



Oregon  
**PERS**  
RETIRES INC.

OPRI Newsletter | Issue #37 | Summer 2020

## RETIREMENT NEWS YOU CAN USE



### How to stay safe as Oregon reopens during the pandemic

On March 8th, Governor Brown issued the executive order that declared a state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the Governor recently issued a new executive order extending the state of emergency to September 4th, Stay Home orders have begun to lift across Oregon.

While businesses and activities are reopening around the state, the risk of exposure to COVID-19 is still out there, especially for those over the age of 65 and those with underlying health issues. It's important to continue to take precautions to protect yourself as you start to step back into the world.

Here's what to expect as you begin venturing out:

- Before going out, check to see if there are any changes to the business's hours of operations or special hours for seniors.
- Respect social distancing guidelines by keeping six feet apart.
- The Governor has issued a requirement for *all Oregonians* to wear a face covering in public indoor venues.
- Stay connected to friends and family through phone calls and social media if you're not able to get together in person.

*The Oregon PERS Retirees, Inc. (OPRI) is the state's largest organization that exists solely to protect the rights and benefits of Oregon's retired public employees. We serve retirees like you by monitoring PERS disbursements, advocating for you at the Legislature and, when necessary, defending you in court. To learn more, please visit our website: [www.opri.org](http://www.opri.org)*

# Oregon Supreme Court hears opening arguments for SB 1049 lawsuit

OPRI has joined the lawsuit to overturn Senate Bill 1049, *James vs. State of Oregon*.

On June 16th, the Oregon Supreme Court heard opening arguments in the court case challenging SB 1049 stating that it unconstitutionally reduces pension benefits. There is currently no deadline for deciding the case.

Senate Bill 1049 was signed into law in June 2019 after narrowly passing the both the Senate and the House with the bare minimum of

votes necessary in both chambers. The law diverts a percentage of employee Individual Account Program (IAP) contributions – 2.5% for active Tier 1 and Tier 2, and 0.75% for active Tier 3 and Tier 4 – to go towards paying down the PERS pension debt. The bill also capped the Final Average Salary at \$195,000. The lawsuit seeks to overturn these provisions, citing that it is a breach of contract.

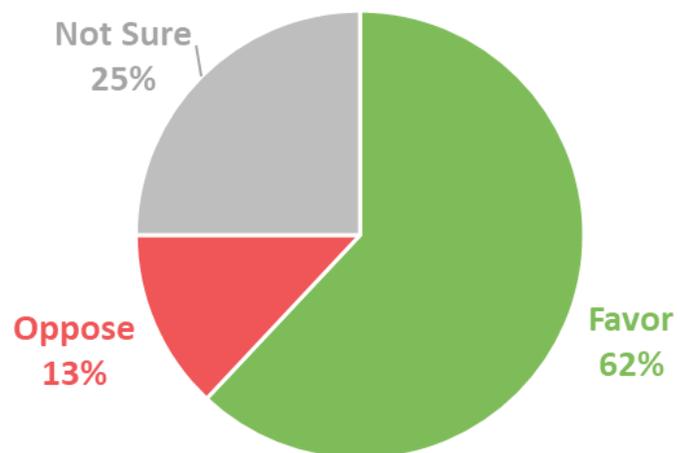


OPRI will continue to keep you updated on the progress of this lawsuit.

## Survey shows OPRI members supportive of lawsuit to overturn SB 1049

In our 2020 OPRI Membership Survey, members were asked if they favored or opposed OPRI joining with the public employee unions to challenge and overturn Senate Bill 1049 at the Oregon Supreme Court. Sixty-two percent of members favored this action.

See full survey results at [opri.org](http://opri.org).



## MEET THE OPRI BOARD - HELGA THOMPSON

Helga Thompson dedicated her career to educating children. Now, as an OPRI Board member, she dedicates time to protecting retirement benefits for teachers like herself.

Born in West Germany, Helga's family immigrated to the U.S. when she was six years old. Helga describes her life growing up as calm and quiet, her father working in a saw mill while her mother stayed home. Their family melded American traditions into their life while keeping many German traditions, including speaking German at home.

