



MSRB



Retiree eNews Bulletin

NOVEMBER 2024

Special Commission for State and Teacher COLA

The Special Commission became law within the FY'25 State Budget, signed into law last July. The Commission's focus is to investigate and recommend improvements to the State and Teacher retirees' COLA base and formulate the creation of a new senior or enhanced COLA benefit for long-term retirees. The work of the Special Commission is essential to increasing the State and Teacher Retirees' COLA base and improving COLA benefits across the 102 local systems.



The State Retirement Board is excited to announce that it has nominated its Executive Director, Kathryn Kougias, as the Board's

designee to the Commission. She was sworn in on Wednesday, November 13, 2024. Also, State Retirement Board Member Francis Valeri was officially sworn in as a representative on the Special COLA Commission.

The Commission will soon be officially assembled to begin formally working to develop recommendations to improve the COLA. Updates will be published in the

November Pension Payment

The next pension benefit will be directly deposited on Friday, November 29, 2024, the last business day of this month.

The ***MSRB 2024 Pension Payment Calendar*** and the ***MSRB 2025 Pension Payment Calendar*** are available on our website and can be downloaded; [click here](#).

State Retirement System Audit Report

The Public Employee Retirement Administration Commission (PERAC) has completed an examination of certain activities of the State Employees' Retirement System for the period of 7/1/2017 to 6/30/2021 and issued its report in October 2024. PERAC auditors spent four months at the Board's Boston offices and worked closely with Board staff to ensure all materials were made available. The focus of the audit was compliance with fiduciary oversight, verification of cash and investment balances, expense approvals, validation of payroll records to ensure an accurate percentage of regular compensation is deducted, and testing of members' retirement allowance calculations. Files

MSRB Retiree eNews Bulletin as they become available. For more information, [click here](#).

Important Update on Your Enrich Financial Wellness Account

What's Happening?

The State Treasurer's Office of Economic Empowerment (OEE) is moving its free financial wellness platform to a new Enrich domain. This move ensures you have continued access to valuable financial education resources.

What You Need to Do

If you currently use a financial wellness account through nastfoundation.enrich.org, please create a new account at our new site, masstreasury.enrich.org.

Creating a new account is simple and lets you continue working toward your financial goals with all the same tools and resources.

Get started now: [Create your new financial wellness account](#) today and secure your path to financial well-being.

Want more information? Visit OEE's [FAQ page](#) to learn more about the transition and what it means for you.

BREAKING NEWS! House Votes to Repeal WEP & GPO

On November 12, 2024, the U.S. House of Representatives passed [H.R. 82](#), also known as the **Social Security Fairness Act of 2023**. This bill repeals the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO). The

were reviewed for accuracy and completeness.

Testing was done on the calculation of the number of days between the retirement date and the first benefit checks issued. Other testing included the processing of refunds and transfers out to other Boards. There were two findings that pertain to the number of days between the retirement date and the first benefit check and Section 91A Non-compliance and Overearnings.

In response to the findings and PERAC's recommendations, the Board rolled out this past calendar year the Estimated Initial Benefit Payment (EIBP), and within the first 8 months of the EIBP, over 700 payments were made within 60 days of the member's retirement date. The Board submitted to PERAC responses to each case noted for Section 91A non-compliance and retirement allowance termination. The Board is remedying the timeliness matter of scheduling requested hearings by seeking additional resources.

In PERAC's opinion, for the areas tested, the financial records are being maintained, and the management functions are being performed in conformity with the standards established by PERAC, except for the two findings mentioned above. A six-month follow-up is scheduled to ensure appropriate actions have been taken regarding the findings.

Reduced Waiting Period for GIC Insurance Coverage

The Massachusetts Group Insurance Commission (GIC) made a significant change to its rules so that insurance benefits for newly hired GIC-eligible employees take effect much sooner after their hire than has been true in the past.

bill passed the House with [327 voting in favor, and 75 voting against](#). It will now move to the U.S. Senate, where it will need to be voted on before heading to President Biden's desk.

