

THE R.O.C. REPORT

RETIREE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE



Fighting for our Pensions, Protecting our Health Care, Defending ERS

TSEU-ROC members are making our voice heard!

✓ **For a pension increase:** In 2022-2023 TSEU will lead the way in a statewide push for a pension increase

As retirees, we used to believe our service to the state would end with a secure pension. However, legislative efforts to undermine our pensions have not stopped. It takes organized action by active employees and retirees to stand up to the attacks, protect what we have, and to win new improvements. Pensions for retirees in the Employees Retirement System of Texas have been frozen since 2001. Meanwhile, the cost of living has increased by almost 40%. Texas does NOT provide automatic cost of living adjustments (COLAs), for retired state employees. With the average pension at \$21,288 /yr, ERS retirees are struggling to make ends meet.

Retirees in the larger Teachers Retirement System received 13th checks in 2006, 2019 and 2021. The one-time checks were paid out of the state General Revenue, not the TRS fund itself. The average pension for TRS retirees is \$25,740/yr. Both ERS and TRS retirees need a pension increase ASAP.

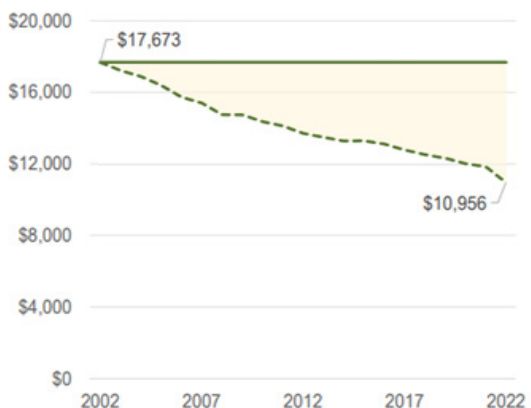
The primary issue: the need for additional state funding

The ERS and TRS needs to be fully funded and “actuarially sound” before paying out a permanent pension increase. The State must fully fund the ERS request for funds to make the pension fund actuarially sound and allocate additional funds to allow ERS retirees to receive a well-deserved and long overdue 13th check. The 2019 legislature added additional funding to TRS by gradually increasing contributions (State 8.25% plus a separate 2% employer portion, Employees 8.25%). The legislature then allocated an additional \$589 million to fund a bonus 13th check but not a pension increase. The Texas Legislature added new funding to the ERS pension fund in 2021, but not enough to allow a pension increase. TSEU ROC members, along with the thousands of active state employee members, will fight for funding for pension increase during the legislative session in 2023!

A secure pension and a 13th check are both needed!

We need legislators to fund our pension systems so they meet the threshold to provide a long overdue permanent increase. In the meantime, there is no reason that a \$2500 bonus cannot be given to present retirees using funds coming from General Revenue. TSEU ROC activists have already begun working to win support for this at the Capitol, without letting up on the pressure for a real, permanent pension increase for ERS retirees.

•Purchasing Power Decline - our frozen pensions buy less today



•The money is there

	Amount per retiree	State Funding
TRS, 2019	Additional payment, Maximum \$2,000	\$589 million
TRS, 2021	Additional payment, Maximum \$2,400	\$701 million
TSEU proposed ERS 2023	Across-the-board \$2500	\$295 Million

•Impact of Inflation on \$1.00

Period from a 2002 Retirement	Average CPI-U Rate	Purchasing Power left
5 years	2.97%	\$0.86
10 years	2.18%	\$0.80
15 years	2.21%	\$0.72
20 years	2.34%	\$0.62

Making Our Voices Heard *continued from cover...*

For Quality, Affordable Health Care

In 2022-2023, TSEU will fight any and all attempts to cut funding or water down our health care plans

TSEU has a 40-year history of fighting for policies and funding to make sure that retired state employees have quality, affordable health care for ourselves and our families. As health care costs increase, there will be increasing pressure in the Legislature to pass costs to employees and retirees and/or to water down our plans. TSEU will continue the fight for adequate funding and to defeat efforts to water down our health plan.

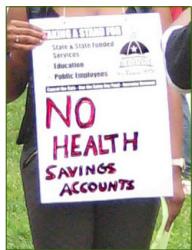
Small increases in out-of-pocket expenses or deductibles have a bigger impact on retirees' budgets because of our reduced income.



For a secure ERS system

In 2022-2023, TSEU will lead the way in defending the programs and resources of the ERS

State legislators in nearly every session since the mid-1990s have floated plans to convert our pension plan to a 401(k) model that reduces pensions and forces retirees to depend on the whims of the stock markets for our futures. Legislators have proposed



converting our health plan to defined contribution plans or health savings accounts that would limit our coverage. Legislators even proposed diverting some of our pension funds into the Emerging Technology Fund that would be used to make risky investments.

