



Kansas Association of Retired School Personnel

Volume 61, Issue 2

The Meadowlark

February 2026

THANK YOU DIANNE!

The KARSP board regretfully accepted the resignation of Dianne Sisk as the secretary. She has done an awesome job and her hard work and dedication have been greatly appreciated.

We thank Carol Bunning for filling in at previous meetings. At the January 9, 2026 board meeting Denise Henn was confirmed as the secretary of the board. We appreciate that Denise has accepted this position.

UNIT NEWS

Many units do not meet during the winter months. When you do get together, the Meadowlark invites you to share what your unit is doing. These units had some interesting meetings and/or have some planned.

WYANDOTTE COUNTY

Provided by Nancy Warren

Wyandotte County will be meeting February 3, 2026. Rosie Hodges and Juanita will present a program on Black History. There will be a pasta bar with sides of Caesar salad and garlic toast. They continue to collect money for scholarships and to collect Best Choice labels. They recently received \$60 for Best Choice Labels. They are also bringing gently used kitchen items to donate to the Kitchen Restore Project with Wyandotte County K-State Extension.

WICHITA AREA

Provided by LuAnna Peck

Although the Meadowlark received an email with the November/December happenings,

I could not open it. January/February came through fine. They will meet February 13th at 11:45 at the Riverside Christian Church. Their speaker will be Dion Lefler, a Wichita Eagle Opinion Editor. He is not afraid to express his opinions and he will welcome questions from the group. WARSP will again be participating in the Earth Day Celebrations at Earhart Environmental Magnet School.

MANHATTAN AREA

Provided by Lew Faust

On January 7, the Manhattan Area unit met at CAFAMC Fellowship Hall. The Community Service Project was for the Boys and Girls Club. Their program was Leah Fliter and Shannon Kimball –Kansas Association of School Boards Advocacy Team– with a preview of the 2026 Kansas Legislative Session. Their February meeting will be on the 4th and they will be supporting the Manhattan Crisis Center as their community service.

EMPORIA AREA

Provided by Dee Schwinn

At the January 9, 2026 meeting, members were introduced to the new Superintendent of Schools for USD 253, Dr. David McGehee, who spoke to the group about what is going on in the Emporia District. Members were reminded to turn in their volunteer hours. They also voted to man a table in Topeka at the Capitol on February 18th. At the next meeting on February 13th, the program will be Leticia Rust talking about cyber security at ESU.

AFTER 29 YEARS, KANSAS RETIREES DESERVE A VOTE ON KPERS COLA

Jerry Henn
KARSP Executive
Director



Kansas public retirees have waited 29 years. It's time Speaker Dan Hawkins allows a KPERS COLA vote.

For 29 years, many Kansas public retirees have effectively been told to "do more with less." While the cost of housing, utilities, groceries, insurance, and prescription drugs has climbed steadily, thousands of KPERS retirees—especially older retirees and those on fixed pensions—have had little or no meaningful cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to keep pace.

A COLA isn't a "bonus." It's a basic mechanism that prevents earned retirement benefits from being eroded year after year by inflation. When lawmakers block even a vote on a KPERS COLA, they deny Kansans a transparent public debate on whether retirees deserve protection from the rising cost of living.

Speaker Dan Hawkins has reportedly told House members he will not bring a KPERS COLA to the floor for a vote. If that is true, Kansas retirees and their families should ask a straightforward question:

Why won't the House be allowed to vote?

Why a KPERS COLA is necessary now:

1. Inflation has reduced retirement purchasing power dramatically. Even normal inflation compounds. Over decades, it can cut the buying power of a fixed

The Meadowlark is an official publication of the Kansas Association of Retired School Personnel.

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STRENGTH IN UNITY

pension nearly in half. Retirees can't simply "work overtime" to catch up. A COLA is the standard way to prevent long-term harm.

2. **Many retirees planned responsibly based on a stable retirement.** KPERS benefits are deferred compensation. Teachers, highway workers, state employees, county and city workers earned those benefits over careers serving Kansas. When inflation goes unaddressed for decades, the value of that compensation is quietly diminished.
3. **A COLA helps retirees remain self-sufficient and stay in Kansas.** When fixed incomes don't keep up, retirees cut spending, delay medical care, and sometimes leave their communities. A modest COLA tends to circulate directly back into local Kansas economies—groceries, property taxes, local services—supporting small businesses statewide.
4. **After nearly three decades, a vote is the minimum.** Even legislators who are skeptical about a COLA should support allowing the elected body to vote openly. Blocking a vote prevents accountability and prevents Kansans from seeing where their representatives stand.

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Kansas Statehouse
Phone 785-296-2302
Email: dan.hawkins@house.ks.gov
Mailing address

Speaker Dan Hawkins
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th Ave
Topeka, KS 66612

BE INFORMED, AWARE, AND TAKE ACTION.

