

# TRSnews

WINTER 2023



THE NEWSLETTER of the TEACHER RETIREMENT SYSTEM of TEXAS



MEMBER EDITION

## Your TRS Annual Statement



**Planning for Your Future.** It's that time of year – time for you to receive your TRS annual statement. This is one of the most important documents you will receive from TRS. It includes your membership information and can be helpful in planning your future retirement.

All statements were sent by mail or electronically (if you have a *MyTRS* account) before Dec. 1, 2023. If your friend receives theirs before or after you do, don't worry; statements were made available in batches throughout October and November to all TRS members. As long as you have not retired or refunded your account, you should receive a statement.

Use [MyTRS](#) to view, download and print a copy of your statement any time! All you need to do is log in and navigate to your Document Center. If you haven't already set up your *MyTRS* account, this is the perfect time to do so!

### • Information on Your Statement

Retirement estimates are available to help you plan for retirement. You will find an unaudited retirement estimate based on your current years of service and the date you are first eligible to retire. We've also included a projection of service credit in which we assume that you continue to work until your retirement eligibility date.

The projected lifetime annuity value can help you understand the value of your potential retirement benefit. It represents the total amount you could expect to receive if you live to your normal life expectancy. It's important to note that this is not a guaranteed amount.

There are a few different versions of the annual statement. The version you receive is based on the status of your employment and your TRS account.

### • No Annual Statement

If you recently became a new member of TRS or returned to TRS-covered employment after the end of the 2022-23 school year, you will not receive an annual statement until fall 2024.

### • Review Your Annual Statement Carefully

Review your statement and notify TRS immediately if information is incorrect regarding compensation or years of service credit. You may have an opportunity to have corrections made for the 2022-23 school year without having to pay additional cost other than the member contributions due on the compensation that was paid to you. TRS must be notified by May 31, 2024 so that the error can be corrected by the end of the 2023-24 school year.

### • Need Help Reading Your Statement?

Grab your statement and follow along! Watch the [Understanding Your Member Statement](#) video for a walk through of the main sections of your statement.

Please refer to the [2023 Annual Statement](#) webpage for more information.

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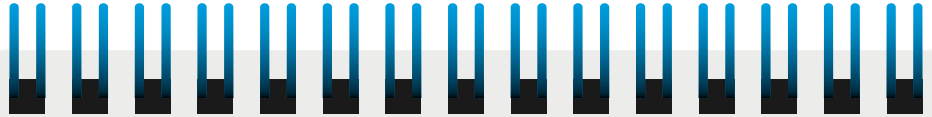
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*TRS News* is published by  
Teacher Retirement System of Texas  
1000 Red River Street  
Austin, Texas 78701-2698  
1-800-223-8778  
[www.trs.texas.gov](http://www.trs.texas.gov)

The Teacher Retirement System of Texas does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability in employment or the provision of services. A copy of the complete TRS plan is available at the above address during normal business hours.



**From the Desk of**  
Executive Director  
Brian K. Guthrie



### Dear Members:

As the new year approaches, we look back on memorable moments that shaped our lives over the past 12 months as well as what we're looking forward to in the future. We're pleased to do both with this edition of *TRS News*, designed to give you the information you need to make the most of your benefits.

It's been one year since TRS opened its first regional office. Inside, you'll find an article that sheds light on the implementation of the office and how you can connect. We've also crisscrossed the state talking to some of you and learning more about life after retirement in our continued *TRS Talks* series. I hope you'll read about it, watch the latest video, and be inspired by the possibilities that await during retirement.

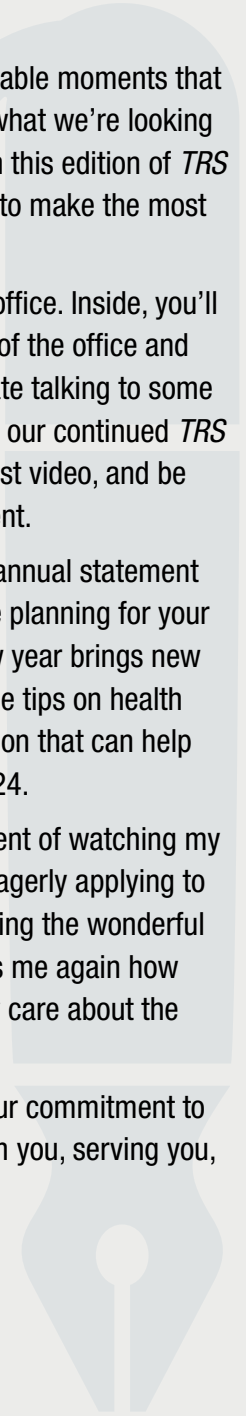
For members, this is the time of year when your TRS annual statement and *MyTRS* provide invaluable insight as you continue planning for your future. You can read more on that. And because a new year brings new resolutions, I encourage each of you to take note of the tips on health care and navigating life events. It's essential information that can help you put your best foot forward while stepping into 2024.

