

Session Wrap Up & What's Ahead

*Cathy Kendall,
Legislative Committee Chair*

The AMRPE Legislative Committee and our lobbyists from Browning, Kaleczyc, Berry & Hoven (BKBH) had over 25 bills on the watch list this session. We took an active position on five of them. Two we supported and three we opposed. Generally speaking, retirement issues were not at center stage during this session—a good time for our new lobbyists to learn about our issues.

This is the first year in over 30 years that Leo Berry was not our registered lobbyist; he has retired! However, he was on hand for brief periods to mentor Dave Galt and Brian Thompson. Dave is an AMRPE and PERS member having worked a number of years at the Montana Department of Transportation. Brian is a recent graduate of the U of M law school. They have become a formidable lobbying team that will be a great help in coming years.

Association of Montana Retired Public Employees
PO Box 603, Helena, MT 59624

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*Association of Montana
Retired Public Employees*



*To enhance and protect
pensions and other benefits
for retired Montana Public
Employees.*

2017 Legislative Session

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We Survived the Session!

Dave Galt, AMRPE Lobbyist

The 65th Legislative session has ended. Public employee pension systems fared better than what many thought based on early bill draft requests. A few bills with negative pension impacts were introduced. Examples include House Bills 436 and 499 by Bozeman Representative Burnett. **HB 436** would have created a constitutional amendment requiring any future increase in employer contributions to be submitted to the voters. **HB 499** would have required system valuations to be based on alternative assumptions that would have artificially enhanced actuarial shortfalls.

“In the years to come public service retirees need to remain vigilant regarding legislative actions that impact your pension systems.”

Both bills were tabled in the House State Administration Committee. A strong showing of AMRPE board members and retiree members provided crucial testimony to help kill these bills. Thank you for your willingness to participate.

Two pension systems for public safety employees, sheriffs (SRS) and game wardens and peace officers (GWPORS), were the point of focus this session. Both systems do not amortize and have not done so for several years. **HB 383**, sponsored by Rep. Custer, increased the SRS employee contribution by 1.25% and employer contribution by 3%; it was sent to the Governor. **HB 136**, also sponsored by Rep. Custer, addressed issues in the GWPORS system; it failed.

Actions surrounding the public safety bills revealed some alternative views about our pension plans.

Both were amended to change the 20-year retirement benefit to 25 years with age restrictions. This would have created an unbalance among public safety retirement systems. SRS (**HB 383**) was amended back to 20 years by a narrow margin. Most disturbing in my mind are the many legislators who believe that public employees should only be able to draw a retirement for as many years as they worked.

In the years to come public service retirees need to remain vigilant regarding legislative actions that impact your pension systems. I appreciate the opportunity to have represented AMRPE in this session.

Address Change? Let us know.

AMRPE
PO Box 603, Helena, MT 59624
406-442-4934 (Contractor)
Email: inquiry@amrpe.org

www.amrpe.org