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A Tribute to Early Teachers

By Laurence A. Walker

Much credit for Wyoming today is due to the early teachers of this state. Most of them were women who answer to challenge to help educate the children on the Western frontier. They were pioneers in the true sense of the word, as they left family, friends, and a much easier life to face the hardships of early Wyoming. The records of their trials and challenges give evidence of their willingness to go to the remote areas and teach the children of the various communities.

One can imagine the loneliness that they must have felt so far removed from populous cultural centers. In their work they had to be imaginative resourceful, and responsible as materials were scarce and the job was hard. Not only were they concerned with the education of the children, but also they were frequently forced into making decisions that affected the total welfare of the pupils, especially in times of crisis. These might be in cases of raging blizzards, frostbite, transportation problems, rattlesnake bites, or numerous other concerns

It is little wonder then that the native sons of the areas quickly became aware of them as possible lifetime partners? Many were the teachers who taught only a year or two before they married. Their children then became the pupils for other teachers. These same

teacher-mothers continued to respond to the call to teach when a teacher shortage developed especially during World Wars I and II. Their loyalty and devotion were sincere in spite of the fact that district school board members usually terminated the contract when the teacher married. Perhaps the most frequent discriminatory clause of a contract was against the right of a teacher to marry.

The wonderful influence of the homes establish by them gave Wyoming the product of their efforts—imaginative, education-seeking, and responsible citizens. From these teachers many future doctors, lawyers, dentists, teachers, legislators, executives, farmers, ranchers, and businessmen received the inspiration to be more than seemed possible from their environment. It was the teacher who often made possible the vision of what one might become. To them, Wyoming owes a debt of gratitude. Their contribution helped to make possible the basis of a solid citizenry in a great state—the “Equality State”.



From Your WREP President

Owen Jones

One of our goals this past year has been to look at options available for Wyoming Retirement System (WRS) retirees for a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) in the next few years.

As your Executive Board we have been diligently working together with Dave Swindel from the WRS office on a proposal for the 2018 Legislative appropriations committee for consideration of a COLA for retirees.

In the following chart, Dave has provided some summary statistics on each scenario.



We would appreciate your input as to which scenario you would prefer us to pursue. We will have a discussion at our state meeting in Sheridan, as to which groups we will encourage the Appropriations

committee to include monies for a COLA in next year’s state budget.

One of the sessions at our Oct. 5th state meeting, we will present more information on each of the 6 scenarios. We will also discuss ways and strategies to present our ideas to legislators for support and endorsement of our request for money for a retiree COLA. We will be asking our local chapters and members to contact local legislators and share thoughts and needs for a COLA for retirees.



After looking over the COLA chart, please contact any of the WREP executive board members by a phone call, or email and share your thoughts and choice for a WRS

COLA. WREP Executive Board member’s names and contact information are listed in this newsletter.

As you can see, we will be discussing COLA’s and hope that you will join us at our annual meeting. We need your input and ideas. Our keynote speaker will be WRS director, Ruth Ryerson, to share some thoughts on the Wyoming Retirement System and how it is working for all retirees.

I would also encourage you to come to Sheridan and visit some of the sites and activities going on in the Sheridan area. You can stay at the renovated Historic Sheridan Inn and be a part of the great events that occurred there. See you in Sheridan in October.

Possible Scenerios for a COLA							
Scenario	One-year Cost	Total Cost	Number of Retirees Af-fected *	Avg annual benefit in-crease (Plan-wide) **	Avg annual benefit increase amongst those receiving COLA	Number of Retirees NOT affected (no COLA)	% of Retir-ees getting a COLA
Retired 15 yrs or more 2% COLA	\$2,165,954	\$16,364,323	7,975	\$95.00	\$250.28	14,756	35.08%
Retired 15 yrs or more 3% COLA	\$3,248,931	\$24,546,486	7,975	\$143.00	\$375.09	14,756	35.08%
Retired 20 yrs or more 2% COLA	\$1,162,513	\$7,793,857	4,688	\$51.00	\$221.03	18,043	20.62%
Retired 20 yrs or more 3% COLA	\$1,743,769	\$11,690,786	4,688	\$77.00	\$330.97	18,043	20.62%
Retired 25 yrs or more 2% COLA	\$528,164	\$3,083,636	2,436	\$23.00	\$190.55	20,295	10.72%
Retired 25 yrs or more 3% COLA	\$792,246	\$4,625,453	2,436	\$35.00	\$285.65	20,295	10.72%

By Wayne Schatz

For example, if your retirement benefit is \$1,000 per month, you can purchase a certain amount of goods or services with that

If you receive a COLA based on this increase in prices, however, then this year's benefit would increase to \$1,030 per month. Thanks to your COLA, you will have the same purchasing power—or the same ability to purchase those same goods—that you did last year with your \$1,000 benefit. COLAs may not seem so significant—you may wonder, how important is just \$30 per month? Yet rising prices and inflation can very quickly erode

your retirement income, even to the point that a retirement benefit that was perfectly adequate to pay your monthly expenses when you retired can become inadequate over time.

Like water cutting through a rock, even a moderate rate of inflation can significantly erode your purchasing power over time. In Wyoming, public employee retirees have not had a COLA added to their retirement payments in the last 10 years. Inflation has gone up to as high as 3% in one year. That means that your buying power has gone down in those years. The legislature has stated that there cannot be a COLA for retirees until the funding is in place to pay for the COLA. Because a COLA is not for just one month or one year, it will continue until the retiree passes away. The money must be in place to fund that COLA. That means it is to be at 100%. This last year the funds were at 78.21%. As you can see, the fund is not strong enough to support a cost of living increase at this time. Long-term projections indicate positive trends and it is hoped that in the future there will be enough funds to offer a COLA to all public employees, including educators.



Did you know that—

Benefits paid by state and local pension plans support a significant amount of economic activity in the state of Wyoming.

Pension benefits received by retirees are spent in the local community. This spending ripples through the economy, as one person's spending becomes another person's income, creating a multiplier effect.

In 2014, expenditures stemming from state and local pensions supported...

- 3,358 jobs that pays \$144.7 million in wages and salaries
- \$483.7 million in total economic output
- \$82.3 million in federal, state, and local tax revenues

This is all in the state of Wyoming.

Each dollar paid out in pension benefits supported \$1.08 in total economic activity in Wyoming.

Each dollar “invested” by Wyoming taxpayers in these plans supported \$7.13 in total economic activity in the state.

See--you and your retirement do matter!

(Data from “Pensionomics 2016: Measuring the Economic Impact of DB Pension Expenditures)

By Lyle Bateman

Memories are happenings along life's road,

And gathered from far and near;
And thoughts are the seeds that grow,
Into memories we hold so dear,

From these memories we can never part,

For they are like leaves of gold,
We keep them forever in our hear,
And like a picture they unfold.

They are thoughts of time that has past,
And link us with the days gone by,
And always in our heart will last,
And never from our mind will die.

**2016-2017 Directory
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- 2 Enter activation code - **ambasavers**
- 3 Register your basic information and sign up for email alerts. *Here you may opt-out of the dining upgrade if you do not wish to join that program. It is not necessary to add your credit card information to take advantage of Passport's discounts.*

Now you're ready to start saving!

