



## Prioritizing service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic

While there have been a number of changes at DRS in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been able to maintain our normal schedule of processing member retirements and paying retiree benefits.

These core services remain our priority as DRS manages through the latest developments from the pandemic, in particular the implementation of mandatory furloughs for state employees. Furloughs were directed by Gov. Jay Inslee as one of several steps to address a forecast of severe economic and budget impacts in the coming months.

At the same time, DRS is entering a period of high seasonal volumes of retirement processing. To address these challenges, DRS reduced customer service delivery beginning in late June.

Here's a summary of our status as of the publication of this newsletter. Keep in mind that circumstances will continue to change in the coming months. Your best source of current information is the [DRS website](#), where you can also sign up to receive email and text news at [drs.wa.gov/updates](https://drs.wa.gov/updates).



### Important information about DRS availability

- DRS will be closed on the following dates: Aug. 21, Sept. 18, 2020.
- Due to COVID-19, DRS remains closed to in-person customer visits and onsite services.
- Online services are still available. And as always, **your online account is available** ([drs.wa.gov/oa](https://drs.wa.gov/oa)).

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We've also moved in-person retirement planning seminars and workshops online, where we regularly present webinars on a variety of topics, including sessions designed especially for members who are nearing retirement. You can join these presentations through the [education section](#), ([drs.wa.gov/education](https://drs.wa.gov/education)) where you'll also find videos, calculators and other planning resources.

For the latest information on our services and operations, visit [DRS' Response to COVID-19](#) ([drs.wa.gov/coronavirus](https://drs.wa.gov/coronavirus)). This page provides updates and resources to assist you as we navigate through the impacts of the pandemic.



## PERS 1, TRS 1 one-time benefit increase took effect in July

As a result of [legislation](http://leg.wa.gov) (leg.wa.gov) approved earlier this year, certain retirees in Plan 1 of the Public Employees' Retirement System and Plan 1 of the Teachers' Retirement System (PERS 1 and TRS 1) received a one-time benefit increase in July of this year.

Under the law, eligible PERS 1 and TRS 1 retirees received a one-time, permanent 3% increase in their monthly benefit, not to exceed \$62.50 per month. The increase applies to PERS 1 and TRS 1 retirees receiving a monthly benefit on or before July 1, 2019. The adjustment does not apply to retirees who already qualify for an annual increase in 2020 through one of the existing minimum benefit provisions provided by the plans.

The law took effect July 1, 2020; the one-time increase will be reflected in retirement benefits paid at the end of July. For more information, [contact DRS](http://drs.wa.gov/contact) (drs.wa.gov/contact).



## New Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLAs) established for 2020

Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLAs) for DRS-administered retirement systems and plans have been established for 2020. LEOFF Plan 1 COLAs took effect April 1. COLAs for all other plans took effect July 1 and will be reflected in end-of-July benefit payments.

You can view the [2020 COLA percentages](http://drs.wa.gov/retiree/information/cola.htm) by retirement date and plan on the DRS website (drs.wa.gov/retiree/information/cola.htm). Additional information is available on the [COLA FAQ](http://drs.wa.gov/retirees/information/colafaq/) page (drs.wa.gov/retirees/information/colafaq/).



## A new record keeper coming for Plan 3, DCP and JRA customer accounts

The Department of Retirement Systems will transition to a new record keeper to serve customers in:

- Plan 3 (PERS, SERS and TRS)
- Deferred Compensation Program (DCP)
- Judicial Retirement Account (JRA)

Prior to the transition, DRS will mail information packets to all Plan 3, DCP and JRA customers. The record keeper change will have minimal impact for most DRS customers. Some new services will include online withdrawal for investment accounts including DCP, a live online chat feature for account assistance and online accounts for TAP annuitants. For the latest information about the record keeper change, visit [drs.wa.gov/rk](http://drs.wa.gov/rk).

### What is a record keeper?

The DRS record keeper maintains the accounting of Plan 3, DCP and JRA investments and assists customers with transactions such as fund transfers and withdrawals. Empower Retirement is the current record keeper and will continue to serve customers until the services are transferred to Voya Financial.

# Pension-related bills passed for the 2020 session



The following bills were approved by the House and Senate and signed into law by Gov. Jay Inslee.

Bill number	Title and summary
HB 1390	<b>Providing a benefit increase to certain retirees of the Public Employees' Retirement System Plan 1 and the Teachers' Retirement System Plan 1.</b> (By request of the Select Committee on Pension Policy.) Provides certain retirees of PERS 1 and TRS 1 who are retired by July 1, 2019, a one-time benefit adjustment of 3% multiplied by their monthly benefit, not to exceed \$62.50, effective July 2020.
HB 1661	<b>Concerning the higher education retirement plans.</b> Establishes institution-specific employer contribution rates for supplemental benefits of each higher education retirement plan. Administration of benefit payments would transition to the Department of Retirement Systems at a point after the Pension Funding Council has determined that an institution has accumulated sufficient assets in a supplemental benefit fund to adequately fund the benefits.
HB 2189	<b>Including specified competency restoration workers at DSHS institutional and residential sites in the Public Safety Employees' Retirement System.</b> Modifies eligibility for PSERS to include specified competency restoration workers at Department of Social and Health Services institutional and residential sites.

For more on pension-related legislation see the [Legislation section of the DRS website at \[drs.wa.gov/legislative/\]\(https://drs.wa.gov/legislative/\)](#)

Bill number	Title and summary
HB 2544	<b>Concerning the definition of a veteran.</b> Amends the definition of veteran to include members who were awarded an expeditionary medal from any armed conflict.
SB 6218	<b>Modifying the definition of salary for the Washington State Patrol Retirement System.</b> (By request of the Select Committee on Pension Policy.) Allows WSPRS Plan 1 members who entered the system on or after July 1, 2001 to have lump sum payments for holiday pay and unused vacation leave included in the definition of salary for calculating pension benefits.
SB 6383	<b>Concerning the retirement strategy funds in the Plan 3 and the Deferred Compensation programs.</b> (By request of the Select Committee on Pension Policy.) Allows the Washington State Investment Board to include the state's commingled trust fund in the asset mix for Plan 3 and DCP Retirement Strategy Fund options.
SB 6417	<b>Allowing retirees to change their survivor option election after retirement.</b> (By request of the LEOFF Plan 2 Retirement Board.) Contingent on approval by the IRS, this measure would provide retirees of all DRS systems up to 90 days after receipt of their first retirement allowance the ability to change their survivor option election.
SB 6499	<b>Concerning the confidentiality of retirement system files and records relating to health information.</b> (By request of the Department of Retirement Systems.) Exempts medical records provided to the Department of Retirement Systems from public inspection and copying.

## 2020 pension deposit dates

Here are the 2020 dates  
DRS will release pension  
payments via direct deposit  
(or mailed check).

