

**Skagit - Island - San Juan
Washington State School Retirees' Association
Unit 21
September 2023**



***A Message From Co-Presidents
Barbara and Diane***

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Newsletter

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**Contact any of the above
individuals for information
about joining the board.**

We Welcome New Faces!

We have had a beautiful summer and we are looking forward to a wonderful fall! It is time to get busy again with important retiree business.

Unit 21 board members held their annual retreat on August 14th at Diane Visten's home. Ten members attended including four new people: Kathy Caldwell, Virginia Meindl, Donna Smith and Colleen Turk. It is exciting to have new members with fresh ideas on our board.

Plans for the next year's events include the annual Mini Grants offering to be held in October, retirement workshops in the local schools for active members on their retirement issues by Bill DeHon, and some special events such as holding our annual Holiday Luncheon again.

As it is time for our fall membership drive several members stepped up to visit and recruit new members at the local schools. We also discussed the scholarships our unit offers. One is the Professional Technology/Vocational Scholarship to a high school graduating senior. The other is a scholarship to a student teacher offered through Western Washington University. We plan to continue each for the next year.

The health insurance offerings/changes have been a challenge for members so the WSSRA staff have planned ways to support questions and concerns from members. There are several issues that we will need to be alert to, such as the open period for changing insurance plans.

Of great importance our board discussed the Legislative Report from the last session and celebrated the gains that the Legislative teams earned for the members.

Please read on through our newsletter. Give us some feedback on the issues that interest you and ask questions. We always like to hear from our members. Barbara Robinson and Diane Visten Co-Presidents of Unit 21

Health News:

WSSRA Retirees--

On **Tuesday, September 26, 2023 at 9:00 a.m.** Ellen Wolfhagen and Jean Bui from the Health Care Authority will present a webinar on changes to the 2024 PEBB Medicare supplementary rates. Those rates in many cases have increased substantially. The reasons for those increases, plus general comparisons between plans, will be the main thrust of the webinar.

Although many members did change providers for 2023, many more did not. In spite of cost differences, Uniform Medical Plan-Classic remains the plan of choice for many retirees.

With **November the only month that PEBB retirees can change plans for 2024**, this webinar will provide much of the information that members will need to consider if they are contemplating a change that would begin on January 1, 2024.

For those who have a conflict on September 26, the webinar will be recorded and posted on the WSSRA website. To Register use this link. <https://jotform.com/232326577422153>. Once registered, an email will be sent with a zoom link for the September 26th event.

PEBB Medicare Retiree 2024 Premiums:	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024 proposed</u>
Kaiser NW Senior Advantage Proposed	\$176.13	\$193.95
Kaiser WA Medicare Advantage and Original Medicare	\$174.59	\$188.62
UMP Classic Medicare	\$438.34	\$532.94
United Health Care (MA-PD) Complete	\$145.63	\$160.58
United Health Care (MA-PD) Balance	\$122.94	\$135.65
Premera Medicare Supplement Plan F Retired	\$115.16	\$119.05
Premera Medicare Supplement Plan F Disabled	\$196.69	\$207.45
Premera Medicare Supplement Plan G Retired	\$98.53	\$101.99
Premera Medicare Supplement Plan G Disabled	\$164.05	\$169.20



For our Active Members still out there working in the schools!

Thinking about Retirement?

Benefits 24/7 is the new online enrollment system that will replace PEBB My Account starting June 12, 2023.

Benefits 24/7 makes it easy to apply for PEBB retiree coverage.

No more requesting paper forms and mailing them back.

Select the Retiree coverage/continuation coverage button in Benefits 24/7 to get started. You will also be able to immediately see the status of your retiree coverage application, whether it is waiting for review, pending or approved.

If you need help with Benefits 24/7, contact:

Employees contact your payroll or human resources person at your district office.

Retirees and continuation coverage subscribers: The PEBB program.

You can send a secure message through:

HCA Support at support.hca.gov or call 1-800-200-1004 (TRS:711)

Learn more by visiting benefits247.hca.wa.gov

In Remembrance

Donald Fosso
George Rector
Marvin Seelye
William Thompson
Terrance Grove
Christine Silves
Mark Chatt,
Harry Sams,
Earl Steele,
Kay Brown
Merydee Carlson
Donald Jeanroy



Legislative Update:

The 2023 Legislative Session is Over! Despite every obstacle, school retirees did really well on our priorities.

