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## Leave Your Pension On Deposit

If you end employment with a WRS participating employer, you may leave your pension account on deposit if your balance is at least \$1,000.<sup>1</sup> No action is required to leave your pension account on deposit. If you return to work for a participating employer in the same plan, you will resume earning service credit.<sup>2</sup> If you are in the Public Employee Plan Tier I, and end employment before vesting you will be in Tier II if you return to service in the Public Employee Plan.

If you are vested and leave your pension account on deposit after you end employment, your account balance will earn interest at a rate set by the WRS Board, which is currently 3 percent.<sup>3</sup> This allows your balance to grow while you take time for decisions and retirement planning. If you are vested, you can apply for a

lifetime monthly retirement benefit once you reach the retirement eligibility age for your plan.

In some WRS pension plans, your balance is doubled for a lump-sum payout to your beneficiary should you die before retirement. However, this doubling for pre-retirement death benefits is not available to non-vested members with a hire date of July 1, 2019 or later who are not actively employed.

Review your pension plan handbook for complete details about your plan, or contact WRS for benefit counseling when making these decisions. 🐝

<sup>1</sup> A member of the Volunteer Firefighter, EMT and Search &; Rescue Plan must be vested to leave an account balance on deposit.

<sup>2</sup> This may not be the case for a member of the Volunteer Firefighter, EMT and Search & Rescue Plan.

<sup>3</sup> Members of the Paid Firefighter Plan A and Plan B do not receive interest on account balances.

## Two Staff Members Receive Recognition

WRS celebrates the recognition received by two staff members. Chief Investment Officer Sam Masoudi, was recently named one of the top 30 Public Fund CIOs by Trusted Insight. Communications and Deferred Compensation 457 Plan Manager, Polly Scott was nominated as a 2019 Wyoming Woman of Influence in the category of Government, Public Service & Military. Congratulations Sam & Polly. 🐝



WRS Trustees Vicci Colgan & Eric Nelson, WY AARP Director, Sam Shumway, Treasurer Curt Meier and WPEA Director Betty Jo Beardsley attend the 2019 Wyoming Women of Influence Banquet with nominee Polly Scott, her husband Kevin Scott and sister Christine Lamons.

## Director's Notes

Summer and fall are busy seasons at the Wyoming Retirement System. These traditional seasons of transition reflect in our workload – we process twice as many retirements in July, August and September as we do in other months.

I assumed the directorship on August 1, 2019 after serving 5 years as Deputy Director. Challenges are always present, but my predecessor, Ruth Ryerson, left WRS in a good position to be successful. I've been proud to serve as her deputy, and honored to be selected as her successor. I'm the tenth director of the system, since the system's inception back in 1953.

As some of you know, prior to my career in public finance, I was a career military officer. Raised in Riverton, Wyoming, I was appointed to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point from Riverton High School. This fall I was privileged to attend our class reunion. It has been 40 years since we threw our caps in the air at graduation and pinned on second lieutenant bars. Aside from renewing old friendships, the trip reminded me of the importance of institutions and stewardship.

WRS is an important institution. Public employees perform important work, whether it is educating our children, responding to emergencies or literally taking out the trash. The possibility of a pension has always been and continues to be one of the reasons people take on public employment.

The dictionary defines "stewardship" as the conducting, supervising, or managing of something, especially: the careful



and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care.

John Kugland served as the System's first director and executive secretary. He's the person in the middle of this 1953 photo, when WRS issued its first retirement check.

All of us at WRS understand the importance of your pension benefit and we take the stewardship of your retirement system very seriously. WRS employees work hard on behalf of the membership and the retirement board is engaged with thoughtful and meaningful oversight. Now in our 66th year, WRS continues to demonstrate the best qualities of stewardship as exemplified in our values: Integrity, Accountability, Commitment, and Excellence. 🐝

David Swindell  
Executive Director



## Wyoming Retirement System by the Numbers

Value of the Fund

**\$8,655,498,296**

January to September Returns

**WRS: +12.78%**

Benchmark: +10.58%

All data is as of September 30, 2019

## Going Paperless

WRS is working to go paperless, both in our annual statements and our payment methods. 99% of retirees are on direct deposit for their retirement benefits, 1% still receive a paper check. This year we contacted those who receive a paper check, and invited them to convert to an electronic deposit.