On a more personal note, I must mention the excitement of watching my children lay the foundation for their future. They are eagerly applying to colleges and collecting recommendation letters. Reading the wonderful sentiments teachers have shared about them reminds me again how educators change lives every day and how much they care about the work they do.

The year may change, but you can always count on our commitment to you. We remain focused on listening and learning from you, serving you, and achieving success together.

All the best,

Brian



# Start the New Year on a Healthy Note

It's almost 2024 – which means a new year of taking care of your health is about to begin. Start the year off right by taking advantage of your 100% covered preventive care!



## SCHEDULE YOUR PREVENTIVE CARE APPOINTMENTS TODAY:

- **Annual wellness visit** – Your doctor will check your weight, Body Mass Index and blood pressure, and perform other screenings you need.
- **Cholesterol screening** – Recommended if you're 35 or older, or between 20–35 if you're at increased risk for coronary heart disease.
- **Diabetes screening** – Recommended if you're 45 or older, have high blood pressure, are overweight, or have risk factors for cardiovascular disease.

## CANCER SCREENINGS:

- **Mammogram** – Recommended if you're 35 or older or have a family history or other risk factors for breast cancer.
- **Cervical cancer screening (Pap test and HPV test)** – Recommended every three years for women ages 21–65 and every five years with an HPV test for women ages 30–65. Women who had a hysterectomy or are 65 or older may not need a Pap test.
- **Prostate cancer screening** – Recommended yearly for men 45 or older. If you're at high risk, you may need screening starting at 40.

- **Colonoscopy (colorectal cancer screening)** – Recommended for adults 45 or older once every 10 years. Depending on your risk factors, you may need a colonoscopy earlier or more frequently.

## ANNUAL VACCINES:

- **Flu** – Recommended for age six months or older.
- **Shingles** – Recommended for age 50 or older.
- **Pneumonia** – Recommended for age 65 or older.

Visit our [covered preventive services](#) webpage to view more annual vaccines.

And don't forget to take advantage of our fitness and nutrition programs as well! Learn more about your [fitness program options](#).

## MID CAREER MEMBERS: Let's Estimate Your Retirement Needs

We're here for you at the start of your career, through the middle stages, into retirement, and beyond. To help ensure your readiness to retire, it's important to estimate your future needs now, so you have time to make adjustments, if necessary.

We encourage you to attend a **new virtual presentation for mid career members** just like yourself. Together, we will look at the importance of estimating your income and expenses in retirement and walk through the steps of the online retirement calculator.

Visit the [Virtual Benefit Presentations](#) webpage for presentation dates and registration details.

Experts say you will need 80-90% of your preretirement income to maintain your current standard of living. Depending on your lifestyle, you need to set a realistic savings goal that works for you. Explore these resources to start your planning today:

- [Video: TRS Retirement Readiness, Mid Career](#)
- [Retirement Income and Expenses Calculator](#) (located under the Retirement Calculators tab)
- [MyTRS Benefit Calculator](#)



# Looking Back on a Year of Serving Our Members in El Paso

*The TRS El Paso Regional Office has officially been open for one year!*

As we reflect on a successful 2023 fiscal year, here are some notable highlights on members served:

- **1,040** Walk-In Visits
- **1,483** In-Person Office Visits
- **1,198** Virtual Appointments
- **746** Telephone Appointments

As a reminder, we provide full services to TRS members in the area:

- Office Visits
- Group Retirement Sessions
- Retirement Benefit Presentations
- Walk-In Services (Document Drop-Off)

Members can register for appointments online through [MyTRS](#) and by phone at 1-800-223-8778. We encourage members to schedule office visit appointments in advance to ensure the timeliest service. For document drop off, feel free to stop by anytime during our regular business hours (Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. MST or 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. CST)



**Tony Peña**  
El Paso Regional Office Director

*“Thank you to those who have scheduled an appointment or walked in for service during our first year! It’s been a pleasure serving you as TRS started on our journey expanding operations to serve members in their community. And to those who we will serve in the upcoming year – we look forward to meeting you and providing exceptional service. We will greet you with a smile as soon as you step through the door.”*

## Ombuds Corner

*Lori LaBrie, TRS Ombuds, has been at the agency for two years now!*

Some may be wanting to know more about her role, while others may have already interacted with her since she joined.

