

RI CHAPTER 94 NEWS, JUNE 2023

Legislative and Executive Board Report By the Chapter 94 Leadership



On May 18, the House Finance Committee heard testimony on several COLA bills, including ours, H6295. Our bill provides a 3% stipend on the first \$30,000 in pension benefits, payable in July 2023, subject to annual appropriation by the General Assembly. We sought this relief because funding a COLA from the ERSRI retirement fund would impact its growth. Ours seek relief from the State's general fund. All COLA/stipend bills remain in play, and we are confident that the General Assembly will approve legislation that will put money in our pockets.

State Representative Pat Serpa, the sponsor of our bill, did a great job testifying in support of H6295. Our lobbyists, Stephen Alves and Robert Jacquard, also presented testimony. We thank Pat, Stephen, Bob, and Chapter Executive Board members who attended the hearing or sent letters supporting H6295 and its Senate counterpart, S215.

A 3% annual stipend on the first \$30,000 doesn't compensate for lost COLAs, but it's time for Smith Hill to "do something." Our members will use that stipend to buy groceries and gas, meet co-pays or fill prescriptions. And by spending a COLA or stipend, monies will recycle back into the state's economy.

Next Chapter Meeting

Tuesday, June 13 @ 1 pm
RI Council 94, Lower Level
1179 Charles St, No. Providence

Special Guests

State Representative Scott Casey
D-50, Woonsocket

Also Invited, Not Confirmed

ACLU Attorney
RIPTA data breach update

Questions?

Contact Chapter 94 Vice Presidents
Russ Marsocci and Ron Pepin

Russ Marsocci, Muni VP

401-339-9224
pbruins49@verizon.net

Ron Pepin, State VP

401-323-8021
ron.pepin.chapter94@gmail.com

Cindy LeBlanc, Office Manager

401-642-2434
clebanc@ricouncil94.org

Can't attend meetings in person?

*Join us via Zoom to attend meetings online.
Email State VP Ron Pepin to receive
monthly invitations and log-in instructions.*

Save the Dates

July 27, 2023

Summer Outing at Wright's Farm
Reservation Form on Back Page

No meetings in July and August.

Chapter meetings resume in September.

(Leg) Our lobbyist, Bob Jacquard, was featured in the *Providence Journal*, the May 20th edition. Chapter 94 was mentioned too! If you can't find the article, "*RI state retirees again beg legislators to restore pension COLAs wiped out in 2011 reform,*" we'll have copies at the June meeting.

But our work isn't done, and we need members to do their part. We have rescheduled our **Call Your Legislators Phone Bank** to June 13, 2023, after our regular business meeting and guest presentations. We will provide pizza and drinks. Bring your cell phone.

We welcome Mary Riley to the Chapter Executive Board. She fills the seat formerly held by Jim Racine. Retired state worker Jose Berto is our new trustee. Congratulations to Mary and Jose. We look forward to working with them and believe their experiences and knowledge will serve the Chapter well. **RP, RM**

State Report, Ron Pepin

Granting caregiver status to a family member or trusted friend allows them to become an authorized representative for your Via Benefits account. I contacted VIA Benefits and designated a caregiver. It was a simple process especially if you do it by phone..

You can name a caregiver for any length of time and change them anytime. This authorization gives your representative the right to access your account and assist with managing your affairs if something happens to you. For example, a caregiver may enroll you in a plan or request reimbursements on your behalf if you're incapacitated and unable to manage your benefits.

(State) To sign up for an authorized representative or caregiver, call Via Benefits at 1-888-586-0692, Monday to Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. No paperwork is needed if you contact VIA Benefits by phone.

You can choose from one of three authorization levels: a power of attorney, authorization to release personal information-full, and authorization to release personal information-limited.

If you cannot call or want additional information, visit the *Help and Support* section or *Contact/Ask a Question* links at my.viabenefits.com. Contacting VIA Benefits by email to designate a caregiver takes longer than calling directly.

My advice? Call VIA Benefits as soon as possible to grant this authorization to a family member or friend to avoid future complications. **RP**

Muni Report, Russ Marsocci

I have spoken to President Mike Connolly recently, and he, barring any setbacks, expects to join us at the summer outing at Wright's Farm. Mike remains on the journey to get healthy. It has been a long journey. Please drop him a line or give him a call. He would love to hear from you.