The results are in and we had 8% of our retirees switch to an electronic payment. This gives them faster access to their money, a more secure form of payment, all while saving paper. WRS planted a tree for each retiree who switched during the campaign through the Arbor Day Foundation.



## National Retirement Security Week

During the week of October 13-19, hundreds of WRS members engaged in taking proactive steps toward good retirement outcomes during National Retirement Security Week 2019. The educational materials promoted during the week are still available at retirement.wyo.gov and all are encouraged to use them! WRS won a Platinum MarCom Award for the effectiveness and impact of its NRSW campaign efforts.

WRS thanks all the elected leaders who lent their support to NRSW. Senator Mike Enzi co-sponsored the U.S. Senate Resolution and Governor Mark Gordon proclaimed it Retirement Security Week in Wyoming.

See NRSW 2019 page 3



retirement.wyo.gov



## Everyone Shares in Keeping Wyoming's Pensions Strong

During the last decade, there have been fundamental changes to our economy such as the Great Recession and decreasing capital markets. These changes are challenging, and have an impact on pension plans. As such, WRS has focused on benefit security and proactive pension management.

Ongoing monitoring of actuarial assumptions, contribution requirements and benefit provisions is critical to pension health. The Board does due diligence on all three areas, and advocates for adjustments when necessary. The changes accomplished have combined to keep adequate funding for the long-term.

**1) Assumptions kept sound:** Using sound actuarial assumptions, which align with actual experience over time, is a critical component of a well-funded pension plan. The Board has its actuary review assumptions each year. Most recently, the Board updated the assumptions used to quantify the liabilities of each pension plan after an experience study in 2017.

Changing the assumptions may impact the funded status or cause a need for a contribution rate increase. For example, it has been necessary to adopt assumptions to reflect longer life spans for pensioners and this increases the cost of the plan. Another change has been to decrease the assumption for investment returns, which also increases the cost of the plan.

**2) Contributions gradually increased:** An adequate contribution rate is key to the health of a pension plan. The Board advocates for legislative changes to the contribution rates when needed. In 2016, the legislature passed a four year plan to gradually raise the contribution rate for the Public Employee Plan<sup>1</sup>. Importantly when the four year plan is completed, a total of 7.37% more in

contributions will be coming into the Public Employee Plan compared to 2010.

Wyoming Public Employees Association Executive Director, Betty Jo Beardsley, recently said, "The sentiment I hear from WPEA members is they value the pension and want to keep the plan strong. Working together with the legislature, we have been able to phase increases in over time so it is manageable for employers and employees. It allows us to head in the right direction, without the stress of getting it done all at once."

**3) Benefit provisions trimmed:** To help take pressure off of contributions, benefit provisions for actively employed members have been cautiously adjusted. The moderately reduced pension formula for those hired after September 2012 has served to bring the costs of the Public Employee Plan benefits down. Other provisions around account balance refunds and death benefits have been fine-tuned. As a result, long-term projections show the cost of benefits earned in the current year is decreasing. This indicates the Public Employee Plan is sustainable for the long term.

It has been difficult for retirees to go without inflation adjustments for the last decade. While this has contributed to keeping the Public Employee Plan well-funded, there is a duty to address the need for inflation relief and stakeholder groups are leading the way.

**Conclusion** It is good for Wyoming to have solid public pension plans. WRS paid \$642 million in pension benefits to members in 2018, and most of it stays in Wyoming; benefiting both state and local economies. The cost of necessary changes has been shared among employers, employees and retirees. We must work together toward a secure future, and WRS is engaged with stakeholders and policymakers to that end. 🌱

## WRS Board

### Representing the Community at Large

Michael Ceballos  
Max "Tom" Chapman III, *Vice Chair*  
Keith Hay  
Laura Ladd, *Chair*  
Eric Nelson

### Representing the Public Employees

Brian Foster  
Tim Sullivan

### Representing School District Employees

Kay Watson

### Representing Higher Education Employees

Garth Shanklin

### Representing Retirees

Vicci Colgan

### Wyoming State Treasurer

The Honorable Curt Meier

## Vol-Plan Board Adds a Member Representing Search & Rescue



Governor Mark Gordon appointed Clinton Becker to represent the Search and Rescue members on the Volunteer Plan Board.

