River member and membership chair, passed away on May 7, 2025. A donation was made by the chapter in remembrance of Romanza to the Hospice of Southern Kentucky. She was one of the Hospice founders and was the recipient of the first Hospice of Southern Kentucky Lotus Award in 2021. Romanza will be deeply missed by our chapter and her community.



Romanza Johnson

Bluegrass West

We welcomed Gary Adkins, state president of AARP, as our speaker in May. Mr. Adkins gave a presentation on fraud and the devastating impact it has on older individuals. Younger people tend to report fraud more often than older adults, he stated. The scope of fraud is high, around \$43 billion dollars. Booklets on ID theft, fraud and scams were provided to the members.



Gary Adkins

In June forty-five members attended our annual picnic at Juniper Hill Park enjoying great food and fellowship.



Sam Dunn

Sam Dunn, executive director of Liberty Hall in Frankfort, provided the program for our July meeting. Mr. Dunn gave an exceptional historic account of the life of the owner of Liberty Hall, John Brown. It was noted that John Brown was no relation to former Governor John Y. Brown.



New BW officers: Treasurer Ben McCray, Vice President Sandra Whitaker, and President Jean Henning

Cumberland Valley - The Cumberland Valley Chapter met on Tuesday, May 27 at Davids Steak House in Corbin. There was no guest speaker. Chapter officers were selected. There were no new nominations for officers, and no new members volunteered to run for office. All officers presently in office agreed to continue serving and were elected by the members present at the meeting. David E. Cornett will be president, John Harris will be vice-president, Roger Gibbs will be secretary, and Carl Lawson, Jr. will be treasurer. Regular meeting activities such as reading of the minutes and treasurer's report were read and approved by the membership present.



David E. Cornett

In June the guest speaker was Shawn Drake, a retirement specialist, from Kentucky Deferred Compensation. Shawn told us about his organization, asked the group to tell present employees still working about Deferred Comp, and also had discussions with several KPR members that currently had retirement accounts with Deferred Compensation.

Green River - In May our guest speaker was Jarred Spurrier and three other members of V.E.T. (Veterans Empowered Together). Jarred and Brian Basham are board members. Others attending were Scott Wallace, vice-president and Meldoy Wallace, secretary. Their focus is to help military veterans in need in the Owensboro, Daviess County community. Although they don't give money, they do pay for food, medical care, and down payments for homeless veterans to get apartments, etc. They help in situations where there is a long wait for VA assistance, or there are services needed which are not covered by the VA, such as equine and outdoor therapy programs tailored to veterans. There is a high demand for mental health therapy programs. The rate of suicide among military veterans is very high. V.E.T. has therapy partners who provide a comprehensive range of therapeutic options. They have two major fundraisers each year – the Sound Mind Fest, and the Annual Military Ball (veterans attend free).

They are also involved in Fill the Humvee by Toys for Tots. The toys are donated to the Salvation Army, St. Jude Radiothon, Habitat for Humanity, Our Community Salutes, and more. They host the Memorial Day Walk to pay their respects to their brothers and sisters who have passed away.

They host a monthly veteran networking opportunity every second Saturday of the month known as Coffee for Veterans – a way to connect with other veterans while enjoying coffee, donuts, and sometimes breakfast. They also share upcoming events during these meetings. They have an 11-person volunteer board made up of veterans. For more information, visit their website www.veteransempoweredtogether.com. They advise that you enroll in the VA system as soon as you get out of the service.

In June our guest speakers were John Hill, owner/CEO of Bevil Brothers Funeral Home in Beaver Dam, and Rachel House, who is an advance funeral planning specialist at James H. Daviess Funeral Home in Owensboro.

John has been employed at Daviess Funeral Home for 30 years and continues to work there part time after his recent purchase of Bevil Brothers Funeral Home. They shared information regarding the death benefit of \$5,000 available for each retired state employee. You can choose to make the funeral home beneficiary of this benefit, thus avoiding your having to pay tax on it. They notify Social Security and insurance companies of your passing. Also, available is an Away from Home insurance plan which can be purchased for \$450 per person. If you die while away from home, even out of the country, your family won't have to pay the cost of having your body transported home.

