
MARSP Newsletter

August 2023

Vote Yes in November for TRS COLA!

As an unapologetic advocate for those who work on behalf of the school children of Texas, this appeal asks for your support for retired public-school employees. As voters, in November, you will be given the opportunity to affirm your support for public school employees, both those in service and those now retired. Texas can and should do better, both for its children and for those who dedicate their lives to helping them succeed in school.

As of Jun 13, 2023, the average yearly Texas Retirement System (TRS) annuity was \$33,373. That's approximately \$17.01 an hour, the equivalent of \$680/week or \$2,947/month, before taxes. What has never been considered a lucrative benefit has now been reduced dramatically by inflation.

This year the average cost of living in Texas (<https://www.sofi.com/cost-of-living-in-texas/>) was estimated to be \$3,760 per person, per month. That works out to \$45,120 a year, putting many TRS recipients in the position of a significant shortfall, particularly the oldest annuitants, many of whom collect far less than the average. Most significantly, TRS annuitants have not seen a cost-of-living Increase in twenty plus years.

Additionally, that \$35,373 annuity shrinks yet again when taxes and health insurance are regularly deducted. Once a TRS annuitant turns 65, a Medicare Advantage PPO plan with United Healthcare represents their only health insurance option, unless they choose to opt out of the group and risk greater exposure to the high cost of medical care.

Insurance costs are high because recipients must pay both TRS and Social Security premiums and, quite frankly, many of us are more than gray around the edges. Add insult to injury because most TRS recipients are not eligible to collect social security, their earned benefits or spousal benefits.

Enter the 88th Session of the Texas Legislature and an attempt to correct neglect becoming tragic for far too many TRS annuitants. Note at this point that I use the word annuitant, because TRS recipients include teachers, but also include administrators, secretaries, nurses, bus drivers, cafeteria workers - all who serve in Texas public schools.

To their credit, legislators tried to find an adequate remedy, but TRS annuitants were among many interest groups with eyes on the State's projected \$32 billion dollar surplus. The results were a good start and TRS annuitants are appreciative.

What did TRS annuitants receive? Well, the answer to that question is complicated. Approximately 186,000 TRS annuitants 75 years of age and older will receive a one-time payment of \$7,500. Approximately, 104,000 TRS annuitants 70 - 74 years of age will receive a one-time payment of \$2,400. Annuitants under the age of 70 will not receive anything in what has been termed a "financial relief package" designed to play catch up for the sad reality that a cost-of-living increase has been such a long time coming and inflation has wreaked havoc with real income.

In addition to the one-time payments, the legislature authorized cost of living increases, but there is a catch. TRS annuitants who retired between September 1, 2013 and August 31, 2020 might see a 2% cost of living increase. TRS annuitants who retired between September 1, 2001 and August 31, 2013 might see a 4% cost of living increase. TRS annuitants who retired on or before August 31, 2001, might see a 6% cost-of-living increase. If you were reading closely, you might have noticed that I used the word "might" more than once.

I repeated the word because here's the catch. Forty-five years ago, the voters of Texas approved a constitutional spending cap that limits growth in appropriations from one biennium to the next. Because the total allocation needed to fund cost of living increases for TRS annuitants adds up to \$3.3 billion dollars, it exceeds that funding cap. In November, voters will be asked to approve the expenditure, or it dies.

While \$3.3 billion dollars sounds like a lot of money, I ask you to put this line item in context. The money is available within the \$32 billion dollar budget surplus. The total expenditure, while admittedly large, funds a modest cost of living increase for the oldest TRS recipients. Six percent of the average annuity represents an increase of \$2002 a year, \$166 dollars each month. No one will be planning vacations with this increase, but some may be able to pay their taxes and stay in their homes, keep up with the electricity bill, or not have to choose between medical care and groceries.

The need is real, and your help will be appreciated. **Please vote in the November election and vote yes for the TRS COLA (Texas Retirement System Cost of Living Adjustment).**

Patricia Mauer



YOU ARE INVITED!

TRTA DISTRICT 18 MEMBERSHIP LUNCHEON

HOSTED BY MIDLAND ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED SCHOOL PERSONNEL

Date: Thursday, August 17, 2023

Place: First Baptist Church Fellowship Hall (North Entrance)
Midland, Texas, Corner of Louisiana and Garfield Streets

Time: 11:30 A. M. -- Sign-in, Meet, and Greet
12:00 Noon Lunch – 1:00 P.M. Meeting

Cost: \$10.00 per person

Speaker: **TIM LEE, TRTA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

TOPIC: " Legislative successes – What to do Now! "

Be sure to make accurate and prompt reservations for you and your guests by email or telephone. A reservation for the meal is a commitment to make payment if not in attendance.

