A Message from AMRPE President Carol Grell Morris


(Photo Courtesy of SUSAN BRUEGGEMAN FOSTER

This 2026 interim year between Montana Legislative Sessions and the upcoming 2027 Session will again prove to be interesting for public employee retirement issues. The interim committee overseeing these issues--State Administrative and Veterans Affairs (SAVA)—continues to meet to address many policy and budget issues. AMRPE's lobbyist attends the SAVA meetings and regularly reports to the AMRPE Board regarding any identified pension issues, allowing the AMRPE Board to prepare in advance to respond immediately when the Session begins in January. All AMRPE members are invited to attend the monthly Board meetings to hear the lobbyist's report.

Thank you again for your membership and support of AMRPE. Please continue to share your thoughts and concerns throughout the interim year and into the next Montana Legislative Session.

The Board has changed some members, but all are volunteers who are contributing their valuable insight, knowledge, and most of all time to keep AMRPE strong for all public employee retirees.

Thank our past board members!
Tom Livers, Geoff Badenoch, Barbara Martens and Dave Ashley

Welcome new board members!
Sheryl Olson, Sandi Olsen, Chris Behan and Steve Garrison

Protecting Your Pension: GABA PROTECTION 2013 - 2015 HISTORY

By Steve Garrison, AMRPE Board Member

Since 1997, Montana's Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) recipients have received a guaranteed annual benefit adjustment (GABA) to their annual retirement benefits, meaning that every January 1, the retirement benefits increased by a certain percentage, year after year. In 2013, largely due to economic difficulties, the PERS fund was no longer actuarially sound. With little warning, at the end of the 2013 Montana Legislative Session, some legislators introduced last-minute amendments to House Bill 454 to reduce the GABA from a flat percentage rate to a floating percentage rate, whether the PERS member was still employed or already retired. After attempts to get the legislature to revise or abandon the benefit reduction in HB 454 failed, and the bill became law, AMRPE filed suit against the State to overturn the benefit reduction.

AMRPE hired the Helena firm of Browning, Kaleczyc, Berry & Hoven, who immediately obtained a District Court temporary injunction that the benefit reduction was a breach of contract. Some AMRPE lawyer members voluntarily assisted the firm for free and provided valuable help in the case. After briefing, in March 2015 the District Court issued a permanent injunction. During the appeal, the parties negotiated a settlement which stopped the State from reducing benefits for active employees and retirees. There have been no other attempts to pass laws affecting the benefit. (NOTE: this case affected only the PERS; other retirement systems, such as Judges', Peace Officers', etc., were not included in the decision.)

SEGBAC UPDATE

By Bruce Brensdal, AMRPE Treasurer

The State Employee Group Benefits Advisory Council (SEGBAC) held its quarterly meeting on March 10, 2026.

$41M
Medical net loss
Dental/Vision small gains

$1.15 per $1
spent for every $1.00 collected for active employees.

$0.87
spent for every $1.00 collected for Medicare and under 65 retirees.


(Photo Courtesy of MIKE MURPHY)

