

A Message from Lyle Manley, AMRPE President

This year brought about changes to the officers on the AMRPE Board. The most significant is that Mike O'Connor stepped down as president and board member. Over the last ten years or so, Mike has worked tirelessly for the members of AMRPE; please thank him for his service if you see him. He deserves a chance to enjoy his retirement. The newly elected officers include myself as president; Cathy Kendall as vice president; James Driggers continuing as treasurer and Jan Brown remaining as secretary.

Leo Hudetz, of Billings, is our newest board member and he is the first from outside of the Helena area. In the first quarter, Leo will participate in board meetings via Skype conference calling. We are excited to engage more of our members through the new communication services that have become available to us.

As you probably know, the 2019 Legislature is now in session. As one of the services provided to our members, we track legislation that impacts public employee retirees. As part of that effort, AMRPE has engaged the services of the law firm of Browning, Kaleczyc, Berry & Hoven P.C., which will help keep an eye on legislation and present AMRPE's position to the Legislature. We also urge our members to become knowledgeable about proposed legislation that impacts your retirement benefits. You should feel free to contact your legislators on your own by letter, email, and telephone. Sometimes the most effective lobbying is directly from a knowledgeable voter.

Meeting minutes and other important information is posted on our website to keep you informed of the Association's activities. If you have any questions, comments or ideas, don't hesitate to contact us. It is a pleasure to serve all our AMRPE members. Our volunteer board will continue to work on matters that concern you.

Most of all, the board wants to thank you all for being members of AMRPE! ▣

(Photo Courtesy of Steve Barry)

Planning for Health Insurance in Retirement

by Connie Welsh, AMRPE Board Member

Welsh shares her expertise, as an insurance professional, highlighting the importance of retiree health coverage options.

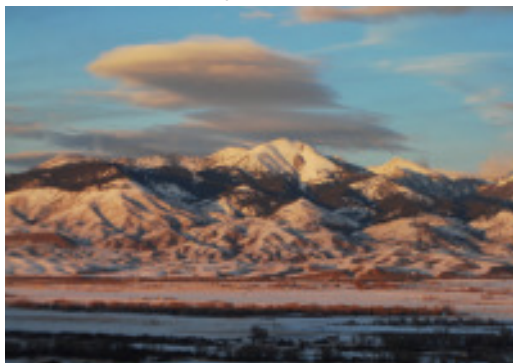
One of the major financial decisions facing retirees and prospective retirees is the issue of planning for health care and associated costs. For many, it is **the issue** that defines their retirement finances and readiness.

Public employees in Montana generally have insurance available to them and their family members as long as they work. But once they are no longer considered "active-employees" (regardless of age), they move into the world of retiree health care coverage.

"Early Retiree" Coverage Options: If you are not yet 65 years of age, you are an "Early-Retiree." Montana law requires that public employers permit you to remain a member of the employer's group health plan until you become Medicare eligible. The employer is allowed to charge Early-Retirees the full cost of the group coverage. The benefit to a retiree is that group health insurance generally costs less than buying an individual health care policy.

The exception is if you qualify for assistance through the individual Federal Health Insurance Marketplace – also nicknamed "ObamaCare." One of the features of the Marketplace is access to help

(Photo Courtesy of Christopher Mumme)



paying health insurance premiums for those who meet certain income criteria. If you qualify – and a substantial number of people do qualify – health insurance plans may be available at considerably reduced monthly premiums or even no premium. The caveat

is higher deductible and out-of-pocket limits for most group plans.

"Medicare Eligible Retiree" Coverage Options: If you are a retiree who is at least 65 years of age, you may be "Medicare-eligible" and qualify for the federal health care program for seniors. Your health care and prescription drug costs may be paid by a combination of your employer's group health plan (if available to those 65 and older) or a commercial Medicare Supplement plan in conjunction with Medicare. Alternatively, you may purchase coverage through a specific type of Medicare policy called a Medicare Advantage plan. A Medicare Retiree does have the option to stay on the state plan but it is expensive.

Costs for retiree coverage can vary widely and should be tailored to meet the needs of you and your family. Resources for assistance in selecting coverage include your employer's Human Resource staff, programs such as the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), or knowledgeable insurance professionals. ▣

AMRPE

Association of Montana Retired Public Employees

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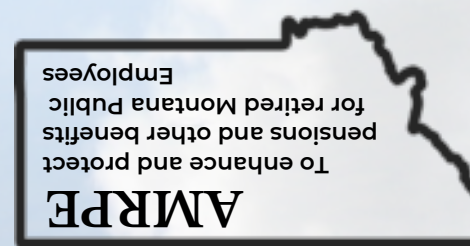
www.AMRPE.org

(Photo Courtesy of Tara Comfort)



- A Message from AMRPE President, Lyle Manley,
- Updates on 2019 Legislature,
- How to refer fellow retirees to join the AMRPE movement,
- And many other membership details...

