

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

CURRENT POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

Leadership and both houses controlled by same political mindset. Most votes are straight down party lines. “Super Majority” Senate – 37-15, House – 78-42. (two vacancies) Majority will **NOT** favor PERS if legislation is introduced unless SIGNIFICANT pressure is brought to bear by large numbers of people such as you!! Met with Speaker and Lt. Gov. prior to 2017 Session. Were NOT given assurances that PERS won’t be affected.

Anti Public Employees – No pay raise in over 12 years

Anti State Government - Downsizing and disrupting vital services

Anti Public Education

National Trend to attack Defined Benefit Programs and replace with 401K.

Critical issues overlooked in favor of “cookie cutter legislation” developed by ALEC-American Legislative Exchange Council (www.alec.org, www.alecexposed.org) Panders to political base to continue to expand political power on state and national level. Prominent members of MS Legislature serve on board.

“Critical” budget situation but tax cuts for big business - Budget shortfall possibly contrived in order to have an excuse to dismantle PERS and Medicaid—both considered to be “Entitlement” programs.

Possible need to ask for increase in Employer Contribution in 2017 Legislative Session

TALKING POINTS WHEN SPEAKING TO LEGISLATORS

Myth: State Employees make large salaries. Fact: Average is \$22,000. (Example: Ole Miss Secretary drawing \$400/mo.).

Myth: Benefit goes up each year. Benefit is fixed for life.

Myth: “13th check” is large “bonus”. Fact: Cost of living increase similar to what is done with Social Security.

Myth: There is no cap on maximum salary upon which benefit is based. Fact: There is a cap of \$265,000—some college presidents, physicians, etc. Based on federal cap. Only about 1% or less of state employees make that much.

Relevant because private sector sentiment does not typically support our retirement benefit and because many legislators have the same misconceptions.

Myth: PERS is a “budget buster”. Fact: PERS spending as a percent of the overall state budget has remained relatively constant over the years at less than 5%.

Myth: To fund PERS at 100% has to be done immediately. Fact: It is a long term debt much like a mortgage. It is a situation that is being managed by the PERS staff and board over time.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

JOIN MRPEA – AND RECRUIT OTHERS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO HAVE NOT RETIRED.

Know who your legislators are!! www.openstates.org, www.mslegislature.ms.gov.

Ask what their position is on your retirement system. Contact them **before** the session begins. Be firm that you want NO changes made to PERS. **It is important that we be consistent in our message.** (Some believe that it would not create a problem if new employees went to 401K, but could have effect of squeezing off contributions to the system which could affect employees who retired at a fairly young age. Changes to the 13th check will very negatively impact those who made lower salaries who count on this money to meet living expenses.)

Be willing to participate in a grassroots effort during the legislative session and encourage fellow employees to do the same. Be a part of a large group email list who respond to “Calls to action” if the need arises during the session. Be willing to come to the Capitol to talk with legislators if necessary or participate in a press conference.

Attend MRPEA Day at the Capitol on January 23, 2018 from 8:30-11:00

NETWORKING

MRPEA has established a network with around 20 organizations throughout the state whose members participate in PERS. We are working together with these organizations to maintain current PERS benefits for retirees and current employees. We do this by keeping our vast combined memberships informed regarding developments regarding PERS and other matters impacting retirees.

-If you know of an organization that might benefit from participating in this partnership please let us know.

Know how to contact your legislators during the session.

In Session:

Governor Phil Bryant –601-359-3150

Lt. Governor Tate Reeves –601-359-3200

Speaker Phillip Gunn –601-359-3300

Senators –601-359-3770

Representatives-601-359-3770

*Senate Finance Committee Chair – Sen. Joey Fillingane -601-359-3246

*House Appropriations Chair – Rep. John Read – 601-359-3340

*These are the committees to which any legislation relevant to PERS would be assigned. See MS Legislative website referenced above for members of these committees.