TSEU members and our allies have successfully fought to defeat these proposals. But we know that the attacks will continue and we must be prepared!



For front-line worker, retiree voices on the ERS Board

In 2023, TSEU will run a campaign to elect a new TSEU active employee or retired member to the ERS Board of Trustees.

The ERS Board of Trustees controls our pension and health plans: having a front-line voice on the Board makes a difference. Until 1989, the elected members of the ERS Board were always high-ranking state agency officials.

That changed when TSEU member Janice Zitelman was elected to the Board in 1989. Since then a TSEU member has always been on the Board. TSEU members on the ERS Board have been the first and only front line state employees, and the first and only Black and Latino board members. Our members on the ERS Board have been a consistent, strong voice for front-line state employees and retirees who struggle to make ends meet.

In 2021 TSEU won an important victory when new legislation allowed retirees to be elected to the ERS Board. Previously, retirees could not run for board positions, and sitting board members had to resign their positions if they retired during their terms.

In 2023, TSEU will run a campaign to elect a new TSEU active employee or retired member to the ERS Board of Trustees. Winning ERS Board elections takes a lot of work, but TSEU members are willing to do what's needed to keep a voice on the Board.

In 2021, TSEU member Neika Clark ran for and was appointed to the ERS Board. We are confident in her ability to represent frontline employees on the ERS Board of Trustees. We are looking forward to doubling TSEU's voice on the ERS board in 2023!



Dear Fellow State Retiree

We are state retirees and members of the Texas State Employees Union Retiree Organizing Committee (ROC). We are asking you to join us.

Hitting retirement should allow us to relax, spend time with our families and friends, travel, and feel secure that the retirement benefits that we've earned will be there for the rest of our lives. Unfortunately and unfairly, attacks on our pension and health benefits do not stop.

Some state leaders openly declare that our pension and health benefits are not guaranteed. Legislators have let two decades go by with our pensions frozen. Our pension checks buy less than half of what they did in 2001, the last time we got an increase. This is largely because legislators cut the state contribution to our pensions in the late 1990s, and the fund never caught up.

Ideas frequently floated by legislators would convert our pensions to 401(k) type defined contribution. Other ideas in the Legislature call for our health plan to be converted to a health savings account system. While a lot of these proposals are careful to exempt those who are already retired, history has taught us that if budget slashers can successfully attack some of us, they'll come back for the rest.

Most of us were active members of the Texas State Employees Union (TSEU) before we retired. We're proud to be part of the union that has stood and fought for good pay and benefits for active employees and retirees, for quality state services for the people of Texas, and for basic justice and equity in our workplaces and communities. We are proud to continue as TSEU members now that we've retired.

The times keep getting harder. The attacks on state employees and state services keep getting worse. But we've learned that, no matter how difficult the challenges, we can win if we stick together and work together. We're asking you to join us in defending our hard fought gains and winning new victories. Send in the enclosed membership form to become a member today.

ELECTION '22: Elect leaders that will prioritize state workers AND retirees and get rid of those that don't!



Retirees have been told repeatedly by our elected state officials and their staffs that “it’s not your turn” or “we’ll take care of you next session”; unfortunately, it hasn’t been our turn or next session for more than 20 years! State retiree pension issues can’t be kicked down the road for another session! This year, who gets elected and who stays in office could be the difference between making serious headway on our issues OR being told yet again, “we’ll take care of you next session.” Here are TWO ways you can GET INVOLVED and make an impact this election:

Level the playing field, JOIN COPE!

We can’t use union dues to donate to campaigns, so we have a separate fund to do this; it’s called COPE, the Committee on Political Education. As state employees, we don’t have millions to donate to political causes and campaigns like some corporations and wealthy individuals, but we do have lots of people. The idea is that if we each give \$5 or \$10 a month to build our COPE fund, we can also help get people elected who will work for us. The reality is that politics in Texas requires money. Joining COPE is making a conscious decision not to stand by and let politics be controlled by corporate interests or rich individuals. COPE is all about leveling the political playing field for the rest of us.



Participate in election/campaign work

TSEU-ROC members are integral to our get-out-the-vote initiatives AND working directly with legislative candidate’s campaigns. Election work usually involves block-walks and phone banks for area endorsed candidates (that have been previously screened by TSEU members). Contact any TSEU office to get more involved in Election 2022 or go online to the TSEU website for more information.

TSEU-COPE members from the Houston area blockwalking earlier this year for HD147 candidate, Aurelia Wagner. More campaign work is being planned all the time - get involved!

