

President's Message for August 2018 by Richard C. Warbrouck

I received an invitation from Kenny Stewart, President of Local 27, as a past President of Local 27, to attend the opening ceremony of the 54th IAFF Convention here in downtown Seattle. This is also the 100th year anniversary of the IAFF and also the 100 year anniversary of Seattle Firefighters Union Local 27. I just returned from the opening ceremony. It was spectacular and very professional. IAFF President Harold Schaiberger gave a very informative and inspiring State of the Union report.

As a past President of Local 27 I can't imagine the amount of work and planning that went into this event. I want to extend my congratulations to President Stewart and the staff of Local 27 for all their hard work, attention to detail and courtesy. These efforts have not gone unnoticed.

In this Newsletter it may appear that we have an unusual number of notes from members and lists of contributions for the Legislative Fund for the DRS mailing. This is because we don't publish a Newsletter in July so the August Newsletter covers a two month period.

I want to thank those of you who responded with comments or contributions for a special mailing to LEOFF I police and fire members. We are still considering to include all retired LEOFF II police and fire members in this special Department of Retirement Systems (DRS) mailing. Including all LEOFF II retirees in the mailing will increase the cost significantly as I believe there are about 3,000 LEOFF II retired members and another 2,000 who are eligible for retirement. I personally feel that we should reach out to the LEOFF II retirees to create one statewide police and fire retiree association. LEOFF II members may not realize it but one day this organization would be a LEOFF II police and fire retiree association and at some point may be in a position to reach out to a group of LEOFF III members.

I know from experience by being involved in the Washington State Council of Firefighters (WSCFF), the IAFF, a past president and executive board member since 1962 of the Seattle Firefighters Union Local 27 that the active members don't always look after the retired members.

Recently a prime example was when the LEOFF II Board submitted a bill to the legislature to allow future LEOFF II retirees when retiring to purchase an annuity through the Department of Retirement Systems. The bill was passed by the legislature with no provision to allow future LEOFF I retirees or those LEOFF II members who had already retired the opportunity to purchase an annuity. The RFFOW went to the LEOFF II board and in the next legislative session we had the bill amended to allow those LEOFF II members already retired and the active LEOFF I members when they retire the option to purchase an annuity. In the future any request to improve a benefit for LEOFF II members already retired will have to be presented to the LEOFF II board before being submitted to the legislature. Any new benefit that includes those LEOFF II members already retired would increase the cost and could increase the contribution rates for LEOFF II members, employers and the state. Future costs will increase significantly as the number of LEOFF II retiree's increases. The LEOFF II board may not look too favorably at any increased benefit for LEOFF II retirees. There could be a time when the LEOFF II retirees would have to go directly to the legislature as we have done to improve the benefits for LEOFF I retirees.

Again, I want to thank those of you who responded to my request for a small donation to offset the cost of a special DRS mailing and the expense of scheduling meetings in different locations in the state. I am humbled over the response. The contributions were very generous and much appreciated. To date we have collected over \$6,000.

I challenge the deputy sheriffs and police officers to reach out to their members for donations to meet or beat the amount that we have raised .I feel that this effort may be another example of what we are attempting to correct. The problem is that a small group of LEOFF I retirees under the banner of the Retired Firefighters of Washington (RFFOW) are paying the major cost for political action activities and for lobbying in Olympia. A small group being about 900 out of the 7,300 LEOFF I members. Unfortunately this Newsletter is only received by those same 900 members. That's why we want to do the special DRS mailing to at least all 7,300 LEOFF I members.

The problem is how much can you address in a letter or how long can the letter be? If the letter is more than one or two pages it may not be read. We are going to have to rely on our 900 members to help get the message out. We will be asking you to contact friends and associates and ask them the following questions:

- Do you believe we should have one statewide police and fire retiree association?
- Do you feel this organization should include all retired police and fire members both LEOFF I and LEOFF II?
- Do you feel all retirees should pay their fair share to protect our retirement system and the benefits we have earned?
- Do you feel that it's fair, equitable and effective to have only 900 firefighters out of the 7,300 LEOFF I members protecting our retirement system?
- Would you join a statewide police and fire retiree association for a modest annual dues with a monthly Newsletter, area meetings, elected officers, meeting minutes and a financial statement to the elected officers?

Our next step is to meet with the various retiree associations or groups to ask for their suggestions or concerns and ask for a donation for the special DRS mailing and to pay for meeting expenses in different parts of the state. We will then forward a letter to all 7,300 LEOFF I members and possibly all 3,000 LEOFF II retirees. We will include a return ballot of some kind so we can have email addresses, home addresses and phone numbers to notify you when and where a meeting will be scheduled for you to attend. If you know of a retirement group or of a location where we can schedule a meeting please notify us at our email address or phone.

One of the main issues we have to discuss before the January session of the 2019 Legislature is how we are going to staff the Prior Act Pension Boards and LEOFF I Disability Boards. This is a major concern and something we must discuss. Another example of why we need a statewide organization where everyone can have a voice, a question and representation in Olympia, or at a Prior Act Pension Board, disability board or LEOFF II retirement board meeting. One solution for the firefighters would be to affiliate with the Washington State Council of Firefighters (WSCFF) as a retired group.

IT IS AND SHOULD BE YOUR DECISION!