

## Legislative Update

The 2011 legislative session ended in late May after a 30-day special session as lawmakers hammered out a bipartisan budget deal. A number of pension-related bills were passed and signed into law during the session, including two new laws that impact retirees:

- **Limiting return to work hours to 867 per year**  
ESHB 1981 limits to 867 the hours a PERS or TRS Plan 1 retiree can work before their pension benefit is suspended. This limit will apply to all retirees beginning January 1, 2012 - except for disability retirees under age 60.
- **Removing the PERS Plan 1 and TRS Plan 1 Uniform COLA**  
SHB 2021 eliminates the automatic annual benefit increase for PERS and TRS Plan 1 retirees and beneficiaries after June 30, 2011. Though the increase will go away beginning this July, no Plan 1 retiree will see a reduction in current benefits.

For the latest information on these and other pension-related bills, visit our [Legislative Web page](#). ■



## Summary Annual Financial Report Available Online

Our 2010 Summary Annual Financial Report is available on the DRS website.

The SAFR contains financial information and statistics on plan membership and retirees. ■

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## Living Well with Chronic Conditions

If you're dealing with a chronic illness or condition, you're not alone. Others around you are also trying to manage life with an illness such as diabetes, arthritis, depression, heart disease, chronic pain or anxiety.

The Department of Health's Chronic Disease Self-Management Program, also known as Living a Healthy Life or Living Well, was developed at Stanford University to help people with chronic health conditions live healthier lives.

The program is a workshop that people with different chronic diseases attend together. It teaches the skills needed for the day-to-day management of treatment and to maintain and/or increase life's activities. When you attend a workshop in person or participate online, you'll:

- Get the support you need
- Find practical ways to deal with pain and fatigue
- Discover better nutrition and exercise choices
- Learn better ways to talk with your doctor and family about your health

These workshops are available in communities across Washington State and are available either free or at a very low cost based on the ability to pay or insurance benefit coverage.

For more on the workshop, as well as other healthy aging information, please visit the Living Well website at <http://livingwell.doh.wa.gov> or contact Maureen Lally or Candy Goehring with the *Aging and Disability Services Administration* at 1-800-422-3263. ■



### Direct Deposit Now easier than ever

It's easier than ever to have your monthly pension check automatically deposited in your account because we've eliminated the requirement for your bank to complete the *Authorization for Direct Deposit* form.

All you need to do is fill out the *Authorization for Direct Deposit* form on our website and return it to DRS.

## Cost-of-Living Adjustments - an overview

There are several different types of COLAs that might impact your retirement benefit. We thought it would be helpful to give you a brief overview of each. You can also find this information on our website.

### Base COLA

The Base COLA is applied to eligible accounts after a retiree's first full year of retirement. This COLA is an automatic increase that is calculated according to the percentage change in the Consumer Price Index over the previous year. The Base COLA applies to all Plan 2 and Plan 3 members and members of the Judicial Retirement Systems, Washington State Patrol Retirement System Plan 1 and the Law Enforcement Officers and Fire Fighters Plan 1.

### Minimum COLA (PERS Plan 1 and TRS Plan 1)

This COLA generally applies to people who received lower compensation while working and/or didn't have many years of service. We determine

whether you're eligible by comparing your initial benefit (minus adjustments) to the current minimum amount. If your benefit is under the minimum, you will receive this COLA.

### Optional COLA

PERS and TRS 1 members can choose this COLA when they retire. It reduces the initial retirement benefit in exchange for an annual COLA.

### Adjusted Minimum Benefit

You qualify for an **adjusted minimum benefit** if your monthly (gross) pension is below a specific level and you:

- Have at least 25 years of service credit and you have been retired at least 20 years; or
- Have at least 20 years of service credit and you have been retired at least 25 years.

For more information about COLAs, check out the [Cost of Living Adjustments FAQ](#). ■

## Agencies offer web resources for seniors

Too often the story is heard. A lifetime of planning and saving for a comfortable retirement is destroyed by frauds or scams that prey on retirees. It can take the briefest of moments or the smallest of mistakes to allow a con artist access to your home or financial accounts.

The [Department of Financial Institutions](#) (DFI) and the [Washington State Office of the Attorney General](#) (AGO) have resources on their websites that can help seniors protect themselves against fraud. The DFI website features a page with tips to help you be more aware of frauds and scams that target seniors. You'll also find advice for maximizing your investments, helping your money last after your final paycheck, and simplifying and organizing your finances.

The AGO's website also has cautionary advice on a variety of scams that target the elderly. For example, the fastest growing financial crime in America is identity theft. Most cases of identity theft involve the use of your Social Security number, so as information on the AGO site points out, protecting your number is extremely important. The AGO site devotes a number of pages to the types of scams that often target seniors: charity scams, Internet scams, living trust scams, travel scams and others. ■

## Pension Notes

### Questions about your health care coverage?

Just contact the Health Care Authority at 1-800-200-1004.

### Need to access a copy of your 1099-R tax form?

Sign up for [online services](#) and you'll find your 1099 form and more.



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