

PSERS Active Member Newsletter

Volume 2 - 2025

A publication of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Public School Employees' Retirement System

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Publication #9299

Message from the Executive Director

With a mix of pleasure and sweet melancholy, I announced on February 21, 2025, that I would retire effective Friday, June 27, 2025. Although I love working in service to you, our members, it is time for me to bring my extensive 39-year tenure with the Commonwealth, which includes nearly 30 years with PSERS, to a close.

As sad as I am to be leaving, I am 100 times happier to know I now get to spend lots of quality time with my grandson, giving him what I hope will be the first of many "best summers of his life."

I first came to PSERS in 1987, just a few years after entering the Commonwealth's workforce as a Computer Science Management Trainee. My first introduction to Commonwealth service took place even earlier, as a Government Service Intern in 1983. I never imagined the many challenges and amazing opportunities ahead of me, nor the blessings I would receive. Part of my Commonwealth journey did include service at a few other agencies, but I found myself returning to PSERS more than once. Richer in experience and grateful to continue.

My passion to serve and my affection for this organization brought me out of my brief retirement as SERS Executive Director to return to PSERS, first in an emergency capacity in January 2022 and then in a permanent capacity five months later. My return to service was the best career decision I could have made, and ultimately, I will have spent almost 30 years with this wonderful organization. I have many to thank for that. I have always had a strong desire to "make things happen" and to leave a position or organization better than I had found it. I hope that is how I leave PSERS for the next phase of my life, for my successor, and for you. What you do matters, and I am so fortunate to be able to have been of service to you.

It has been my absolute honor and privilege to return to this fine organization, which I care deeply about, and to conclude my many years of Commonwealth service working alongside PSERS' employees, the Board, and PSERS' 500,000+ members.

PSERS Board of Trustees Meetings

Board Meeting Schedule:

January 10, 2025
March 20-21, 2025
June 12-13, 2025
August 21-22, 2025
October 23-24, 2025
December 11-12, 2025

Visit PSERS' website for the detailed schedule of Board and Committee meetings.

Board meetings are held in Harrisburg at PSERS, located at 5 N 5th Street.

In addition to Board meetings, Committee meetings are held throughout the year. All PSERS Board meetings are live streamed and open to the public.

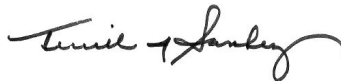
For exact meeting times or if you would like to attend and require an accommodation to participate, please contact Tivia Danner, PSERS Executive Office at tidanner@pa.gov.

Message from the Executive Director...continued

In the months ahead, I intend to continue to give my best, leading this agency and assisting the Board as they seek to fill this incredible position, and championing the important initiatives that are underway. Your retirement system is strong and well-prepared to continue its 108 years of existence far into the future as a partner with you in the fulfillment of a secure retirement. Thank you, and all the best to you,



Sincerely,



Terrill (Terri) J. Sanchez
PSERS' Executive Director

PSERS' Board of Trustees Updates

Active Certified Board Member Election Result

At its March 21, 2025, public meeting, the Board of Trustees welcomed Jason Moore, an economics and AP U.S. history teacher at Valley Jr-Sr High School in the New Kensington-Arnold School District in Westmoreland County. Moore ran unopposed in a special election to fill a PSERS Board vacancy due to the departure of Trustee Jason Davis. Moore represents active certified members and will serve the remaining nine months of Davis' term and a three-year term beginning in January 2026.

Board Re-Elects Chair and Vice Chair for 2025

At its January 10, 2025, meeting, PSERS' Board voted to re-elect Richard Vague and Susan C. Lemmo as chair and vice chair, respectively.

The chair and vice chair lead the 15-member PSERS Board, and their terms are for one year.

Vague, a Philadelphia resident, is Governor Josh Shapiro's board appointee. From 2020 until 2022, he served on the PSERS board in his previous capacity as Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Banking & Securities (DOBS) as a member of the Wolf Administration.

Lemmo, a Clearfield resident, is in her first 3-year term representing annuitants and class DC participants. Prior to retiring from a 32-year career as an art teacher in the Curwensville Area School District, Lemmo served three terms (2014 to 2022) on the PSERS Board, representing active certified members and participants. During that time, she earned the Certified Public Pension Trustee accreditation from the Pennsylvania Association of Public Employee Retirement Systems.

“We thank our fellow trustees for the continued faith they have shown in our leadership,” Vague and Lemmo said in a joint statement. “As trustees, we have each been entrusted with the fiduciary interests of more than half a million PSERS members, and we know the entire board remains focused on ensuring that the fund is effectively and prudently managed on their behalf.”

During the meeting, DOBS Secretary Wendy Spicher was elected as vice chair of the Investment Committee, the Board’s only standing committee in which all trustees are members. Pennsylvania Treasurer Stacy Garrity previously held the committee’s vice chair position and recently assumed the chair position to fill a board vacancy in accordance with board Bylaws.

Beneficiaries and Your PSERS Retirement

Remember to review your PSERS beneficiaries!

