

At the recent MRTA New Unit President Summit in Jefferson City, a COLA Panel discussion was included in the agenda. This year no COLA was granted for PSRS/PEERS retirees. The presenters were three retired Superintendents - Dr. Terry Holder from St. Charles; Dr James Sandfort from Lindbergh and Tyler Laney. I am including the major points from the presentation made by these presenters.

- 1) For the health of the system, we should receive the actual COLA based upon the CPI not an artificially set one. (COLA is the cost of living adjustment provided by PSRS/PEERS) (CPI is the consumer price index)
- 2) PSRS/PEERS needs to communicate with members more effectively. The PSRS/PEERS Board should solicit member input before making key policy changes.
- 3) PSRS/PEERS should adhere to the Sunshine Law which applies to all public agencies and boards.

Major Questions raised by the presenters:

- 1) Why does PSRS/PEERS, a public institution, refuse to publish personnel salaries? Every School District publishes Superintendents salaries and teacher salary schedules are also a matter of public record.
- 2) Why did most PSRS/PEERS employees receive merit bonuses when the return on investment was so low (approximately 1.6%) and the decision was made to grant a zero COLA for retirees who are serviced by these employees?
- 3) Why did the PSRS/PEERS Board not examine their budget, the way school districts and other layers of government must do, to find places to cut expenditures instead of having retirees bear the full burden of the short fall in investment returns?
- 4) Why do PSRS/PEERS employees have matched 457 plans in addition to their PEERS/Social Security retirement plans? Both of these require a contribution from the PSRS/PEERS budget.

The PSRS/PEERS Board has finally agreed to review the COLA annually instead of waiting five years as originally approved.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT!!

As a member of MRTA, what can you do? MRTA is working to influence the selection of members to the PSRS/PEERS Board. You may get a Call to Action in the near future regarding this COLA policy. We could also ask the PSRS/PEERS Board to review the budget and take austerity measures so that we do not have to have a zero COLA again.

I am sending this note as information. It is so important to stay vigilant regarding our pension since there are moneyed interests attempting to change PSRS/PEERS to a 401(k) or defined contribution plan. If you are not a member of MRTA, please consider it. If you need information, contact me.

Thanks for attending to this important issue.

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