

## Engineering Retirees Society

## ERS Newsletter

## Quarterly meeting

Join us for our next all-member quarterly meeting, **Thursday, March 6**. We are planning a hybrid meeting at the SPEEA Tukwila office. Light lunch is planned at 11:35 a.m. or so, with the speaker and business starting at noon.

There will be a Zoom connection using the A/V equipment at the end of the room, which will allow Zoom participation from your home computer. The Zoom has provided OK listening, and some limited speaking participation, but no lunch.

Look in your email for a meeting notice with Zoom link info and any changes in the plans. Join us in person if you can.

## March guest speaker

Robby Stern from Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action (PSARA) is our guest speaker. Robby retired from the staff of the Washington State Labor Council in 2008. He has been an active member of PSARA, serving as president for nine years. He presently serves as the president of the PSARA Education Fund, chairs the Social Security Works WA coalition and is active in PSARA's Fund Raising, Race and Gender Equity (RAGE) and Climate Justice committees.

His talk will be on Medicare, with the basic message: *Medicare, when passed into law, was for the most part designed to be fair, providing publicly funded and administered health benefits to seniors and people with disabilities. The program, with the introduction of private, for-profit insurance, has strayed very far from its original goals. The PSARA presentation will cover how we can make Medicare more fair, equitable and better for all Medicare beneficiaries.*

## President's Corner

Please check your email for a meeting announcement with Zoom connection info. You can use SPEEA member parking in the front or park behind the building.

## Editor's Corner

Our ERS charter is to provide a gathering place for retirees and to some degree, to look after our financial interests. Significant parts of most of our members' financial interests are bound up with Social Security, medical expenses and pensions (for those who still have meaningful pensions).

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## Minutes from Dec. 5 all-member meeting

ERS President Dave Baine called the hybrid in-person and Zoom meeting to order at 12 p.m.

**Business:** The day's agenda was approved as submitted.

**Officer Elections:** Steve Ellis called for nominations from the floor. There were none. Dave Baine was re-elected as president and Jessica Bonebright was re-elected as secretary - both by acclamation.

**Secretary's Report:** Jessica Bonebright's September meeting minutes were approved as published.

**President's Report:** Dave Baine pointed out this had been our first in-person meeting this year. Work on ERS tax status with the IRS was delayed for family reasons. Social Security's annual inflation adjustment will be 2.5%. Medicare open-enrollment window ends Dec. 7 for next year. National Retiree Legislative Network (NRLN) [NRLN.org](http://NRLN.org) occasionally had good information on national issues. He recommends reading about their work.

**Treasurer:** Bob Ferguson reported ERS account balances at BECU are: Checking - \$745.56, - savings -\$11,564.83, money market - \$20,787.89 and three CDs totaling \$35,133.39 for a grand total of \$68,231.41. We reported a total of \$68,030.94 at our September meeting. Expenses for the year are \$2,803.55. There were savings on refreshments and NRLN fly-ins relative to budgeted amounts. Interest income so far is \$1,932.41. It will be about \$2,100 for the year.

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## Minutes from Dec. 5 all-member meeting

*Continued from P1*

**Vice-President:** Steve Ellis shared the 2025 budget that he and Bob Ferguson proposed and the steering board recommends. It's close to the same as our 2024 budget. We will also be conducting our annual internal financial review in January. Motion seconded and carried to accept the 2025 budget proposal.

**Steering Board Chair:** Dwight Rousu reported the board met, and the newsletter went out and is posted on our website. He encouraged new people to step up for leadership of our organization.

### Committee and Rep Reports

**Membership:** Chair John Neller encouraged those present to sign the attendance sheet. Our badges chair, Roger Aisaka, couldn't make it to the in-person meeting today, so we asked people to write their names on a name tag. ERS has 740 members. Of that total, 631 are paid for 2023 or later, and 41 haven't paid since 2021 or 2022, so we'll try to reach them before we drop their membership status.

**Social committee:** Chair Steve Ellis reported we have \$1,500 as a contingency budget for an unspecified event.

**Programs:** Chair Dave Watt thanked everyone for coming and expressed his appreciation for in-person meetings. He reported the next investment meeting will be Jan. 16. We don't have a speaker, but we'll get one. If anyone has suggestions for speakers for membership or investment meetings, please contact Dave.

**Sunshine Committee:** Co-chairs Myrv & Joan Johansen reported there were no reported ERS members passing away this last quarter. Twenty members passed away this year. Four cards were sent out

(three sympathy and one get well). Ten had no spouse/survivors listed, and no other information could be found. For eight members, we found an obituary and added a condolence message to the memorial/guest book site that was still active. We also sent a sympathy card to one of the members' survivors in addition to adding a condolence message to the memorial/guest book. There have been 233 deaths since Joan and I took over the Sunshine Committee in June 2011.

**Travel:** John Neller asked Jessica to speak about her recent transatlantic cruise. It was a Princess cruise around the British Isles then a repositioning cruise from Southampton to Galveston, Texas. Six days at sea is a long time, but you get used to it.