Ernie Claudel, KARSP Legislative Chair

Our proposed bill was given a number on January 21st.

The Journal Entry announcing the bill was as follows:

HB 2500, AN ACT concerning retirement and pensions; relating to the Kansas public employees retirement system and systems thereunder; creating the Kansas public employees retirement system cost-of-living adjustment commission; prescribing the powers and duties of the commission; establishing procedures of the legislature for the review and consideration of cost-of-living adjustments by the commission, by Committee on Financial Institutions and Pensions.

We have already received questions regarding why we didn't directly ask for a COLA. Even though many of you who have been following this process understand the reasoning, we will repeat it. Over the years following the 2012 legislation that was the result of the 2011 KPERS Commission which established Tier III, KARSP and KCPR have attempted numerous COLA and/or permanent benefit increase legislation passed for the KPERS Retired and Beneficiaries. We have been turned away numerous times with a variety of explanations/excuses as to why one cannot be voted on. The idea of a Commission came about for several reasons:

1. This is the approach used by the Legislature to receive their recent raise.
2. To fund a Commission is a relatively small cost compared to a benefit increase.
3. We hope that if a group of folks, including legislators suggest a benefit increase the idea will be better received.
4. A thorough study has never been conducted by the legislature.
5. We know that any kind of raise will cost a considerable amount. We hope that with a study and someone else making the proposal, we will finally have some success.

There is a lot of interest in HB2500. As always concerns about the cost of any recommend benefit increase.

What I have learned is that on the Kansas House side the speaker doesn't want to see a COLA Bill debated or on the floor. His contact information as well as the President of the Senates contact information is listed below! Here are some possible reasons:

1. Even though he is running for insurance commissioner he apparently doesn't think squashing a KPERS Benefit Bill will hurt his election chances.
2. The possibility that it might pass if a bill ever made it to the House Floor.
3. If it didn't pass, we would know who voted against it.

I have also been working on the Senate side to get it introduced as well. At this point, I have not yet heard the refusal to let the bill advance as I have on the House side.

This is why you need to keep up the avid emailing to your legislators and the speaker of the house and the President of the Senate. It is time to pounce!

Obviously, at this point, any communication with the Senate leadership can be more encouraging than the House.

We also have postcards we can provide. Contact Jerry Henn or myself and we will send you postcards for unit members to mail.

We have replaced "Rally Day" and "Lobby Day" with numerous "*Table Days*."

We need a minimum of 3 people to staff these days from 7:45 AM until NOON. If you provide the original suggested 6, that will give all of you ample time to talk to your legislators. Monday through Thursday, the committees in the House and Senate are scheduled to meet at 9:00 or 9:30. This would answer my call for other retirees to visit these committees and be visible.

LEADERSHIP ADDRESSES

Kansas Speaker the House contact information.

Representative Dan Hawkins
Room 368-W
785-296-2303
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Kansas Senate President contact information.
Senator Ty Masterson
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FIND YOUR KANSAS LEGISLATOR

If you do not know, or are not sure, who your Kansas Senator and Representative is, go to OpenStates.org. It will ask you what you are looking for and enter legislators. It will next ask for your address, and your Senator and Representative will pop up!

EMAIL IDEAS

Jerry Henn, KARSP Executive Director, and I attended an AARP/NRTA (National Retired Teacher Association) conference virtually. One of the presentations was on effective emails. I found it personally very helpful. I am sharing it with you because I believe it would be very helpful to you as well, but also because the emphasis on brevity may relieve some of your communication fear with your representative in Topeka. This information is very compatible with my comments, "Remember a dissertation is not necessary!"

The Subject Line

1. The subject line should be limited to about 30 characters.
2. Make it time sensitive/urgent if possible.
3. "Will you please vote [or take some other action] for _____."
4. "Will you please voice your support for a COLA now!"
5. Hopefully, you will be able to use this suggestion later! "Please vote for Bill _____ which provides the KPERS

retired with a COLA.”

Email Body

1. Make the first sentence and certainly the first paragraph a summary of the rest of the body of the email.
2. Remainder of the email body:
 - Second Level: In some more detail, 3 to 5 sentences explain in more detail (IF NECESSARY). If possible, communicate to the recipient what the problem is, the solution and the action needed.
 - Third Level: An option might be to enclose a link to something you want them to look at in greater detail. One example might be: List our website, www.ksretirees.org and what you want them to read on the site.

Three Cautions:

1. Do not try to prove your knowledge of the vocabulary of the English language.
2. Keep the statistics to a minimum!
3. Be brief and concise!!

KARSP BOARD MEETING MINUTES

On October 23, 2025 the KARSP Board met in Goddard. These minutes from that meeting which were approved at the January 9, 2026 zoom meeting are listed below.

