

AASRA ADVOCACY IN ACTION

AASRA Advocacy

Welcome to the AASRA Advocacy Website. The All Arizona School Retirees Assn. (AASRA) seeks to keep members informed and help them advocate effectively on issues that affect retirees and public education. Of particular concern are:

1. Issues affecting retirement: pensions (ASRS), social security, health plan benefits.
2. Issues regarding senior health and well-being: community services, security from abuse, exploitation. etc.
3. Issues affecting public education, students and educators

Issues Update

Arizona's Pension Funds Under Attack

Arizona's legislature seeks ways to balance the State budget with further cuts. **Arizona's State Retirement Systems will be targeted!**

We understand that bills are written for submission when the legislature starts in January by legislator Kirk Adams. Bills are expected to:

1. seek voter reversal of the constitutional protections for AZ pension funds
2. attempt to replace our current DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION PLAN

The Arizona Republic newspaper launched the attack with its week-long "expose" of costs and "excesses" of Arizona's retirement pension plans. Worst case examples highlighted problems, several of them already corrected in the last legislative session with AASRA support. While we support needed reforms to strengthen the ASRS, it seems the series real purpose was to create a negative public perception of Arizona's public retirees and retirement plans. This smoothes the path for the legislation to come from those bent on destroying the ASRS defined benefits plan.

ALL AASRA MEMBERS AND ALL ARIZONA PUBLIC RETIREES NEED TO "GET OUT THE WORD" TO LEGISLATORS AND THE PUBLIC: SUPPORT OUR PENSION FUNDS

On the following pages are materials that may be of help.

For excellent information go to the Retirement System website: azasrs.gov

For additional information on advocacy issues, please contact AASRA:

Mary Murphy, State President: ronmurphx@msn.com

Sigrid Whitman, Legislative Team Chair: sigridw@msn.com

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All Arizona School Retirees Association

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An ASRA Position Statement:

Support for the Arizona State Retirement System

AASRA actively supports the Arizona State Retirement System, our public retirees' defined benefit pension plan and retirement health plan.

- 1. AASRA will support legislation that strengthens ASRS, protecting and maintaining our pension plan for the benefit of current retirees and for active employees in the future.**
- 2. AASRA will oppose efforts harmful to ASRS, including:**
 - a.) attempts to change or remove the current Constitutional definitions and protections provided for the fund.**
 - b.) attempts to freeze the defined benefit plan, denying access to future members.**
 - c.) attempts to replace the defined benefit plan with an alternative plan, such as a defined contribution plan.**
- 3. AASRA will provide active advocacy in support of ASRS.**
 - a.) provide factual information and materials to sharpen members knowledge regarding our pension plan and how it benefits members (retired and active), their communities and Arizona.**
 - b.) prepare presentations and speakers to carry information into various segments of their communities.**
 - c.) respond to anti-pension fund efforts to influence the press, business communities, legislators and/or public at large (correcting disinformation).**
 - d.) seek cooperation with other supporters of ASRS.**



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Key Talking Points: Defending ASRS Defined Benefits

- 1) Defined benefits (DB) programs (like ASRS) cost less than defined contributions (DC) programs for the same retirement benefits—*“More bang for the buck!”*.
- 2) Defined benefits plans are more dependable than defined contribution plans for retirees—*“No gambling on your livelihood”*.
- 3) ASRS is not a “gift funded by taxpayers”. The most significant portion of benefits comes from investment earnings. The remainder is paid for equally by workers and employers. *“Don’t apologize for what we’ve paid for”*.
- 4) ASRS is healthy and well managed-- *“One of the TOP systems in the nation”*.
- 5) Defined benefits plans allow retirees to continue to support healthy local economic activity-- *“DB plans support job growth and local tax revenue”*.
- 6) Our defined benefits plan enables AZ to attract and maintain more highly qualified and educated employees.....despite relatively low salaries—*“Arizona deserves the best”*.
- 7) The American public as a whole believes in pensions and security in our senior years-- *“Secure retirement has three parts: pensions, social security, & savings”*.
- 8) AASRA will monitor and respond to myths of comparisons between public and private sector compensation---*“No apples and oranges comparisons”*.

AASRA ADVOCACY: AN ACTIVITY UPDATE

(OUTSTANDING EFFORTS BY AASRA PRESIDENT-ELECT, ASRS LIAISON, LEGISLATIVE TEAM, AND POWER POINT TEAM, HAVE ACCOMPLISHED THESE TASKS, TO DATE)

- A. BECOME KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT PENSION ISSUES- NATIONWIDE AND ARIZONA
 - 1. NRTA NATIONAL MEETINGS, WEBINARS, MATERIALS
 - 2. MEETINGS WITH ASRS DIRECTOR / LEGISLATIVE CONSULTANT
 - 3. NIRS, CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, NRTA STUDIES, etc.

- B. PREPARE MATERIALS/ INFORMATION
 - 1. POSITION STATEMENT
 - 2. KEY TALKING POINTS
 - 3. FORMATS: POWER POINT PRESENTATION

- C. INFORM AASRA MEMBERS AND UNIT OF IMPENDING CONCERNS
 - 1. NEWSLETTER ARTICLES
 - 2. E-MAILS TO BOARD, UNITS
 - 3. UNIT VISITS BEGUN

- D. SEEK COOPERATIVE EFFORTS
 - 1. REACTIVATED ASRS COALITION
 - 2. MET WITH SORORITY
 - 3. OFFICIAL AARP ADVOCACY POSITION OBTAINED

- G. BEGUN ACTIVE RESPONSE TO ATTACKS ON PENSION FUND
 - 1. RESPONSE TO NEWSPAPER ATTACKS
 - 2. LEGISLATOR CONTACTS
 - 3. COMMUNITY CONTACTS: EDUCATION GROUPS / COMMUNITY GROUPS

WHAT WE NEED YOU TO DO:

EVERYONE NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED. WE NEED TO ACTIVATE OUR SUPPORTERS.

- A. THIS IS THE CRITICAL TIME FOR COMMUNICATION
 - 1. GET MATERIALS AND INFORMATION TO OUR MEMBERS
 - 2. CONTACT LEGISLATORS. ESPECIALLY NEWLY ELECTED ONES.
contact on line at: azleg.gov.
 - 3. CONTACT EDUCATION RELATED GROUPS, YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD, YOUR OLD SCHOOL FRIEND GROUPS, PTA, LOCAL PARENTS, ETC.
 - 4. CONTACT SMALL LOCAL NEWSPAPERS, YOUR GROUPS, CLUBS, CHURCHES, ESPECIALLY BUSINESS GROUPS, CHAMBERS, ETC.

- B. KEEP US INFORMED. WHAT HAVE YOU DONE? WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?
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