**Pensions:** Since we currently have no Pension or Insurance chairs, John pointed out the number of Medicare plans offered in our area went down significantly since last year – even bigger reductions occurred in more rural areas.

**Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action (PSARA):** Jessica Bonebright reported PSARA's membership meeting is coming up next week, and they expect great guest speakers. Visit [PSARA.org](https://psara.org) for more information and to join for just \$20/year, which includes mailed hardcopy monthly newsletters. PSARA continues to work on Medicare - leveling the playing field between Advantage plans and Traditional Medicare.

The Trump Administration is expected to push more privatization of Medicare, including making privately owned Medicare Advantage insurance the default selection and promoting it on their website and in other publications.

Traditional Medicare has just 2% overhead expense compared to 30% and more, including profits, for private advantage plans. Advantage plans were

originally introduced to save the trust fund money, but they actually cost more. They've also been shown to delay and deny care.

There was a question about today's news reports of the CEO of United Healthcare who was shot and killed. The bullet casings had messages like delay, deny and depose/defend, suggesting the killer targeted him because of his leadership in the company's practices of refusing to pay healthcare claims to increase profits. The suspect hasn't been identified or apprehended yet. We're likely to learn more about his motives going forward.

**Refreshments:** Co-chair John Meeker noted we'll have more pizza and fewer cocktail sandwiches in the future based on today's experience. Cookies, salad, nuts, apples and candy were also served to those who attended in person today.

**Communications and website:** Chair Walt Ditlefsen reported emails have been working well for sending out meeting notices. He continues to work on updating our ERS email list, including hard bounces when an address is not good. Walt tries to contact people, including unsubscribes. He passes along the names of people he can't contact to Myrv and Joan. We pay \$30/month for MailChimp and we recently paid \$200 for web hosting for two years. Also, our domain name registration is about \$20/year.

**Service:** Rep Dick Beham reported the Bluebills Dec. 20 meeting and potluck lunch will be a celebration of their 30th anniversary. Visit [bluebills.org](https://bluebills.org) and click 'chapters' to find out more about their Heritage Renton/Seattle group and sign up for their monthly newsletter. The Busy Bees are raffling off five quilts. They've made and donated 28 quilts to the USO.

### AD HOC COMMITTEE REPORTS

**SPEEA Liaison:** Dave Baine reported

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*Continued from P2*

SPEEA provides support to ERS from staff and the use of their hall. We gave poinsettias to three supporting SPEEA staff today as thanks. We need to confirm with Amber Musselman the availability of the hall two weeks in advance of our meetings. We hope to have more in-person meetings next year.

**Legislative & Public Affairs:** Dwight said there's too much to report since the election – just make sure you're well informed – especially when you hear from people who have a tendency to lie.

**National Retiree Legislative Network (NLRN):** Dave Baine reported the incoming administration may want to cut funding for senior programs. NRLN is focused on Social Security, Medicare and other issues which affect us all financially. NRLN headquarters are in Washington, D.C. We'll need to be more active and involved, considering proposals from the new administration. Watch for NRLN emails and visit [NRLN.org](http://NRLN.org) to stay informed and contact your elected officials.

**Medical Insurance & Pensions:** Katrina Jones asked if the Machinists contract protects the Boeing early retiree medical plan. No one present was sure. This shows the importance of having an ERS pension's chair. Katrina agreed to assume the role of chair for medical insurance and pensions. President Dave Baine appointed her on the spot, and Katrina and Dave will speak further about the functions and scope of that position.

**Badges:** Roger Aisaka was on Zoom, so John Neller recorded new attendees.

No reports this meeting for Finance, Governing Documents, Pensions or Insurance.

**Old Business:** None.

**New Business:** ERS normally donates the amount of our interest income to charities at our December meetings. The motion was seconded and carried to donate \$265 to each of the eight charities we donated to last year for a total of \$2,120. The charities are: Uplift NW, SPEEA Cares Fund, Food Lifeline, Salvation Army, Sound Generations (meals on wheels), Northwest Harvest, Downtown Emergency Services (DESC – homelessness) and Tukwila Pantry food bank. Door prize drawings for poinsettias were done for in-person members. Thanks to Bob Ferguson for arranging to have them.

**Upcoming meetings:** Thursday, March 6, at noon is our next quarterly membership meeting. The next ERS steering board meeting is Thursday, Feb. 27. Investment meetings are at noon on the third Thursday of odd months. The next investment meetings are Jan.16 and March 20.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 1 p.m.

*Minutes respectfully submitted, Jessica Bonebright, secretary*



*Image of December's hybrid meeting at the SPEEA hall.*

## Investment meetings

We continue to hold investment meetings at noon on the third Thursday of odd months. We email notices with the Zoom link and a link to any speaker-supplied information. The March 20 speaker is David Thread with Edward Jones. Subject is TBD.

## Reminder about links

For those receiving a print copy of the newsletter, links are live in the newsletter posted online at [engineeringretirees.org](http://engineeringretirees.org) if you or your grandkids have access to a computer. The link target is accessed by CTRL-left CLICK on the link.