[CALL ANITA PATTON AT 432-349-6822 OR](tel:432-349-6822)
[EMAIL TO apatton123@sbcglobal.net,](mailto:apatton123@sbcglobal.net)

[WITH RESERVATIONS.](#)

Payment can be made at the door, but we must have reservations

No later than Monday, August 14. Bring a retired school employee with you to our meeting with Tim Lee. We need new TRTA/MARSP members and they need to be educated about the COLA vote in November.

**You may come and hear Tim Lee at no charge,
but please email Anita Patton at the above address
so arrangements can be provided.**



MARSP Thinking Of You!

If any MARSP members are aware of members in need of sympathy or a “Thinking of You” card, please contact Patti Watson at pnw1000@gmail.com or 432-697-1170. This is a very important request that ensures our members know that they are being thought about during difficult times.

Family of Carole Clay—Sympathy upon Carole’s death

Kathy Landrum—Sympathy upon the death of her mother

Dorothy Thompson—Sympathy upon the death of her grandson

Dorothy Baird—Sympathy upon the death of her husband



Legislature News

Tim Lee will hold the second of several live events on Facebook and YouTube on Tuesday, August 8 at 4:00 to provide more information about how TRTA plans to support the TRS COLA amendment and how members can participate in the process. **Tim Lee will continue these live events the second Tuesday of every month, through Election Day on Nov. 7, 2023.**



MARSP Going Digital

MARSP Has Nearly Gone Digital

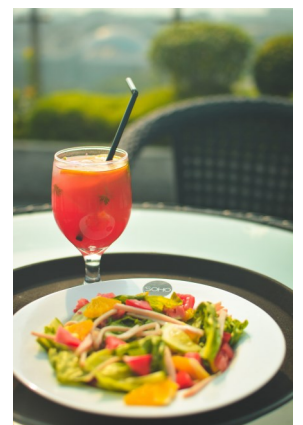
Comments From Michael Landrum, Technology/Email Coordinator

Email: jmlandrum@earthlink.net or jmland1014@gmail.com or jmland0162@yahoo.com

Many of you have sensed that MARSP began to shift from mail notifications, announcements, and newsletters a few years ago. Because of the cost of postage, paper, and the physical demands of creating paper documents, MARSP sends most information to you by email or you can find it on the web at <https://www.midlandretireded.org>. If you need to update your email address, please email me at one of the addresses above so that we can be current with information. Additionally, if you have not signed up for the TRTA Inside Line, the mechanism that TRTA uses to inform its members, then please use this link, <https://trta.org/inside-line-sign-up/>, to sign up. Because of the COLA vote in November, you will want to stay current on the vote and other issues facing us.

Meal Cost increases for 23-24 MARSP

The cost of our meal each month is **increasing to \$7 starting in September**. Each month if you plan to eat at our meetings, please email Anita Patton your reservation prior to the meeting.



MARSP Members:

August begins the push for retired teachers to get out the information about voting for Proposition 9. It's very vital that people understand the facts about the COLA. The funding for the COLA will be paid by the state treasury not TRS, this expense is approximately 3.3 billion dollars. Since the money comes from the state, it requires approval from voters. Some teachers may not want to vote for it because they didn't get a raise, that is a poor reason because they too will be retired one day. Some people say it's only 2%. It's a raise for retired teachers, who haven't seen one in 20 years. It sets a precedent for future COLAs for retired teachers. And if more retired teachers would join TRTA our voices would be even more powerful, we got this with 90,000 members. Imagine what we could achieve with 200,000 members? We need to talk to friends and relatives about Proposition 9 and who better to educate than us!!!

Deborah Jordan

MARSP President



23-24 MARSP PROGRAM CALENDAR (details on website)

<https://www.midlandretireded.org>

August—Tim LEE, TRTA Executive Director

September— AMBA and TRTA Insurance

October— Dr. Stephanie Howard, MISD Supt.

November— Texas Parks and Wildlife

December—1st Baptist Church Men's Choir

January—Dr. Rebecca Dodge

February— Midland Chamber of Commerce

March— Midland Lions Club

April— Museum of the Southwest

Let's Increase our Membership! Invite a Retired Educator Friend

MARSP Membership is already at 234 members! That's great, but let's not stop at that number! There are still around 100 members on the roster who haven't renewed their dues for 2023-2024. Most of us know retirees who have not joined or even attended a meeting. Reach out to them and invite them to the August 17th MARSP Meeting when Tim Lee will be discussing the legislative successes and the drive to get a positive COLA vote in November. Active membership is especially important at this time. Be proactive!!!

Thanks!

Paula Knight

MARSP 1st VP/Membership



MISD looking for Volunteers

If you have some time and want to work with kids, MISD is always open to former educators coming in and volunteering their time to work with MISD Students. See Michelle Harmon for information.