AMRPE
Association of Montana Retired Public Employees
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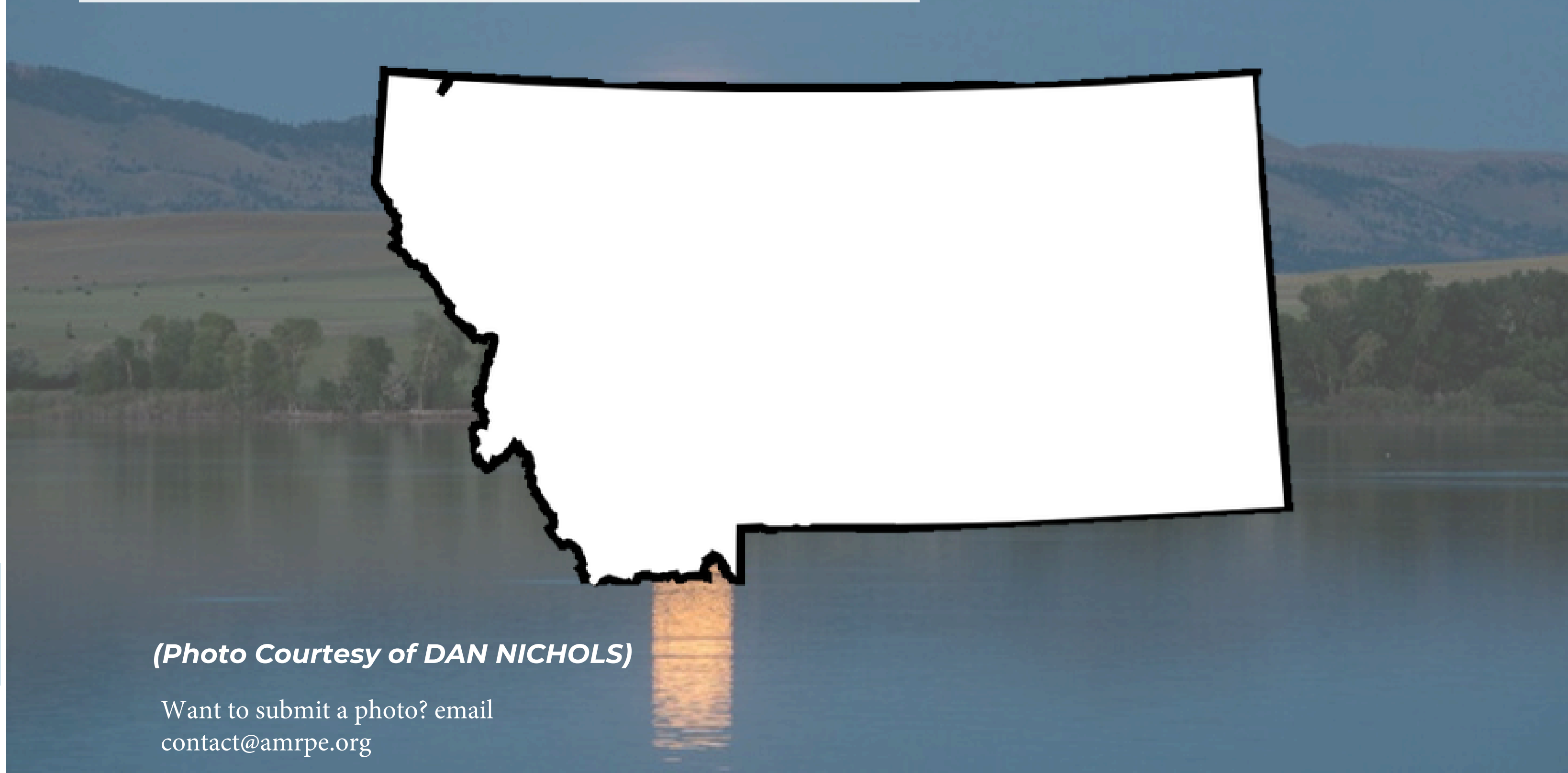

(Photo Courtesy of DAN NICHOLS)

Want to submit a photo? email contact@amrpe.org

INSIDE THIS ISSUE
- President's Message
- Protecting Your Benefits (GABA)
- Retirement System Updates
- Membership & Community

Use your smart phone's camera to read the QR Code to the left to visit our website at: www.AMRPE.org

Look for AMRPE's Facebook page and give us a like!

Association of Montana Retired Public Employees Spring 2026 Newsletter

AMRPE MEMBER NEWS

AMRPE
To enhance and protect pensions and other benefits for retired Montana public employees

Retirees by the Numbers

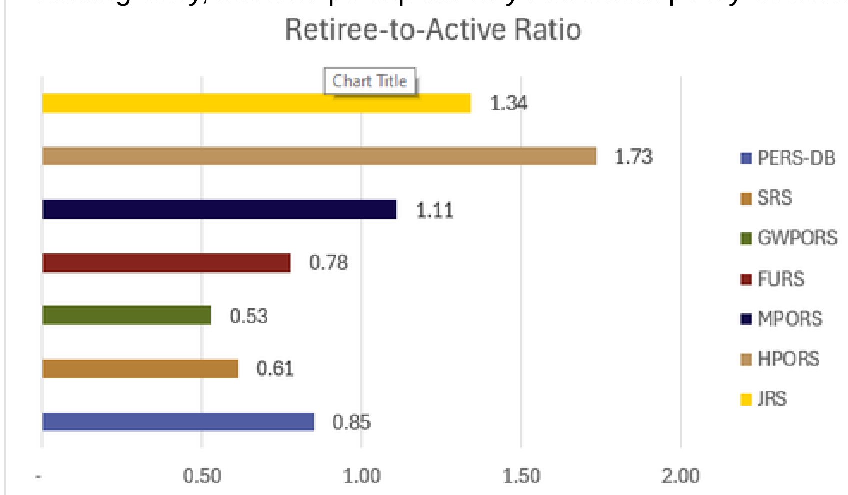
By Sheri Scurr, AMRPE Legislation Committee Chair

Legislative Services Division Website | www.legmt.gov

Montana's public retirement systems serve employees whose careers look different across agencies, roles, and public safety responsibilities. Looking at active members, retirees and benefit recipients, retirement age, and years of service together gives a clearer picture of how each system is shaped.

What to notice:

A few smaller systems now have more retirees and benefit recipients than active members. This does not tell the full funding story, but it helps explain why retirement policy decisions deserve continued attention.



**A ratio above 1.0 means there are more retirees and benefit recipients than active members. This does not tell the full funding story, but it helps show why retirement policy decisions matter.