Association of Montana Retired Public Employees 2019 Newsletter



Hello Member,



Update on January 2019 Legislature

by Dave Galt, AMRPE Lobbyist

Galt provides insight on the current issues and future goals of retirement legislation.

Dave here, reporting details from the 2019 Montana Legislative Session. So far there are a total of 28 bill draft requests within the topic of retirement. Of the 28 bill drafts, three have been introduced and have a scheduled hearing. Eighteen of these bill drafts have the broad title of "Generally Revise Retirement Laws." We never know what gifts may unfold if these bill drafts turn into legislation. Even though these drafts may not become anything, it is still important to watch as they may propose to exempt some pensions from State income tax.

Some bill drafts may be because of market volatility as we have seen in the last 45 days. Even as I write, the market has clawed its way up from the late December floor. However, we are still about 2,700 points below the 52 week high. This type of volatility fuels concerns by some legislators looking at the effects of retirement systems and the need for change because of the market fluctuation.

Actuarial valuations for each retirement system were released in October. While the actual market return was higher than the assumed rate of return at 7.95 percent, the four year smoothing resulted in a slightly lower return. This lower return changed amortization periods for the various retirement systems: Public Employee Retirement System (PERS) currently amortizes in 38 years, which will cause some concern; and the Game Wardens' and Peace Officers' Retirement System (GWORS) will not amortize for 72 years. This plan is long term and has seen drops. With our lobbying and association board efforts we continue to watch for long term progress.

"...constant vigilance over the entirety of the legislative process is necessary to ensure that legislation negatively impacting AMRPE membership is avoided."



(Photo Courtesy of Tara Comfort)

One of the first retirement bills heard in Committee was HB 128, to fix the GWPORS. HB 128 was heard on January 16th and led by the Montana Public Employee Retirement Administration. This bill increases the employer contribution by 2 percent and includes a termination of the higher rate once the GWPORS returns to a 25 year amortization period. We foresee this as a step in a positive direction for the Game Wardens' and Peace Officers' Retirement System.

While legislative conversations about public retirement appear relatively limited right now, constant vigilance over the entirety of the legislative process is necessary to ensure that legislation negatively impacting AMRPE membership is avoided. While

Browning, Kaleczyc, Berry & Hoven, P.C. lobbying team is strategizing with new Board President, Lyle Manley, AMRPE Board and AMRPE Legislative Committee, we look forward to our work and representing the interests of AMRPE members. ■

You Are the Key to Our Success!

by Patty Mott, AMRPE Board & Membership Committee Member



Be in the know about the association's work, access to legislature, member information and other membership updates .

AMRPE is working for you. January brings the Montana Legislature to Helena and a busy time for our lobbyists and board members serving on the Legislative Committee. The most important aspect of paying AMRPE dues is that it allows our organization to monitor bills that will affect your retirement.

If you haven't checked our website recently, please do - we have links to connect you to Montana Legislative Services to find the representative in your area as well as access to monitoring legislative bills as they are introduced.

We will send an email, to those members who have provided them, if we need you to contact your legislator concerning retiree issues on upcoming bills.

We publish our meeting minutes and financial reports on our website to help you stay engaged on retirement issues. Members can also join our

meetings by teleconference, if you are interested contact our administrator at (406) 442-4934.

Last month we sent our notice to members whose dues expire in 2019. You have the option of renewing for one, two, or three year(s) or lifetime. Please consider a two or three year option and help us contain printing and mailing costs. We had a 79 percent return on our renewals in 2018. With your help we hope to raise this percentage! If you did receive your dues notice but have not yet returned it, please do. Another option is to send payment through our website. (amrpe.org)

Each fall we invite new retirees to join our organization. Last year we had 138 new members join us. Please tell your fellow public employee retiree friends and neighbors about our organization and how it can help protect their retirement. ■

(Photo Courtesy of Dan Nichols)

Renew or Become a Member Today!



Submission Instructions: Cut out the below section on the dotted line and send your renewal or membership to PO Box 603, Helena, MT 59624. If you have questions about your renewal or submission details please call: (406) 442-4934.

Refer a Fellow Retiree to Join Today!

Do you have a friend or family member who recently retired from a public entity?

You can help them by sharing information, like this newsletter or our website (amrpe.org) to inform them of what AMRPE does for retirees. With your help we can continue a strong membership and remain vigilant of your retirement benefits. ■

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

- 1 year for \$15
- 2 years for \$29
- 3 years for \$43

Additional donation enclosed \$ _____

LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP

- \$250 if under age 60
- \$200 if 60-69 years of age
- \$150 if 70 or older

Member Information (please print)

FIRST NAME		MI	LAST NAME	
ADDRESS		CITY	STATE	ZIP
TELEPHONE		EMAIL		
YEAR BORN	YEAR RETIRED	RETIRED FROM		

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