



The West Virginia Association of Retired School Employees (WVARSE) is an organization open to membership for all retired school employees, irrespective of job title. The Executive Board met November 4, 2015, and by unanimous vote adamantly opposes the proposed increases in premiums, co-pays, deductibles, out-of-pocket expenses, prescription costs and any other increases that are currently under consideration by the PEIA Finance Board. These draconian changes would have a devastating impact, especially on those retirees who have had the audacity to live into their 80's or 90's and who struggle to live on low fixed incomes that have not changed since they retired. (See other side for data supplied by the State Teachers' Retirement System.)

Some retirees are already faced with a dilemma: "Do I eat, or do I take my prescription medication?" They also are reluctant to seek medical care when ill. With increasing costs of living, other retirees are finding it necessary to go back to work; many are trying to live on an income that is below the poverty level and are therefore eligible for public assistance. These proposed benefit reductions, added to the constant fear of either loss of or reduction in Social Security, Medicare and other benefits, constitute a toxic mix. Retirees already know that they will receive no cost-of-living increase in Social Security benefits for 2016.

How can this be fixed? The Legislature should provide additional funding for PEIA in the 2016 Regular Session, something that has not been enacted since 2012. Effective education for the students is the combined efforts of everyone in the school system. WVARSE is composed of those former employees who dedicated years to the most valuable resource of the state: the youth. Adequate funding will demonstrate respect for retired school employees and will ensure the stability of so important an aspect of the well-being of senior citizens: access to adequate, affordable health care.

Danny Gray, President