Do you know who your beneficiary is? Have your circumstances changed? When did you last update your beneficiary? Keeping your beneficiary information up to date is critical to ensure that your death benefit is distributed according to your wishes. Take the time to review and revise your beneficiary designation to reflect your current situation and to avoid any misunderstandings or unintended consequences. Stay proactive and protect your loved ones!

Nominating beneficiaries and updating beneficiary information is quick and easy through the PSERS Member Self-Service (MSS) Portal. If you cannot access the MSS Portal, you can complete a *Nomination of Beneficiary* (PSRS-187) form. Please remember, the most current form on file supersedes all previously filed nominations.

You can view your current beneficiaries through the MSS Portal. Your beneficiaries are also listed in your annual *Statement of Account*, unless you have chosen not to have them display.



Visit our website to stay up to date on upcoming board meetings and to see who is on the PSERS Board of Trustees, view the meeting schedule, and view minutes and resolutions from previous meetings.

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Disability Retirement Benefit

PSERS provides a disability retirement benefit to members who are unable to perform their current public school employment duties for medical reasons. Unlike an insurance policy, a PSERS disability retirement benefit is comprised of a disability supplement that is added to your regular (normal or early) retirement benefit. A disability retirement benefit is not designed to replace 100% of your salary and will vary based on your membership class, but, in most scenarios, a disability retirement benefit will be more than an early retirement benefit because there is no early retirement reduction. If approved, you will receive a monthly retirement payment for as long as you are deemed and remain disabled and comply with the necessary requirements set forth in the Retirement Code.

Eligibility

To be eligible for a disability retirement benefit, you must:

- Be a Class T-C, Class T-D, Class T-E, Class T-F, Class T-G, or Class T-H member. Class DC members are not eligible for a PSERS disability retirement benefit.
- Have at least five years of credited service with PSERS.
- Be found by a PSERS medical examiner to be physically or mentally unable to perform the duties stated in your job description. You have the responsibility to provide PSERS with sufficient medical evidence to support your disability and to respond timely to any requests for additional medical evidence.
- Have become disabled while an active, contributing member of PSERS. Should you become disabled while inactive or after you terminate service, you are not eligible for a PSERS disability retirement benefit.
- Be disabled at the time you submit your *Application for Disability Retirement* (PSRS-49).
- Apply for disability retirement benefits within two full school years of your last day of active PSERS service or paid, contributing leave for which you receive PSERS service credit (you do not receive service credit for workers' compensation payments unless you are on a Special Sick Leave approved by your employer), whichever is later.*

**Example: Member's last day of active PSERS service is February 15, 2024. Because this date occurs within the 2023-2024 school year, the disability filing deadline would be June 30, 2026, as shown below:*

- o *Last active service occurred within school year 2023-2024*
- o *Full school year #1 – July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025*
- o *Full school year #2 – July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026*

If you do not apply within the two school years, you will not be eligible to apply for a disability retirement benefit regardless of your physical or mental incapacity to perform your job. The application, approval, or receipt of disability employment benefits, such as workers' compensation or Social Security benefits, will not determine your eligibility or extend the time frame to apply with PSERS.

You must either be terminated or on an unpaid leave to receive a PSERS disability retirement benefit. If you submit an *Application for a Disability Retirement* while still in active status (paid and reported to PSERS by your school employer), your employer must either terminate your employment or place you on an unpaid leave of absence within 30 days after PSERS receives your *Application for Disability Retirement*.

Working While Receiving a Disability Benefit

A disability retirement benefit may be granted on a long-term or short-term basis, but there is no partial disability that would allow you to continue to work for a public school employer in any capacity. As a disability retiree, you are still a PSERS retiree, who is generally not permitted to work for any public school in Pennsylvania while receiving a PSERS pension.

You may work outside of Pennsylvania public school service while receiving a disability benefit, but a disability retirement benefit is subject to review by PSERS at any time for any reason to ensure continued disability and compliance with the Retirement Code. Employment may raise the question of continued medical eligibility.

Income you receive may impact your disability retirement benefit if you are under normal retirement age.

To apply for a PSERS disability retirement benefit, you must contact PSERS to request an application. A PSERS retirement representative will assist you with the disability application process.

PSERS is conducting disability counseling sessions remotely and in-person. Please refer to the *Let's Talk About Disability Retirement Benefits* publication, which is available on the PSERS website at pa.gov/PSERS, or contact PSERS for more information.

Within 12 Months of Retirement? Attend Retirement Exit Counseling!

For members planning on retiring within the next twelve months, PSERS provides retirement education to ensure members understand the details and impact of their PSERS retirement choices.

When you attend a small-group Retirement Exit Counseling session, trained PSERS retirement representatives will provide an overview of your retirement options and answer your questions and assist you in the completion of your retirement paperwork. Sessions are offered in-person and online.

Retirement counseling is for **all** Pennsylvania public school employees, from part-time support staff such as cafeteria workers to full-time teachers and administrators...every public school employee who is a member of PSERS!