Ms. LaBrie is here and ready to engage with you when you’re unable to resolve an issue through normal TRS channels. She serves as an escalated resource as opposed to a first point of contact.

She is committed to achieving the highest levels of customer satisfaction while:

- Listening to member concerns and providing information or help
- Making referrals to appropriate TRS resources or departments
- Providing information, if normal channels were unable to resolve the item
- Conducting investigations about a concern or complaint
- Escalating or reporting complaints
- Reviewing and analyzing trends

For more information and ways to contact, please visit the [Office of the Ombuds](#) webpage.



**Lori LaBrie**  
TRS Ombuds

*“The past year has been a wonderful experience. I enjoy getting to know the members, listening to their concerns, and helping them meet their needs. I am genuinely optimistic about what the future holds.”*



## Mental Health Care is Health Care

Taking care of your mental health is just as important as taking care of your physical health! If you're a TRS-ActiveCare participant, you have many resources to help keep your mind at ease.



- **Virtual mental health visits through Teladoc:** Speak with a certified mental health expert confidentially in the comfort of your own home. If you're enrolled in TRS-ActiveCare or TRS-ActiveCare Primary+, the copay for this is \$0!
- **Wellness coaching:** Through wellness coaching you have access to one-on-one coaching programs that help with mental health, such as stress management, nutrition and fitness.
- **Learn to Live:** This confidential online service uses cognitive behavioral therapy techniques. You can either take short lessons at your own pace or work with a coach one-on-one.

*Take advantage of your benefits to the fullest by using these resources!*

## Join Thousands of Your Fellow TRS Members on *MyTRS*

Whether you want to plan for retirement, explore your benefits, schedule an appointment with a benefit counselor, communicate with TRS, or keep track of your personal account, [MyTRS](#) is a helpful resource for all members.

If you haven't already registered, we highly encourage you to do so. There are enhanced security measures in place during the registration process to ensure your account is set up by you. An additional reminder: We recommend using a personal email rather than a work email.

Find resources and information, including a [How to Establish Your MyTRS Account](#) video, on our [MyTRS webpage](#), and join us online today!



# Vital Tips to Keep Your Information and Member Account Secure

## Do Not Send Personally Identifiable Information Through Email

Email is quick and easy, but it's not always secure. If you must send confidential or sensitive information (social security numbers, birth dates, copies of birth certificates, drivers licenses), it's safer to send this by certified mail or a courier. Be cautious, validate the reason for sending the information, and provide only if necessary.

## Imposter Applications

Take precautions when downloading and providing information through a mobile application. Make sure it is the app you were seeking and not an imposter.

The New York State Teacher Retirement System (NYSTRS) recently warned their members: "A fraudulent mobile app claiming to be "NYS Retirement" is currently available on Google Play. Do not download or use this fraudulent app. It is not affiliated with NYSTRS and may be an attempt to steal your personal data."

**TRS does not currently have a mobile app.** If you suspect or become aware of an imposter TRS mobile app on any stores or elsewhere, please report it immediately by calling 1-800-223-8778.



## Three Types of Fraud to Be Aware of: Phishing, Vishing and Smishing

**Phishing: When a bad actor sends an email** that contains a link that appears to be from the recipient's bank, PayPal, an online retailer such as Amazon, Netflix or other legitimate sources. The message might tell the recipient that their account has been compromised, money has been taken or a payment is late. Clicking the link installs malware on the recipient's device and takes the recipient to a fake website, which then steals the information they enter.

**Protect Yourself:** If you receive a suspicious email, check the email address is from who they're claiming to be (however, note that some scammers can forge this). Ensure the email is addressed to you by name. Generic greetings such as *Dear Sir, Dear Madam, Dear Customer, or Dear [your email address]*, will never be used by your bank or other legitimate sources. Do not click on any links. If it is legitimate, then you should be able to find the page on the institution's website by searching for it yourself. You can also call the institution directly to discuss the email.