Mr. Becker moved to Converse County in 1986 to serve as a Wyoming Highway Patrol trooper. He served for 20 years with the Patrol.

Currently, as Converse County Sheriff he oversees the Search and Rescue Operations for the county. As an all-volunteer organization it gives it's time to help those who lose their way. The group is made up of approximately 30 members of varying ages and experiences with a wide variety of skills. 🌱

## Avoid Fraud: Tips to Protect Yourself & Your Money

Source: Federal Trade Commission

**Do Not Believe Your Caller ID** Technology makes it easy for scammers to fake caller ID information. The name and number you see aren't always real. If someone calls asking for personal information or money, hang up! If you think the caller could be telling the truth call back a number you know to be legitimate.

### Search Online

Type a product or company name into your preferred search engine with words like "complaint," "scam," or "review." You can also search for a phrase that describes your situation, like "IRS phone call." Or you can search for phone numbers to see if other people have reported them as scams.

### Do not Deposit a Check and Send Back Money

By law, banks must make funds from deposited checks available within days, however, uncovering a bogus check can take weeks. If you deposit a check that turns out to be phony, you're responsible for repaying the bank.

### Hang-Up on RoboCalls

If you answer the phone and hear either a recorded or live sales pitch, hang up and report it to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). These types of calls are illegal, and the products are often fake.

Do not press 1 to speak to a representative or to be taken off the list. Doing so could lead to just more phone calls.



### Watch for Con Artists

Con artists often pretend to be someone you trust, like a family member, a charity, or a company you do business with. Do not send money or give out personal information in response to an unexpected request – whether it comes as a phone call, text or email.

## More National Retirement Security Week

The following state legislators signed on to support our efforts.

| Representative  | District | Senator              | District |
|-----------------|----------|----------------------|----------|
| Bill Henderson  | 41       | Eli Bebout           | 26       |
| Don Burkhart    | 15       | R. J. Kost           | 19       |
| Shelly Duncan   | 05       | Dave Kinskey         | 22       |
| Dan Furphy      | 14       | Wendy Davis Schuler  | 15       |
| Cathy Connolly  | 13       | Stephan Pappas       | 07       |
| Sandy Newsome   | 24       | Mike Gierau          | 17       |
| Andy Schwartz   | 23       | Tara Nethercott      | 04       |
| Clarence Styvar | 12       | Bill Landen          | 27       |
| Sue Wilson      | 07       | Liisa Anselmi-Dalton | 12       |
| Dan Kirkbride   | 04       | Glenn Moniz          | 10       |
| Landon Brown    | 09       | Affie Ellis          | 08       |
| Sara Burlingame | 44       | Fred Baldwin         | 14       |

### Talk to Someone You Trust Before Acting

Before you provide personal information or hand over money, talk to someone you trust. Scammers want you to make decisions in a hurry. They may even threaten you. Slow down, look into their story, do an online search, consult an expert – or just tell a friend about the situation.

### Think About How You Pay

Credit cards have considerable fraud protection, but some payment methods do not. Sending money through services like Western Union or MoneyGram can be risky because it is almost impossible to get your money back.

### Social Security Suspending Benefits

The Social Security Administration has seen a new scam. The SSA will never call to threaten your benefits, they will never ask you to wire money or send cash or put money on a gift card.

Stay up-to-date with press releases and a newsletter that highlights the efforts the Federal Trade Commission to protect consumers. Sign up at: [www.ftc.gov/stay-connected](http://www.ftc.gov/stay-connected) 🌱



**NRSW2019 continued from page 1** Working with the Global Financial Literacy Excellence Center, WRS has developed three new worksheets to help with our members' preparation for retirement.

- 1. Evaluating Your Financial Readiness for Retirement** Stepping into retirement is exciting, a time of transition and new budget. Learn about your readiness by answering seven questions to consider before retirement.
- 2. Delaying Social Security Benefits** Did you know that your benefits will change based on when you start claiming a benefit. This fact sheet helps you understand the changes if you start early or later.
- 3. Planning for and Living in Retirement worksheet** is about the changes you need to make when you transition from saving for retirement to living on your retirement benefits. 🌱

<sup>1</sup> The majority of WRS' members are in the Public Employee Pension, and this article focuses on that plan. The WRS Board engages in similar proactive management for all eight of Wyoming's public pension plans.