To attend an exit counseling session, you must have a current, PSERS staff-prepared retirement estimate. You can request one by calling PSERS during normal business hours or by submitting a *Request for Retirement Estimate* (PSRS-151). Because PSERS will perform a thorough account review for your estimate, please allow 4 – 6 weeks for processing.

When calling PSERS to request your estimate, you can schedule an exit counseling session. Alternatively, contact PSERS to schedule your exit counseling session after you receive your staff-prepared estimate. Exit counseling sessions are available both in-person or virtually.

If you need immediate assistance or if you can't request an estimate in time, please contact PSERS for options.

Even if you have a financial advisor, you should attend a PSERS Retirement Exit Counseling session with one of our trained retirement representatives who will help you understand your PSERS retirement benefits when you're ready to retire. Your advisor may also attend.



Be Aware of PSERS Deadlines!

Submit your *Application for Retirement* within 90 days of termination from school service so that you can receive payments beginning the day after your termination.

Misconceptions About Retirement

In our previous issue, we discussed two misconceptions PSERS members may have when preparing for retirement. We are back with three more that we hope will assist you as you plan your retirement.

Misconception: You can keep retiring a secret from your employer.

When PSERS receives a retirement application, we will reach out to your employer to request your termination record, which will be the last day you worked in most cases. We cannot process benefits for you until your employer provides this information.

Furthermore, your retirement benefits can start the day after your termination date if you submit your application within 90 days after your termination date. If you delay submitting your retirement application so that your employer does not receive PSERS' request for your termination record, you run the risk of not receiving pension payments retroactive to the day after your termination date.

Remember, you must complete and submit your retirement application to PSERS to begin the retirement process and preserve the effective date of your benefit. Notifying your employer does not initiate the retirement process or impact when you are eligible to begin receiving a retirement benefit, but it is a necessary step before PSERS can calculate your benefit.

Misconception: A termination date and retirement date are the same.

A **termination date** and a **retirement date** are two different dates that are defined within the PSERS Retirement Code. Your **termination date** is the last day of work, paid leave, or unpaid leave with your employer. Your **retirement date** is the first day you are retired by PSERS, and your benefit payments will commence as of that date once processing is completed. Your retirement date typically will be the day after your termination date unless you submit your application more than 90 days after your termination date, OR you choose to delay your retirement until a later date. Then, your retirement date will be the date your application is received or the date you chose to delay your retirement and your benefits.

Keep in mind that your retirement date does not have to occur on a workday. It can be any day, even a holiday, because in retirement, *there are no workdays!*

Misconception: The 90-day filing deadline for retroactive retirement benefits is based on the school board approval date.

You do not need to wait for employer or school board approval before you file your retirement application with PSERS. Your retirement will be effective on the day after your termination date if you submit your retirement application no more than 90 days after your termination date. Notifying your employer of your intent to retire does not establish your retirement date with PSERS. You also do not need to wait for your employer to submit your termination date to PSERS before filing your retirement application. Although PSERS cannot process your benefit without a termination date, we can receive your application and determine the effective date of your benefit.

Keep Your Contact Information Updated

It is important to keep your personal information at PSERS up to date. You can conveniently update your information with PSERS online through your MSS account.



Mailing Address

It is essential for PSERS to have a valid mailing address on file for you even if you have paperless delivery through the MSS Portal. We need to make sure that our communication will reach you if PSERS needs to contact you via mail. To change your address without an MSS account, submit your address change to PSERS in writing. Be sure to include your signature, your PSERS ID or last four digits of your social security number, and the effective date of the change.



Email Address

If you have paperless delivery, you must keep your email address current with PSERS to ensure that you will continue to receive time-sensitive documents and correspondence from PSERS.

Tip: PSERS strongly recommends you use a personal email address instead of an employer-provided email address to avoid problems accessing your MSS account or PSERS contacting you if you change employers or retire.



Phone Number

It is also important to keep your phone number current with PSERS. Not only is your phone number used as a part of the authentication process for logging into your MSS account, but it is needed for PSERS staff to contact you, if necessary.

Don't have an MSS Account? Register today!

You only need the following to get started:

- PSERS ID
- Social security number
- Date of birth
- A valid email address

Need Your PSERS ID? If you do not have your PSERS ID, you can connect with PSERS at 1.888.773.7748 to have your ID mailed to you.

Protect Your Information

Pay close attention when PSERS notifies you of changes to your account. PSERS will notify you when there is a change made to your account (e.g., change of address, phone number, email address, direct deposit information, beneficiary information, username). If you did not make a change, contact PSERS immediately.

PSERS
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Harrisburg PA 17101-1905

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**Important Information from the
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Public School Employees' Retirement System**



Website
pa.gov/PSERS

Register for PSERS' Member Self-Service (MSS) Portal to access your retirement account online, anytime!



Call or Fax

Toll-Free: 1.888.773.7748

Local Calls: 717.787.8540

FAX: 717.772.3860



**Send us a Secure Message
through your MSS Account!**

Don't have an MSS Account?
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