

Good Morning. My name is Jay Rowh, and I am the Silver Haired Legislator from Mitchell County (Beloit). I am also the President of the Kansas Silver Haired Legislature (SHL). We represent the nearly 500,000 (half million) Senior Citizens over the age of 60 in Kansas.

Each spring, the 11 SHL districts in the state meet to discuss and debate the issues that are important to that particular SHL district. These issues are then presented in July to the Executive Board of the SHL, again to be debated and discussed by that Board. From the 37 issues brought in from around the entire State of Kansas, the Executive Board reduced them to the six issues which we will present to the entire SHL body for their consideration at the Annual Session in October.

One of those six issues pertains to the issue of KPERS that we are discussing here today. Our proposal concerning the KPERS issue deals in three areas. First: It is our proposal that the Kansas Legislature fully fund KPERS each year. The working KPERS members have paid the 50% increase in their contribution each month, the employers are making their full contribution each month, and we feel the State of Kansas should do likewise. Second: The Silver Haired Legislature feels it is time for a Cost of Living Increase (COLA), which hasn't happened in nearly 20 years. Third: It is the request of the SHL that the Legislative and Executive Branches of the State Government cease using the KPERS pool as a source of income, or as a bank, to shore up or help balance the State General Fund. That is not what it was intended for, and it puts the entire KPERS program in both short-term and long-term jeopardy.

Many of our Kansas Seniors are members and participants in the KPERS program – state highway workers, city and county employees, public education workers (both certified and classified), and many more. They diligently contributed to their KPERS fund each month, knowing they would have a retirement benefit in their “golden years” to supplement their Social Security. They expected their employer to contribute likewise, and trusted the State of Kansas to uphold their end of the law by funding the program as prescribed by State Statute. They most certainly did NOT expect the State to short-fund the program many times, and definitely did NOT expect the State to use the KPERS fund to build a more positive General Fund balance at this time.

Please hear the requests of the 500,000 Silver Haired Legislators, and respect their many years of effort in the Kansas labor pool building a stronger state, which helped build the KPERS fund to what it is today. Show your appreciation to those efforts by giving our proposal your fullest consideration in any deliberation during the upcoming 2017 Kansas Legislative Session, and voting accordingly on all bills pertaining to this matter.

Thank you for allowing me to present our proposal to you today. The half-million Kansas Seniors, who have the highest voting percentage of any age demographic group in the state, are looking forward to your response in the upcoming Legislative Session.

Respectfully submitted,

Jay Rowh, President, Kansas Silver Haired Legislature