When she began school, she knew no English. In fact, Helga said she owes her love of teaching to her first-grade teacher, who helped her immensely.

"She was the most wonderful woman," Helga recalled. "She taught me how to read before I knew what the words meant."

Helga went on to become a middle school math and science teacher. She spent most of her 35-year career in the Salem-Keizer School District, and continued as a substitute teacher for another five years. She especially enjoyed teaching algebra and showing her students how it was used in daily life.

Along with teaching students, Helga worked with the Ames Education Foundation doing workshops for teachers all over the country to help build science curriculum. She also received her administration certificate degree, but she chose to stay in the classroom until she retired in 2005.



**Helga and her husband, Jim, enjoy traveling by cruise.**

**CONTINUED ON PG 4**

## OPR-PAC CONTRIBUTIONS



In the 2020 Primary election, the OPR-PAC supported 16 candidates who would be advocates for PERS retirees and issues in the House, Senate and Secretary of State races.

OPRI invested \$33,000 from our PAC to support these 16 candidates, with 75% of our supported candidates winning their respective races.

### OPRI BOARD - CONTINUED FROM PG 3

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“As a lifelong teacher, it was the best job in the world,” she said. “It’s the most rewarding thing anybody can do.” Now, she gets to enjoy catching up with former students on Facebook.

Helga joined the OPRI Board in 2015 when she realized that she could help protect what people have worked for. She sees the strength of the organization that they can combine efforts with other groups to make a more powerful voice.

“I decided, if I’m not going to help protect my own retirement, I shouldn’t depend on other people. And this way I can help some of my colleagues, and help protect what we’ve worked for for so long. Every retiree should belong to a PERS group like OPRI to stay on top of things.”

Helga is now enjoying her retirement. She loves to spend time with her grandkids, bake, cook, and continuing to add to her cookbook collection (she has 2,500 volumes). She also loves to travel on cruises with her husband, Jim. Together, they have taken trips through the Panama Canal, eastern Caribbean, and Alaska. She and Jim celebrated their 52<sup>nd</sup> wedding anniversary this year. They have two children and five grandchildren.

## OPRI NEWS UPDATES



Oregon PERS Retirees, Inc.

@ORPersRetirees

### OPRI launches Facebook page

OPRI is excited to announce the launch of our Facebook page, which went live in March. This page is designed to give retirees a new forum to connect with OPRI. The page will highlight news articles, legislative updates, and engagement opportunities.

Since the page launched, the Facebook page has already gained more than 1,000 likes and followers and has reached more than 8,500 PERS retirees.

You can connect with us at: [Facebook.com/ORPersRetirees](https://www.facebook.com/ORPersRetirees)

### Addition to PERS administrative rule to implement CARES Act

A new section was added to the PERS administrative rule to implement the federal CARES Act optional withdrawal provision, allowing qualified individuals to take an in-service withdrawal of no more than \$100,000 from their OSGP account balance during calendar year 2020. You can read the full rule change online. If you have questions about how this impacts you, please contact PERS Headquarters at: 888-320-7377.



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The date above indicates when your membership is up for renewal. For more information, please visit [www.opri.org](http://www.opri.org) or send a letter to: Oregon PERS Retirees Inc. | PO Box 12945 | Salem, OR 97309

## Current Board of Directors

**Jay Osborne**, Chair

**Bob Oleson**, Vice-Chair

**John Goodson**, Board Member

**Helga Thompson**, Board Member

**Charles Luukinen**, Board Member

**Greg Monahan**, Board Member

Under the current leadership of this Board of Directors, OPRI has succeeded in adding a large amount of money to OPRI's political action committee and operating funds in the last two years.

## Put your Political Tax Credit to use

Help us continue to protect your rights and benefits in 2020

[www.opri.org](http://www.opri.org)



## NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL

If you are receiving this newsletter by mail, we encourage you to consider electing to switch to email delivery. This way you can be sure of getting all communications from OPRI in a timely and convenient way, and it will allow OPRI to reduce the cost of postage — one of our major operational costs. You can be sure we have your email address by sending us a note at [info@opri.org](mailto:info@opri.org). Thanks for considering this option.