**Vishing: Phone fraud.** The caller may pretend to be from the individual's bank, mortgage lender, or retailer with whom the individual may have an account and will try to get them to reveal their account details and passwords.

**Protect Yourself:** If you receive this type of call, remember that your bank or retailers will never ask you for secure information like your bank account passwords. If in doubt, end the call and wait a few minutes (in case the bad actors have hijacked your phone line), then call the institution using the phone number on your bank or retailer's card or website.

**Smishing: Text-message fraud.** The bad actor sends a text claiming to be from the recipient's bank or other legitimate source. It may contain a link to a fake website or give the recipient a phone number to call. The aim is to get the recipient to reveal banking or other security details.

**Protect Yourself:** If you get a text message, never click a link, and only call an institution back using the phone number published by the institution on your bank/credit card statements or their website.

## REMEMBER!

Signing up for [MyTRS](#) is one way to protect your information. If you haven't already, set up an account so that a hacker doesn't do it for you.

## EMPLOYMENT AFTER RETIREMENT REMINDER: Tracking Hours Worked for Full-Time Employment

If you plan to work for a TRS-covered employer after retirement, it's important to be familiar with the employment after retirement (EAR) exceptions. All retirees must observe a one full, calendar-month break in service after their effective retirement date to avoid revoking their retirement. Returning to work for a TRS-covered employer in the month directly following your effective retirement date will revoke your retirement.

Retirees who qualify for full-time employment (after a 12-full, consecutive-calendar-month break in service or service retirees with an effective retirement date prior to Jan. 1, 2021), may work full time in any position without forfeiting annuity payments.

**Although qualifying retirees can work full time without violating the EAR limits, it's important to keep in mind that employers must still track and report time worked to TRS for all employees, including those that retired and returned to work.** If your employer asks you to report time worked, this does not necessarily mean you have violated EAR laws, it may just mean your school district needs to report hours and days worked to TRS regardless of being able to work full time.

If you retired on or after Sept. 1, 2005 and work more than one-half time in a month, in most cases your employer(s) will owe TRS pension and health care surcharges. As of Sept. 1, 2021, your employer can no longer pass any surcharge amount on to you. Please contact TRS if you feel that your employer is violating this prohibition.

For more information and helpful EAR scenarios, read the [EAR brochure](#) or take part in the [interactive EAR video](#). You can always contact TRS for questions related to your specific situation.



## Navigating Life Events with Ease

From new hire to retiring, purchasing a home to starting a family, and everything in between, TRS has the information you need for your personal and career life-changing events. Explore the [Life Event Resource Kit](#) where we help you navigate life's toughest – and sometimes sweetest – moments. No matter what change you face or milestone you reach, TRS is also right there. The impact of these events can be significant, and we want to ensure you're making the most of your benefits – in all ways possible – with each step forward.



# NEW TRS TALKS VIDEO: "The Art of Retirement"



Since retiring, John and Paula Hodge dedicate time to creative pursuits on their quiet patch of land in Grand Saline, Texas. There, you can find John working in his woodshop while Paula paints colorful canvases in their adjoining garage studio. Some days, Paula is back in a different kind of classroom, but still doing the teaching she has always loved. Their TRS pension has enabled them to enjoy retirement for more than two decades. <https://youtu.be/8-B5nfF2W9k>

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## Miss a TRS Board Meeting? We've Got You Covered

We provide access to on-demand viewing of TRS board meeting webcasts. This allows you to watch previous presentations whenever you want!

Find references, website links and webcast archives that provide more information on board decisions at [https://www.trs.texas.gov/Pages/board\\_meeting\\_webcasts.aspx](https://www.trs.texas.gov/Pages/board_meeting_webcasts.aspx).

For key discussion highlights, you may also wish to read our board summaries, available after each meeting, at [https://www.trs.texas.gov/Pages/board\\_meeting\\_summary.aspx](https://www.trs.texas.gov/Pages/board_meeting_summary.aspx).



## 2023 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) Published

Now available, the [2023 ACFR](#) provides a complete picture of TRS operations for the past year. You can find the "high points" by reading through the Management Discussion and Analysis (MD&A) in the financial section. This document conforms with Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) accounting requirements and is also audited by the State Auditor.