ELECTED OFFICIALS AND STATE RETIREES:

Regarding pensions, we are NOT all in the same boat

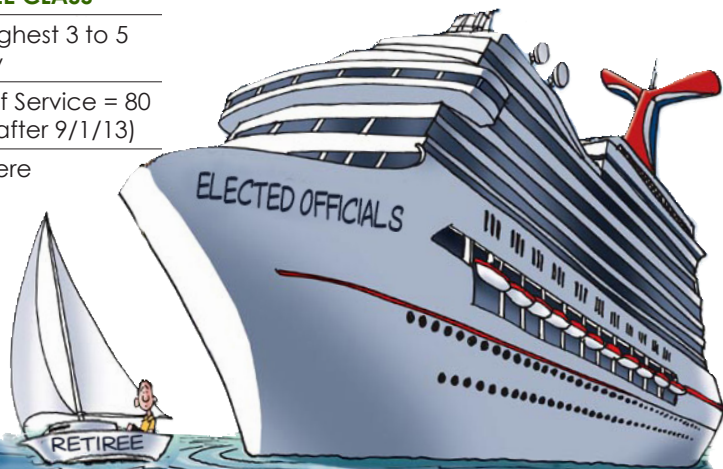
While pensions for state retirees have remained stagnant for over 20 years, State Representatives and State Senators have increased their pension benefits three times over the same period. As a result, when they retire from public office, they can expect to receive much larger annuity checks from our ERS pension fund.

Elected Class vs. Employee Class

Decades ago, lawmakers created the elected class category of ERS membership that includes only Legislators and other elected officials. This exclusive class has special privileges. Unlike state employees, their pension benefit is not based on salary, but rather on the annual base salary of a state district judge. Currently, that salary

is \$140,000. Elected officials don’t have to meet the rule of 80 to be eligible for their pension. They are eligible for full pension benefits when they reach either the age of 60 with eight years of service or the age of 50 with 12 years of service. During this same 20+ years our pensions have remained stagnant, benefits for future retirees have been watered down. In 2009 and 2013, legislators approved cuts in benefits for future retirees in the Employee Class that would not apply to future retirees of the Elected Class. Importantly, while the contribution rate for members of the Elected Class to the ERS is the same as members of the Employee Class - 9.5% of salary - State Reps. and State Senators are paid \$7,200 per year. Legislators have regularly increased their own per diem though, which now ranks as one of the highest in the country at \$221/day while in Session.

ERS RETIREMENT:	ELECTED CLASS	EMPLOYEE CLASS
Salary used to: calculate pension:	\$140,000	Average of highest 3 to 5 years of salary
Minimum age: to retire:	60 with 8 years of service or 50 with 12 years service	Age + Years of Service = 80 (or 65 if hired after 9/1/13)
Increases: since 2001:	2005: Increased salary used to calculate pension to \$125,000 2009: Increased multiplier in annuity formula from 2% to 2.3% 2013: Increased salary used to calculate pension to \$140,000	since 2001, there have been 0 (zero) increases



YES!

I want to assist TSEU's Organizing staff to BUILD OUR STRENGTH by organizing at a state agency, university, or facility near me!

NAME _____

EMAIL _____

MAILING ADDRESS (STREET/PO BOX, CITY, STATE, ZIP) _____

(_____) _____
PHONE

I RETIRED FROM (AGENCY/UNIVERSITY) _____

YEAR RETIRED _____

Days/times I'm usually available (check all applicable):

<input type="checkbox"/> Monday	<input type="checkbox"/> AM	<input type="checkbox"/> PM
<input type="checkbox"/> Tuesday	<input type="checkbox"/> AM	<input type="checkbox"/> PM
<input type="checkbox"/> Wed	<input type="checkbox"/> AM	<input type="checkbox"/> PM
<input type="checkbox"/> Thursday	<input type="checkbox"/> AM	<input type="checkbox"/> PM
<input type="checkbox"/> Friday	<input type="checkbox"/> AM	<input type="checkbox"/> PM
<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday	<input type="checkbox"/> AM	<input type="checkbox"/> PM
<input type="checkbox"/> Sunday	<input type="checkbox"/> AM	<input type="checkbox"/> PM

TSEU-ROC: THE RETIREE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE
TEXAS STATE EMPLOYEES UNION / www.cwa-tseu.org / 512.448.4225

☐ I would like more information.
Please contact me.

ORGANIZE WITH A TSEU ORGANIZER: If you want to help in recruiting new members to TSEU from around where you live or at your former office or work location, please fill out the form above or for more information, call Alex Moir at TSEU (239)287-3307.

Be a ROC Star - help our union grow stronger!



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Find us online at:
www.cwa-tseu.org
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TEXAS STATE EMPLOYEES UNION/CWA
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