Rachel helps individuals and families navigate through the process of pre-arranging funeral services so that they can assure that their loved ones won't have to make difficult decisions about their final wishes. The funeral home offers a variety of Advance Funeral Planning Services all of which are at no cost. By planning now, you can enjoy the peace of mind you receive from knowing your loved ones won't have to make so many decisions. Rachel House can be reached at James H. Davis Funeral Home 270-683-5377 or you can go online and make selections at www.davisfuneralhome.com.

In July our guest speaker was Pam Wright-Smith, former city commissioner in Owensboro. She described her varied background, from cosmetologist to serving six terms as city commissioner. She currently serves as chair of the Senior Center, and has much enthusiasm for the new center. Ground breaking has happened, and it is expected that building will be completed by this time next year. It will be an ultra-modern building with a gymnasium, stage, exercise rooms, chapel, and more; all on one level and located across from Western Kentucky Botanical Garden. Pam stated that anyone over 60 years of age is encouraged to join the Senior Center. The membership fee is \$15.

Lincoln Trail - Our May meeting was held at the Golden Corral in Elizabethtown with 10 members and four guests in attendance. At the meeting, homeless veterans advocate Nate Fowler addressed the plight of homeless veterans through an oral, video, and musical presentation. The moving video presentation was built around a song he wrote, entitled "Send Me an Angel." He played his guitar and sang another song he wrote, entitled "Teardrops to Heaven." Gary Brangers played his guitar and sang a song he had written entitled "We Gotta Be Heroes." Members were once again very generous with their donations of white socks, backpacks, and other useful items for homeless veterans.



Lincoln Trail members and guests in May

President Wickersham discussed information State KPR President Larry Totten had provided concerning the repeal of the WEP/GPO provisions in the Social Security Act. Those receiving additional payments this year may experience a deficit in the amount of federal tax withheld on these additional amounts. It is recommended that those receiving these payments consult with their tax form preparers to see if additional withholding during this year is warranted.

Our June meeting was held at the Golden Corral in Elizabethtown with 13 members and one guest in attendance. Our guest speaker was Marlessa Stark, quality assurance specialist, with the Lincoln Trail Agency on Aging and Independent Living, which covers the eight counties of the Lincoln Trail Chapter. She distributed pamphlets that highlight the programs and services offered including family caregiver, counseling, legal aid, senior nutrition program at senior centers, and home delivered meals. She encouraged us to contact them for further information.

Membership Chair Linda Marcum reported that 16 members have been removed for not renewing their memberships. We now have a total of 166 members. We will not meet in July. Our next meeting will be held August 11, 2025, 11:30 a.m., at the Golden Corral, 1835 N Dixie Ave, Elizabethtown. The guest speaker will be Rebekah Acres from the Hardin County Library.

Northern Kentucky - In April Jane Beyersdoerfer, travel advisor for Prestige Travel, Inc., in Fort Thomas, presented our program. Jane has been a travel advisor for over thirty years and loves what she does. Jane shared her knowledge of traveling by car, plane, train, and cruise ship. Jane also had several travel guidebooks for anyone interested in visiting Ireland, Scotland, Alaska, resorts at sea, and other destinations. She can make your travel dream come true.

Ralph Wolff, membership chair, gave the membership report. Sixteen members and one guest were in attendance. Attending members include two of our newest members, Joan Vickers, Campbell County Courts, and Judy Huesman, Campbell/Kenton Courts. Ralph reiterated that we need to continue to reach out to current members to join our monthly meetings and to actively engage in the recruiting of new members, especially younger retirees.

In May Jason Sebastian, chief of the Campbell County Land Search and Rescue Team (LandSAR), presented our program. Jason has been volunteering in emergency services for 32 years, 17 years as a firefighter and over 20 years in search and rescue, starting with Highland Heights FD in January 1993 where he met Ron Schneider, who was one of his assistant chiefs. Jason helped start the Campbell County Search and Rescue team and became the assistant chief and ATV officer until the team shut down in January of 2016.