KARSP - Board of Directors Meeting October 23, 2025 - Goddard, Kansas 10:00 a.m.

The following board members were in attendance –

Jerry Henn - Executive Director
Tom Barnes, Jay Brown, Carol Bunning, Gil Bunning, Ernie Claudel, Rod Dietz, Beccy Isom, Mike Isom, Junnae Landry, Hershel Martin, Jane Martin, Karen Pulaski, Leigh-Anne Rogers, Nancy Sapp, Kay Sewell, and Betsy Zadorozny

Meeting opened with Beccy Isom,

Vice-President, leading in the Flag Salute.

Gil Bunning, President, asked for approval of the agenda. Rod Dietz moved and Ernie Claudel seconded -- Approved.

Jerry Henn, Executive Director, asked for approval of the June Board Meeting Minutes. -- Approved.

Rod Dietz, Treasurer, presented the Treasurer's Report. He reported that we are in good shape at this time. Mike Isom moved and Karen Pulaski seconded to accept the report - Approved.

Jerry Henn gave the Executive Director's report. The following items were presented:

- New salesman for AMBA, Sam, is either 1st or 2nd in the nation. He has brought over 150 new members to KARSP through his work.
- Shout out to Mike Isom – 8 new members for Smith County.
- **New banners are needed (stand alone). Mike Isom moved and Kay Sewell seconded to buy two new banners. Approved.**
- Phone charge of \$20 will start in January.
- We need to look for a secretary for KARSP. Dianne Sisk has asked to be relieved of the position.

Mike Isom, Past President, gave the History Committee Report. He mentioned that Gil Bunning, Outgoing President, will cover January 1 2024 - December 31, 2025.

Membership Chair Leigh Anne Rogers began her report by introducing herself. She reported the following:

- 2168 active members
- 644 Life members
- 29 deaths reported this year
- Membership forms will be due in December
- New member forms can be sent at any time
- Send checks in right away after receiving them.

Nancy Sapp, Foundation Representative, reported that 14 grants were given at the convention in 2025

and we are target to give the same number at the 2026 convention. She read thank you notes received from grant recipients.

Ernie Claudel, Lobbyist and Co-Chair of the Legislative Committee, reported that the joint committee on Pension Benefits is a great group of people with persistent members. They feel that there should be an increase in KPERS benefits and that it should be studied in committee.

- He reported that KRISP Bill – SB282 – was dropped (it would not have fixed Tier 3)
- Ernie writes a blurb every two weeks for the website. The information is for people to use as they write to their legislators.
- He gave new COLA buttons to all board members. He emphasized that we need many people to attend meetings at the Capitol so that we are a presence that is seen and felt by our legislators.

Community Service Chair, Kay Sewell, reported about volunteer hours across the state. She will let general members know how to submit their hours. Volunteer hours forms are on the website.

Karen Pulaski, Convention Chair, reported that our organization has been hit hard by rising prices, especially from the Sonesta hotel chain (where we have met in Junction City). The proposal was such that the convention committee decided to look elsewhere.

- June 10, 11, 12 – 2026 – we will meet in Hutchinson for a much better price. Information will be sent to the membership at large at a later date.

District Directors gave their reports. All Directors had visited all or most of their units. They reported interesting projects and programs. Betsy Zadorozny brought a bag made by one of her units which is filled with back-to-school items. Then the bags are given to new teachers in each school in the district. Tom Barnes presented a power-point showing speakers and projects from the Dodge City unit.

The directors were asked to make it clear to the units that only state dues are sent to the state. The local units are to keep the local dues.

Lobby Day incentive -- to give the driver of a car with at least 4 people \$100 for attending Lobby Day. The driver must be a KARSP member. Mike Isom moved and Ernie Claudel seconded. Approved.

KCPR (Kansas Coalition of Public Retirees) has requested \$500. Betsy Zadorozny moved and Nancy Sapp seconded. Approved.

All three contracts - USA Service Agreement, Membership Contract, and Legislative Contract – were presented to accept all three. Nancy Sapp moved and Becky Isom seconded. Approved.

Discussion was held to extend the \$100 for membership recruitment. Jay Brown moved and Betsy Zadorozny seconded. Approved.

Discussion was held of what KARSP will do for an office space when Jerry retires from his position at USA. He intends to stay with KARSP as Executive Director.

President Bunning thanked Jerry for the “heads-up” and indicated that we would discuss it more at length at the January board meeting.

Discussion of replacing Dianne Sisk as Secretary was held. Recognition of her years of service, as well as the outgoing president will be held at the 2026 convention.

Next Board Meeting - Betsy Zadorozny moved and Nancy Sapp seconded to have the board meeting on January 9, 2026 – by ZOOM. Approved.

Meeting adjourned.

Carol Bunning
Acting Secretary