

## President's Message for January 2019 by Richard C. Warbrouck

As we begin the New Year we want to extend to all of you our best wishes for a happy, healthy and safe New Year. We also want to remember all of those who have fallen from our ranks, unfortunately too many to list.

I want to thank all of you for your membership and support as we work to protect the benefits that we earned during our careers in the fire service. We also want to acknowledge and thank you for the cards, notes and kind words you have forwarded to us during this holiday season.

It is very pleasing to see the many annual dues checks coming in. We appreciate those of you who fill out the membership information form. This form allows us to update our membership roster and keep your information up to date. I want to remind those of you who pay your annual dues monthly by payroll deduction from your retirement check to send in the membership information form and mark the box on the top "payroll deduction." This will help in keeping your membership information up to date. Your membership is the same as an authorization form to represent you and gives us the right and authority to represent you in all areas as needed, pension boards, disability boards, Department of Retirement Systems (DRS) and in Olympia.

I want to thank all of you who donate three dollars to our Legislative Fund by rounding off your dues payment to sixty dollars. I certainly want to extend my thanks and appreciation to the many who make a generous contribution by adding a donation to your dues check or by forwarding a second check as a donation to our Legislative Fund or the DRS mailing. In the next few weeks we will mail a questionnaire to all LEOFF I members, police & fire and to all LEOFF I and LEOFF II retired police & fire. These donations allow us to attend functions, fundraisers for legislators and candidates in office or running for office and activities that we could not normally attend. When responding to invitations we are able to talk with legislators or candidates one on one to introduce ourselves, our organization and explain who we are and who we represent. When attending these functions we are able to thank those who are or who have been sympathetic to our issues. Attending hearings and testifying at hearings is a small part of a legislative program. One has to develop a relationship with as many legislators as possible to know what they like or don't like, know what their interests are and when possible visit them in their legislative districts in the interim between legislative sessions.

The questionnaire that will be mailed out will be an attempt to solicit each recipient and ask you as a retired member, what type of organization would

you support or join to represent you in Olympia and assist you with other retirement problems. This will be one time that each recipient can give their own personal opinion as to what they need, what they want and the type of organization that would meet their expectations. This will be difficult and expensive. It's hard to develop a questionnaire that will be meaningful, get the information needed and guarantee a response. The donations from our members and the Retired Seattle Police Officers Association will pay the cost of this first mailing. This will be expensive considering the cost of paper, printing or copying, postage, envelopes and stuffing if more than two sheets of paper, a DRS fee for developing the mailing list and a mailing service fee for processing the mailing. We hope that each of you will respond!!!

It's in our best interest to have one organization representing LEOFF I retirees especially after the last Select Committee on Pension Policy (SCPP), hearing on December 11, 2018. There were two organizations representing LEOFF I members. One was the RFFOW who represents the largest number of firefighters and some police officers in the state and the LEOFF I Coalition that speaks for some. We don't know how many make donations to the so-called Coalition. Each of these two groups gave testimony on two issues affecting LEOFF I members. The problem was that each group had somewhat different positions on both issues. This makes it awkward and quite difficult for legislators and other committee members to form an opinion. Quite often when two organizations approach a committee representing the same group and are at odds, the committee will take no action. This committee meeting was advertised as a public hearing on an issue we had requested the committee in November to put on the agenda of the December meeting. I don't believe anyone from the Coalition was at the November meeting.

The first issue was to amend the various retirement statutes to make the language stipulation who can be elected to a Pension or LEOFF I Disability Board more uniform.

The second issue was to expand the eligibility for election to the board by stipulating "That any employed or retired firefighter or law enforcement officer living in the jurisdiction of the board be eligible for election to the board." The rationale was to solve the problem of staffing these boards. If a firefighter or law enforcement officer living in a city or county as a resident can hold any other office including Mayor and city council, why can't they serve on a pension or disability board.

At the November SCPP meeting the Committee directed the Actuary's office to draft legislation for a Public Hearing on the amendments at the December

meeting. I assisted the Actuary's office in drafting language for the amendments.

The night before the hearing I received a call from Bill Dickinson, the new president of the Coalition to inquire about the amendments maybe thinking that the amendments were put forth by DRS, the Actuary's office or some employer group. Bill did seem sincere, straight forward and capable but a little uninformed. I told him that we had requested the amendments and why. He explained that he was not aware of any problems staffing the boards and I gave him several examples. He said he could go along with the first amendment but had a problem with the second one as he didn't want some retired police officer or firefighter from out of state to serve on these boards. Being that I didn't have the amendment in front of me I said I think that is taken care of and if not we can add such a restriction. I also said that if a group wants to elect someone from out of state that should be up to them. Incidentally, his concern is in the draft amendment: *If no eligible regularly employed or retired firefighters are willing or able to be elected to the board pursuant to section (1), then any active or retired firefighters who reside within the city or county may be elected pursuant to section (1). This includes active and retired firefighters under RCW 4q.16, RCW 41.18, and RCW 41.26.*

At the SCPP Hearing in December Bill Dickinson and the Coalition's contract lobbyist Joyce Wilms both testified against the second amendment. They said that they were not aware of any problems filling these positions on the boards. I have to ask how would they know when they don't interact with these boards. They don't have monthly meetings in where contributors as they don't have members who can come in and discuss these types of issues? How would they be expected to know? Bill then stated that he didn't want any out of state retired firefighters or police officers eligible for election to these boards. I had to interrupt and explain that they can't, apparently you did not read the amendment.

Remember, the RFFOW had legislation drafted and eventually passed to

- To only allow LEOFF I members to vote in board elections. Previously LEOFF II members could vote in the board elections.
- To allow LEOFF II members to serve on these boards if elected by the LEOFF I members under the jurisdiction of the board. This was a temporary fix to fill these board positions.

During my conversation with Bill I explained that we had defeated a bill during the last session with an amendment. The bill would have increased the requirement from a population of 20,000 to 30,000 for a city to develop a LEOFF I disability board. Well, much to my surprise, Joyce Wilms the

contract lobbyist, offered an amendment to increase the requirement from a population of 20,000 to 30,000 for a city to establish a disability board. Joyce should have known that this issue was not on the agenda for a public hearing and being that this was the last committee hearing before the 2019 Legislative Session the committee could not take any action. Joyce said that the cities had come to her with the request because it's too expensive to establish these boards. First, why would a Mayor or City Manager come to the Coalition when they could approach their own three legislators to introduce a bill or request the Association of Washington Cities or the Association of Washington Counties to have a bill introduced?

Secondly, why would it be so expensive to form a board when the two elected members are not paid and the other three are city officials who can meet on city time in a city facility? Lastly, why would the Coalition, funded by retiree donations, want to make it more difficult for city members to form their own Disability Board? Incidentally, this was not mentioned by Joe Dawson in the "Hot Sheet", the latest by the Washington State Retired Deputy Sheriffs and Police Officers Association (WSRDSAPOA) Newsletter.