In October 2016, a new team was started under Campbell County Emergency Management called Campbell County LandSAR, and Jason was appointed chief. Jason's team currently consists of 22 active volunteers, and they are always welcoming new members. The LandSAR team's primary response area is Campbell and Kenton Counties, and they cover the 12 counties of Northern Kentucky making up Kentucky Emergency Management Area 6, but can respond anywhere in the state that is requesting assistance.



Campbell County LandSAR van

Since going operational on January 1, 2017, Jason's LandSAR team has responded to over 50 missing person incidents and were called to Breathitt County three times after the devastating floods in 2022 and have been called to the Red River Gorge for searches on several occasions. They have also been placed on standby for several incidents including the Western Kentucky EF4 tornado outbreak in 2021.

Northern Kentucky (Cont'd) - In June our program was "10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's" presented by Kelsey Nihiser, program manager of the Alzheimer's Association, Greater Cincinnati Chapter. Alzheimer disease is the disease "you can't see." Kelsey joined the Alzheimer's Association's Greater Cincinnati Chapter in 2023 after working in local nonprofits for the arts, art education, community education and mental health education, including the Contemporary Arts Center, the Baker Hunt Art and Cultural Center, and the Art Academy of Cincinnati. Her work in creative communities and her family history with dementia fostered her passion for supporting this work and connecting people to resources and support.

Please let us know if you change your address, phone number, or email address so that you don't miss receiving our newsletter, dues notices, or other information.

You can email the change to kprmanager@gmail.com, call and leave a message at 502-437-9408, or complete the contact form on our website: kentuckypublicretirees.org.

Scan the QR code at right to visit our website.



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KENTUCKY PUBLIC RETIREES





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Barren River 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 (270) 535-4023	Big Sandy 11:30 a.m., 2nd Thursday Jenny Wiley State Resort Park 75 Theater Court Prestonsburg, KY Contact Judy White (606) 886-7922	Bluegrass East 11:30 a.m. (ET), 2nd Wednesday Quarterly - Jan., Apr., Jul., Oct. Pasta Garage 962 Delaware Ave. Lexington, KY Contact Stephen Wyatt (859) 806– 8883	Bluegrass West 11:30 a.m. (ET), 3rd Tuesday VFW Franklin County Post 4075 104 E. Second St. Frankfort, KY Contact Jean Henning (502) 682-6996
Covered Bridge 11:00 a.m. (ET), 2nd Thursday Double 'S' Bowling 150 Foster St. Flemingsburg, KY Contact June Pugh (606) 849-2651	Cumberland Valley 11:30 a.m. (ET) David's Steak House, Corbin Dates may vary Contact David Cornett (606) 260-0490	Fivco 11:30 a.m. (ET), 3rd Monday Belle Fonte' 1320 Carter Avenue Ashland, KY Contact Morris Wells (606) 465-5784	Green River 12:00 p.m. (CT), 2nd Wednesday Briarpatch Restaurant 2760 Veach Road Owensboro, KY Contact Agnes Barron ((270) 298-7151
Kentucky River 3rd Friday of each month Variety Pizza 1189 Main St. Jackson, KY Contact Jeff Allen 606-568-0757	Lake Cumberland 11:30 a.m. (ET), 3rd Monday The Mellow Mushroom 2520 Monticello St Somerset, KY Contact Bruce Brown (606) 305-9960	Lincoln Trail 11:30 a.m. (ET), 2nd Monday Golden Corral Buffet and Grill 1835 N. Dixie Highway Elizabethtown, KY Contact Theresa Wickersham (270) 300-2453	North Central 11:30 a.m. (ET), 2nd Wednesday Jumbo Buffet 2731 S. Hurstbourne Pkwy Louisville Louisville, KY Contact Lee Tobbe (606) 340-6874
Northern Kentucky 11:30 a.m. (ET), 2nd Monday Golden Corral 4770 Houston Rd Florence, KY Contact Milton Mains (859) 512-9881	Pennyrile 11:30 a.m. (CT), 4th Thursday Country Cupboard Restaurant 518 McCoy Avenue Madisonville, KY Contact Rev. Ollie Littlepage (270) 881-7935	Purchase 10:30 a.m. (CT), 1st Thursday Pizza Inn Joe Clifton Drive Paducah, KY Contact Tom Moore (270) 898-7289	