Our Healthcare Benefits were protected and maintained at \$183 per month for PEBB members. **Equalizing the Plan 2 and Plan 3 Retiree Health Insurances** now means that Plan 2 members have the same right as Plan 3 members to enroll in PEBB insurance after previously deferring it because of an alternative insurance.

Equalizing Return to work Rules allows all retiree's (PERS, TRS and SERS) the option to work up to 867 hours per year without jeopardizing their pensions.

Paying off the TRS 1 and PERS 1 Unfunded Liability. The House wanted to take away all of the promised 800 million payment to the unfunded liability. Thankfully a \$250 million payment was used for that purpose.

Passing a Plan 1 COLA Legislation. Plan 1 members received a limited and capped, one-time COLA of up to 3% that started in July. There will also now be a study to be done this biennium on providing a permanent COLA.

The successes that were gained were attributed to all the retirees who wrote, emailed or called their legislators. "Many legislators really heard us!" **Thank you to those members that did contact their legislators and welcome to those that plan to join us in that endeavor next session!** Now it is time to look forward, to be in contact with our legislators as they are back in their districts, many of them holding community events and to be sure they know who we are and what we are concerned about.

Unit 21 Legislative Team: Barbara Robinson, Diane Visten, Bruce Boyer



Bits and Pieces from Peter Diedrick WSSRA Legislative Director

We're Back! Hopefully you've had an enjoyable summer and are watching the kids go back to school from the comfort of your front porch.

The legislature is getting back to work as well. Legislators are still in district, but the professional staff is in Olympia preparing for the 2024 Legislative Session. It's been slower over the summer however, there were some important developments.

The Select Committee on Pension Policy met in June and July. That body seems poised to recommend a 3% Plan 1 COLA for 2024. The Committee is also scheduling time to study implementation of a permanent, automatic COLA for Plan 1. It's well past time, but we applaud their decision to tackle the matter. Further action is expected at the October, November and December SPCPP meetings.

The Washington State Healthcare Authority – the agency managing state retirees insurance – has put out a plea to Washington's congressional delegation regarding subsidies for retiree insurance. The way the Social Security Act is written, Medicare Advantage plans are eligible for more subsidies than traditional Medicare plans. The state has asked Congress to equalize those benefits. WSSRA is fully supporting this effort to drive down premium costs. If you have the opportunity, please raise this issue with your Member of Congress.

As always, thanks for your efforts. Our lobbying efforts are valueless without you.

Events you don't want to miss:

Candidate Forums

Sponsored by the League of Womens's Voters of Skagit County
Forums also available via Zoom

**When: October 2
October 16**

**Where: Skagit PUD
1415 Freeway Drive
Mount Vernon**

Time: 6 - 8 PM

PRSRRT AUTO
US Postage Paid
Bow, WA

Skagit Island San Juan
WSSRA School Retirees
5024 n324th St NW
Stanwood, WA 98273

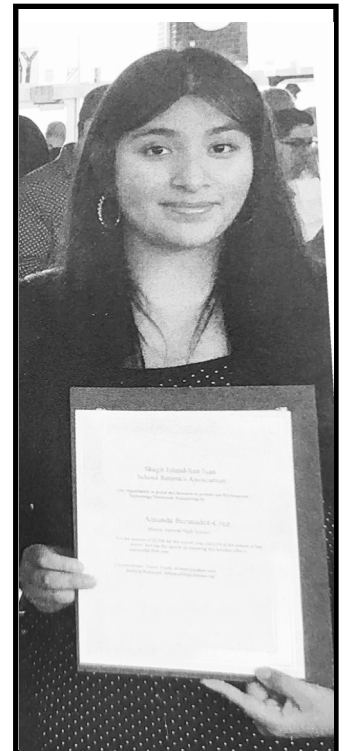
Skagit, Island, San Juan School Retiree's Scholarships are working in our own community

Amanda Bermudez-Cruz was awarded the Professional Technology/Vocational Scholarship of \$1500 this past spring for the coming school year.

A Mount Vernon High School graduate, Amanda plans to attend Skagit Valley College. After a successful first year she will be able to have a second year option.

Unit 21 also offers a scholarship in conjunction with Western Washington University. That scholarship supports those people that are going into the student teacher phase of their education before becoming an educator. The monies will help defray the costs of that program.

Across the state WSSRA in partnership with local units provide many scholarship opportunities for our high school grads. Your WSSRA Journal has information on those as many are given to students in our NW 1 area.



Amanda Bermudez-Cruz
Scholarship Recipient