Local budgets: The West Warwick budget passed in May, and it included full payment to the retirement fund, now under MERS. Coventry voters weighed in on their town's budget before the Town Council vote on May 23. If you want to send us information on your city or own budgets, contact me at pbruins49@verizon.net or (401) 339-9224.

(Muni) West Warwick retiree health care: The co-share decreases by 3.8%, and retirees will see a reduction in monthly premiums. HILB, the consultant handling retiree medical premiums, will send coupons reflecting the new rate. Per the memo from the Town, “there will be no changes to health/dental coverage or network of doctors/dentists with Blue Cross or Delta Dental.” Members should contact the Town’s Personnel Department at 401-825-7235 or email the Director at safournier@westwarwickri.org for more information.

The West Warwick disabled police met with our attorney recently. How we proceed will be determined once all the depositions are completed.

Our planned litigation against the West Warwick schools for changes to retiree spousal health care continues as we, again, wait for two depositions.

I have no updates to report on Coventry police retirees.

RIPERC is a coalition of public sector retiree unions. Chapter 94 works with RIPERC to provide benefits and perks for members such as Delta Dental and VSP. Big changes are coming to VSP. When the current contract expires, Delta Dental becomes the third-party administrator for VSP. And the arrangement will lead to reduced premiums. RIPERC and Chapter 94 will sort this by open enrollment in the fall. Remember, your Chapter 94 membership must be current to enroll in Delta Dental and VSP.

This is our last newsletter before the summer break. Stay healthy and have fun. **RM**

Golf Tournament Refunds

Our golf tournament has been postponed until October. Many golfers dropped out of our May event when the golf course unilaterally changed our tee times and cookout to later in the day. In other words, we got bumped!

Contact the Chapter office if you have not received your refunded golf registration fee.

The executive board decided to find another date and venue. We’re finalizing an agreement with Louisquisett Country Club in North Providence. Tournament details and registration forms will be available in the September newsletter and at our Wright’s Farm summer outing.

Free Golf for Veterans

Button Hole Golf Course on the Providence-Johnston line offers free play and free range balls for Veterans every Wednesday, from Noon to 3 pm.. Contact Button Hole for more info, 401-421-1664.

Free News

The independent, local and non-profit news site, EcoRI News is a community ally of Chapter 94. If you want the local perspective on the environment and climate justice, visit ecori.org. Sign up to receive the weekly newsletter. It’s free.

Go Phish

It’s always “phishing” time so please be aware that scammers are posing as well-known brands to entice you to click on a link to steal your personal information. We’ve seen the UPS Shipment Scam, Costco Survey Scam, Fake Amazon Security Alerts, Fake Password Expired Email Notifications. Google blocks around 100 phishing emails daily and 48% of all email sent are phishing scams. If you think you have been a victim phishing or any other scam, contact the RI State Attorney General, Consumer Protection Unit, at 401-274-4400.



**2nd Annual RI Chapter 94 Retirees Summer Outing
Thursday, July 27, 2023 @ Wright's Farm**

Join us at this famous venue for family style food, fun and a chance to win a 50/50 raffle.

Wright's Farm Restaurant
84 Inman Road
Harrisville, RI

Check-in @ 11:30 am
Lunch served @12 pm

Costs: \$10 per person
Members, spouses and guests
fee includes lunch & raffle ticket

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED

No payments accepted at the door!
Reservations and payment
due by July 20, 2023

Send form and payment to
AFSCME RI Chapter 94 Retirees
1179 Charles St
North Providence, RI 02904

Questions?
Russ Marsocci, Muni VP
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Ron Pepin, State VP
ron.pepin.chapter94@gmail.com
401-323-8021

RI Chapter 94 Retirees Office
401-642-2434

Registration
RSVP by July 20, 2023

Remit to
AFSCME RI Chapter 94 Retirees
1179 Charles St, North Providence, RI 02904

Member (\$10) _____
Phone with area code _____
Email _____

Spouse (\$10) _____
Phone with area code _____
Email _____

Guest (\$10) _____
Phone with area code _____
Email _____

Guest (\$10) _____
Phone with area code _____
Email _____

Total amount enclosed \$ _____