

TRTA LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

2025  **TRTA**
DAY AT THE CAPITOL



THE VOICE FOR ALL EDUCATION RETIREES

STATE ISSUES

Maintain a solvent TRS pension fund by fully funding statutory contribution rates and using excess state revenues to help reduce the unfunded liability

- The TRS defined benefit pension plan is vital to the retirement security of all public education employees and retirees.
- TRS provides cost-efficient retirement security for plan participants and taxpayers.
- Reducing the unfunded liability now saves Texas taxpayers significant money in the long term and protects the TRS pension fund.

Provide a benefit enhancement to help offset the negative impact of inflation

- TRTA recommends funding a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for TRS retirees when possible or providing a supplemental payment when a COLA is not possible.
- Retirees living on fixed incomes have been impacted drastically by record inflation over the last decade and managing its impact is an ongoing challenge.
- Last session, the Texas Legislature passed SB 10 and Texas voters approved Prop 9, providing much-needed help to most TRS retirees.
- The unfortunate reality is that cumulative inflation has eroded the modest pension benefits of all TRS retirees.

Maintain and protect TRS-Care by fully funding the current statutory contribution rates

- Continue to provide an affordable healthcare plan for all TRS retirees.

Pension Funding

80th Legislature Regular Session
83rd Legislature Regular Session
86th Legislature Regular Session
87th Legislature 2nd Called Session
88th Legislature Regular Session

Benefit Enhancements

80th Legislature Regular Session
83rd Legislature Regular Session
86th Legislature Regular Session
87th Legislature 2nd Called Session
88th Legislature Regular Session

TRS-Care

84th Legislature Regular Session
85th Legislature Regular Session
86th Legislature Regular Session

FEDERAL ISSUES

Support Efficient Implementation of the Repeal of WEP and GPO: Ensure the recently passed repeal of the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO) affecting public servants who contributed to and qualify for Social Security benefits goes to all eligible recipients and continues to remain in place going forward.

H.R. 82, the Social Security Fairness Act, and Its Impact on Texas Public Education Retirees

- The recent passage of H.R. 82, the Social Security Fairness Act, will impact hundreds of thousands of Texas public service retirees, including many who worked in our public schools.
- H.R. 82 repealed two arbitrary, unfair provisions that have been in place for more than forty years—the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO).
- WEP and GPO reduced or eliminated earned Social Security benefits for 3 million Americans.
- In Texas, it is estimated that approximately 200,000 public service retirees have been impacted by WEP and 100,000 by GPO.
- H.R. 82 is a true bipartisan success, passing the U.S. House with a vote of 327 to 75 and the U.S. Senate with a vote of 76 to 20. It was signed into law by President Biden on January 5, 2025.
- The Social Security Administration (SSA) projects that the restoration of benefits to public servants who have been impacted by the WEP and GPO may take twelve to eighteen months.
- While the repeal of these provisions is a great victory for many Texas public-school retirees, not all will be eligible for these benefits depending upon their own or their spouse's work history.
- Social Security benefits earned by Texas public school retirees are largely based on secondary jobs they held before, during, or after their full education careers.
- The income that will be restored to them because of this repeal may help them pay for medications, groceries, or gas, but cannot replace their primary source of income: the modest monthly annuities they receive from the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS).
- **TRS retirees still rely upon the support of the Texas Legislature to ensure their retirement is secure.**
- Inflation continues to erode the fixed incomes of TRS retirees and affects their ability to afford basic goods and services.
- While thousands of TRS retirees are grateful they received an increase in their pension benefits in 2024, not all received the cost-of-living adjustments or stipends approved by the Legislature.
- The passage of Proposition 9 during the November 2023 General Election demonstrated tremendous support by Texas voters, who recognize that our retired public education retirees are hurting financially and deserve to retire with dignity.
- TRS retirees appreciate the continued support of the Texas Legislature and their willingness to protect and improve retirement benefits through TRS, via benefit enhancements and affordable healthcare options.