Medicare Premium Increase Announced for 2025

On November 8, 2024, the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released the 2025 Medicare Parts A and B premiums, deductibles, and coinsurance amounts.

According to the [CMS press release](#), the standard monthly Medicare Part B premium will be \$185 in 2025, an increase of \$10.30. The annual deductible for Medicare Part B beneficiaries will be \$257 in 2025, an increase of \$17.

If you have any questions about your health, dental, vision, or life insurance policies, [please contact the Massachusetts Group Insurance Commission \(GIC\)](#).

IRS Releases 2025 Plan Limits

Earlier this month, the [IRS officially announced](#) an increase in plan limits for 2025. Their press release detailed that the maximum individuals contribute to their 401(k) plans in 2025 has increased from \$23,000 to \$23,500.

This increase applies to employees participating in 403(b), most 457 plans, including the SMART Plan, and the federal government's Thrift Savings Plan.

The limit on annual contributions to an IRA remains at \$7,000, and the IRA catch-up contribution will remain at \$1,000 for 2025.

[For more information, click here.](#)

Through this new rule, which took effect on July 1, 2024, coverage for new employees and their dependents will be effective on the first day of the month following their hire date or, if the start date is the first of the month, benefits will be effective immediately.

This exciting change impacts future new hires as well as all agencies and entities offering benefits through the GIC. Reducing the extended waiting period for insurance eligibility greatly benefits new employees and enhances the lives of those employees by ensuring quicker access to essential benefits and fostering a more supportive work environment.

[Click here to learn more.](#)

Fall Back: Daylight Saving Time Survival Tips

The end of daylight savings time can be challenging as it may reduce our sleep, mood, and health. To embrace the change and stay energized as we "fall back," [click here to view seven tips from AARP](#).

AARP: Thriving Through the Holidays: Six Tips for Older Adults

The holidays are here, and while it may be a time for spending time with your family and celebrating, it can also bring severe stress. Stress can take a physical toll on your body, so it's essential to ensure you keep your health at the top of your mind. [Click here to view the AARP's six tips](#) on maintaining focus on your health to ensure an enjoyable holiday season!

Reminder From PERAC - You Can Help Protect Public Retirement Benefits

Public pension fraud is a crime that can result in the suspension or termination of pension benefits, and the Public Employee Retirement Administration Commission (PERAC) wants to hear from you if you suspect pension fraud is being committed.

Several categories can fall under public pension fraud, such as submitting falsified records, submitting falsified affidavits, or exceeding earnings or hours and not reporting them.

If you suspect someone is committing pension fraud, please [visit this link](#) to file a report. You can report suspected pension fraud with PERAC's online form, mail the information to PERAC, or call their fraud hotline, **1-800-445-3266**. Individuals can submit these reports anonymously, and PERAC actively investigates all allegations received.

Contact us:

Boston Office:

Downtown Crossing
One Winter Street, 8th Floor
Boston, MA 02108

Springfield Office:

436 Dwight Street, #109A
Springfield, MA 01103

Tel: 617-367-7770

Note: MSRB phones are answered Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., except on state holidays.

Thank You to Our Veterans

Veterans Day is a time to remember and pay tribute to the brave men and women of the United States Armed Forces. Their commitment to service is valued and appreciated by us all. MSRB staff thanks all Veterans for their sacrifice, service, and all they have done for us!



Have you recently updated your email? Or did you receive this Retiree eNews Bulletin as a forwarded email from a friend? Let us know! We can update your email address or add you to our mailing list. You can email msrbcommunications@tre.state.ma.us to request that your email be added or updated.

Note: Please include your full name and either your MSRB I.D. or the last four digits of your Social Security Number, and request that we add it to our distribution list.

Is there something you would like us to communicate in an upcoming ***Retiree eNews Bulletin***? If so, let us know!

Email your request or comments to MSRBCommunications@tre.state.ma.us.

We look forward to hearing from you!

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