Retirement Snapshot

System	Avg. Retire Age	Avg. Yr of Service
PERS-DB	62	22
SRS	54	19
GWPORS	58	19
FURS	53	24
MPORS	50	21
HPORS	51	21
JRS	67	18

Membership Update

by Lois Menzies, AMRPE Secretary & Membership Committee Chair

AMRPE is the only association working exclusively for Montana public retirees to protect your hard-earned pensions and other benefits. Your membership enables us to advocate on your behalf before the Legislature and keep you informed through newsletters, our website, and other important communications.

In January, AMRPE mailed a letter and return envelope to those whose membership was up for renewal. Thank you to everyone who has already renewed — we truly appreciate your continued support. If you have not yet renewed, please take a moment to use the envelope provided or mail the form below. For your convenience, you may also renew online using the PayPal option at **www.AMRPE.org**.

If you know any public retirees who are not AMRPE members, invite them to join. The more members we have, the stronger our voice!

Did you Forget to Renew for 2026?

How to check your renewal year:
***Check** the "Current Through" year printed above your address in this newsletter. If the year is prior to **2026**, your membership fee is due!*

Submission Instructions:
*Cut out the section to the right on the dotted line and send your renewal to: **PO Box 603, Helena, MT 59624.** Or you can submit payment through our website: www.AMRPE.org.*
If you have questions about your renewal or submission details please call: (406) 442-4934.

Please select a membership option below:

- ❑ New Member
- ❑ Renewing membership

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

- ❑ 1 year for $20
- ❑ 2 years for $39
- ❑ 3 years for $58

LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP

- ❑ $225 if 60-70 years of age
- ❑ $175 if 71 or older

Pay with PayPal!

Member Information (please print)

FIRST NAME		MI	LAST NAME	
ADDRESS		CITY	STATE	ZIP
TELEPHONE		*EMAIL (REQUIRED)		
YEAR BORN	YEAR RETIRED	RETIRED FROM		

*Membership updates and Association action requests will be sent through email periodically.
Please make checks payable to AMRPE.

Estimating Retirement Plan Costs

Experience Study – SAVA

By Sheri Scurr, AMRPE Legislation Committee Chair

Have you ever wondered how retirement system administrators estimate benefit costs, or pondered what happens when cost estimates are off? The Montana Public Employee Retirement Administration (MPERA) and the legislature regularly monitor plan experiences and adjust the cost estimates used to set contribution rates.

In addition to the annual actuarial valuations for each retirement plan, an experience study is also conducted every five years to compare historical experience with the assumptions used to project costs.

Assumptions are key to projecting future costs - Demographic assumptions include how long employees will work; disability rates; age at retirement; mortality rates; and other rates that affect costs. Economic assumptions include: the investment rate of return; price inflation; and wage growth.

An experience study will be presented in May - The July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2025 experience study for all MPERA-administered defined benefit plans is being conducted now. The results will be presented to the Public Employees' Retirement Board (PERB) at its meeting in May. If plan experience indicates an assumption should change, actuaries will recommend the change and outline any financial impacts. The PERB may then adopt or decline a recommended change. The Board's adopted assumptions are used in each retirement system's annual actuarial valuations.

Contribution rate changes require legislative action - If an adopted assumption change warrants additional funding, the PERB could recommend a contribution rate change to the next legislature.

SAVA - This is where the legislature's State Administration and Veterans Affairs Interim Committee (SAVA) comes in. Because benefit formulas and contribution rates are set by state statute and public pension policy is complex, the legislature designated SAVA as its oversight committee to review annual actuarial valuations, the experience studies, and any adopted assumption changes. SAVA can then advise the full legislature if statutory changes are needed to keep the retirement systems actuarially sound.

More information - To review the experience study when it is posted (expected by May 8th), visit https://mpera.mt.gov, click on the "About" tab and the "Annual Reports" link. Also, PERB meetings are recorded and open to the public. Meeting information may also be found on the MPERA website under the Board tab.

To follow SAVA's activities, visit SAVA | Committee Explorer (https://committees.legmt.gov/#/nonStandingCommittees/3) to find meeting information and agendas. Pension materials are posted under the "Study/Topics" tab.

ARE YOU MISSING A LEG?

Three-legged Stool

Sheryl Olson, AMRPE Nominating Committee Chair

Since the late 1940s, the idea has been around of a "three-legged stool" of retirement income security. Retirement advisers use this metaphor to encourage people to have at least three sources of income to afford solid and well-rounded financial protection. As members of the Montana's public employee retirement system, we have the first leg: our pension. Most public employees also have the second leg: our Social Security income. But the critical third leg is to also have personal savings or investments. As any pre-retirement presentation or retirement budget calculator will tell you, all of us should be mindful of the unexpected parts of life that may demand more than our pension and social security can cover. The State's deferred compensation plan is an easy, cost-effective way to build a savings plan, along with other investment plans and individual retirement accounts. Remember – three-legged stools were invented for a reason!