



Oregon
PERS
RETIRES INC.

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RETIREMENT NEWS YOU CAN USE



OPRI weighs in on PERS COLA

In January, Representative Evans introduced House Bill 2822 — OPRI’s priority bill — which aimed to address the PERS COLA cap. The bill died in committee without receiving a hearing.

With many retirees on fixed incomes, cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) help buffer the impact of rising costs. Despite the record Social Security COLAs that have been applied since 2021, the PERS COLA is capped at 2% annually. This means that while infla-

tion increased 14.6% over the last two years, PERS retirees only saw a cost of living increase of 4%. HB 2822 would have given low-and-middle income PERS retirees a one-time cash payment — equivalent to an 8% cost-of-living stipend.

This outcome is disappointing, considering that record rates of inflation show no signs of stopping soon. OPRI will continue to keep this issue in front of legislators and hope to revive this discussion in future sessions.

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

2023 LEGISLATIVE SESSION UPDATE

Since the 2023 Session began in January, OPRI has been monitoring a number of bills that would impact PERS retiree benefits. Here's the latest on what we've been following.

ALIVE: Bills that could have a positive impact on PERS members

- **HB 2283:** PERS Agency bill: Modifies provisions relating to public employee retirement. As it stands now, the requirement for police and firefighters to be eligible for retirement is 60 months of continuous work which must be held immediately before the retirement date. As amended, this bill would change the 60-month requirement to a retirement credit. This would allow for service to be counted toward retirement without having to restart the 60-months of service if there is a break in service.
- **HB 2296:** Makes permanent provisions allowing retired member of Public Employees Retirement System to be reemployed by participating public employer for unlimited number of hours without reduction in pension benefits. As amended, this extends the sunset 10 years to 2034. *OPRI supports*
- **SB 283:** As amended, this bill establishes retirement and benefit rights for certain substitute teachers and exempts retired person from certain limitations on employment if person is employed as licensed or classified staff member by school district or education service district. *OPRI supports*

DEAD: Bills that were introduced and no longer moving forward

- **HB 2822:** OPRI's priority bill: Would have given low-and-middle income PERS retirees a one-time cash payment – equivalent to an 8% cost-of-living stipend.
- **HB 2601:** Would change the way the Treasury invests Oregon Public Employee Retirement Funds (OPERF), directing them to exit from certain carbon-intensive investments and modify future investment options. *OPRI testified on this bill after surveying members on whether they supported this bill*
- **SB 541:** Directs Oregon Investment Council to develop, publish and implement policy to incorporate human rights analyses into investment decisions. Directs officers and employees of council and State Treasurer to consider results of human rights analyses when making investment decisions. Requires State Treasurer to publish annual list of privately placed investments and private assets held in Public Employees Retirement Fund.
- **SB 663:** Changes calculation of final average salary for purposes of Public Employees Retirement System to use five years of salary instead of three years, for salary paid on and after January 1, 2024. *OPRI opposed*

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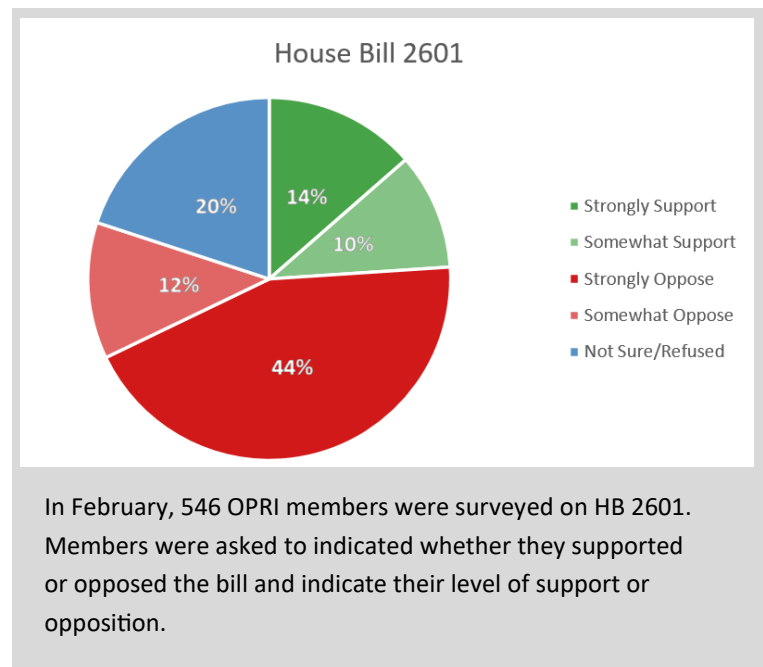


Survey reveals member sentiment on fossil fuel divestment bill

OPRI conducted a survey to find out where members stood on HB 2601, a bill which would change the way the Treasury invests Oregon Public Employee Retirement Funds (OPERF), directing them to exit from certain carbon-intensive investments and modify future investment options. The survey of 546 members found that 24% of the membership supported HB 2601, while a majority – 56.1% – opposed.

These findings were shared with the House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans at the public hearing on the bill. OPRI submitted written testimony stating, “There is very strong sentiment among the membership that PERS investments should be focused on maximizing returns and maximizing benefit levels. The reality is, with a \$33,000 average pension benefit, retirees don’t have the luxury of lesser investment returns.”

Supporters of the bill stated the OPERF should be leading by example and should not be funding fossil fuels or contributing to climate change with its investments. Meanwhile, opponents stated that HB 2601 would lead to lower investment returns for the PERS Fund, lower benefit levels for retirees, and a higher unfunded liability for the PERS system. OPRI will continue to monitor these discussions.



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

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