## Service Corner

Many of us already volunteer in our communities or local organizations. ERS Services Committee chair Dick Beham is active in the Bluebills, a service organization of all Boeing retirees, engineering or not. See [BlueBills.org](http://BlueBills.org). The Bluebills invite you to become an active Bluebill member and join their efforts. Their motto is "Together, we can make a difference!" [Click here](#) for their newsletter.

### **BlueBill contacts:**

Central & South Puget Sound

- Dick Beham - [rsqdnrcr@foxinternet.com](mailto:rsqdnrcr@foxinternet.com)

North King & Snohomish County

- Alan Rice - [aerice77@yahoo.com](mailto:aerice77@yahoo.com)

Olympic Peninsula

- Clinton Webb - [cwebb91275@aol.com](mailto:cwebb91275@aol.com)

## Editor's Corner

*Continued from P1*

Other individual financial situations can also be affected by volatility in investments such as stock markets, inflation and insurance costs. We have largely assumed these life supports would be stable and predictable. The ERS has had years of not having to panic about any of them. The current political extreme proposals and turmoil suggest we should up our game. The move to ignore the climate science that predicts near future climate disasters amplifies the urgency, especially if any of us should happen to have young friends or grandchildren.

If you have not been too taken over by eye candy on 'TICTOX,' you are probably already aware of many of the threats and denials of the threats that are currently in the truthful news and the

disinformation news. Among the proposals being reported in the media are:

**Social Security** - Up initial age qualification, let the trust fund run down so benefits have to decrease, expel non-citizen workers who pay Social Security taxes but draw no benefits which thereby further runs down the trust fund and turn Social Security into needs-based welfare so mid-income recipients will get less.

**Medicare** - Move all traditional Medicare over to private insurance-company owned "Medicare Advantage," where profits are greater and services can be denied, stop limiting prices on expensive drugs, since most drugs are manufactured overseas, tariff wars may affect availability and costs of drugs, epidemic prevention drugs may not be developed or available, sex-related treatments may be outlawed and the limits on immigration, may affect availability of doctors and nurses and staff.

**Pensions** - Companies are shifting pension

cost risks off their books by selling their pension obligations to insurance firms that may be underfinanced and later fold. Also, projected and public policies that increase inflation will reduce the buying power of fixed pension payments.

**Climate Change** - Science is being ignored, which risks immense costs from storms and fires both for repairs and for insurance, if insurance is even available. We, as engineers and technical workers, should at the very least be upset at facts, data, and science being ignored.

What to do? Be informed. Resist bad policies and actions. Support organizations who are also resisting such as our Washington state attorney general, Public Citizens organization and others come to mind. Vote and protect everybody's ability to vote. And if you think of more things to do individually or as a group, share them.

*-Dwight*

## Volunteers who make it all happen

We would like **VOLUNTEERS** for the chair **OPEN**-ings noted below and members for the Refreshments Committee.

### Elected officers



*Dave Baine*  
President



*Steve Ellis*  
Vice President



*Jessica Bonebright*  
Secretary



*Bob Ferguson*  
Treasurer



*Dwight Rousu*  
Steering Board Chair

### Appointed Committee Chairs and Reps

<u>Badges</u>	Roger Aisaka
<u>Programs</u>	<b>OPEN</b> (Dave Watt)
<u>Communications (website)</u>	Walt Ditlefsen
<u>Insurance</u>	<b>OPEN</b>
<u>Governing Documents</u>	Walt Ditlefsen
<u>Discounts</u>	<b>OPEN</b>
<u>Finance, Elections</u>	Steve Ellis
<u>Refreshments</u>	John Meeker / Steve Ellis
<u>Investments</u>	Dave Watt / Ken Kuehnl
<u>Social</u>	Steve Ellis
<u>Legislative &amp; Public Affairs</u>	Dwight Rousu / Dave Watt

<u>NLRN Liaison</u>	Steve Ellis
<u>SPEEA Liaison</u>	Dave Baine
<u>Membership</u>	John Neller
<u>Sunshine</u>	Joan and Myrv Johansen
<u>Medical/Pension</u>	Katrina Jones
<u>Travel</u>	John Neller
<u>Service (Bluebills)</u>	Dick Beham

**ERS SPEEA**

*Contact:*

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### On the lighter side

-He thinks he is a self-made man and worships his creator.

-It's been months since I bought the book, "How to Scam People Online." It still has not arrived.

-One good thing about being wrong is the joy it brings to others.

-My wife wants me to wear a bracelet that belonged to her grandfather. It says: "Do Not Resuscitate."

-If you have a red wine stain on your carpet, get some white wine and drink it until you don't care anymore.

-My wife and I decided to never go to bed angry. We've been awake since Tuesday.

-Yesterday I bought a world map, gave my wife a dart, and said, "Throw this and wherever it lands, I will take you on vacation." We're spending three weeks behind the fridge.

-My wife said, "That's the fourth time you've gone back for dessert! Doesn't it embarrass you?" I said, "No, I keep telling them it's for you."