



Board of Directors

President

Michael J. Francis
Las Cruces

First Vice President

Lee Caruana
Ratón

Second Vice President

Barbara Castillo
Ratón

Treasurer

Michael D. Hansen
Albuquerque

RHCA Representative

Doug Crandall
Scottsdale

Immediate Past President

Joel W. Pafford
Ratón

Jason Quintana
Manzano

Executive Director

Miguel A. Gómez
Albuquerque

RPENM Albuquerque Office
4120 Cutler Ave NE
Albuquerque, NM 87110
(505) 280-8459
rpenm@rpenm.org

President's Report

By Michael J. Francis, President

Greetings from my masked and socially distanced podium. I stand before you metaphorically to attempt to let you know where we, as an organization, stand in these troubled times. In the past two years our organization and the world have experienced unprecedented events, which prevented our normal means of communication, that being newsletters, and in-person meetings. I will briefly address a few issues and our capable Executive Director, Miguel Gómez will discuss other matters later in the newsletter.

As you are aware, we have not been able to have an in-person meeting since the Spring of 2020 due to the global pandemic and statewide health guidelines. Your Board of Directors, however, continued to work on your behalf without endangering the health and safety of our members.

Specifically, regarding the Board of Directors, our former Executive Director and Board Member Gerald Chávez resigned last year due to family obligations and several other Board members' terms ended. The Board of Directors appointed two new members who expressed interest in joining the Board, however, after only a few months, both of those members resigned from the Board.

Also, in May of 2021, Joel Pafford's term as President of the Board of Directors ended and he had to step aside due to term limits. He still serves on the Board as the Immediate Past President and his advice and experience is valued. Last May, the Board held elections for officers and I was somehow elected to be your President. I have only been in this job for a short time, so please bear with me.

Lee Caruana was elected 1st Vice President and Barbara Castillo was elected as 2nd Vice President. Michael Hanson was re-elected Treasurer and Doug Crandall was reappointed as our Retiree Health Care Authority Representative. The Secretary position remains open.

The next election cycle for the Board of Directors is in 2023 and I look forward to welcoming new Board members in accordance with the normal process. Anyone interested in serving on the RPENM Board of Directors should keep an eye out for information later this year regarding that process.

In 2020, the PERA Board, at the recommendation of their former

Continues on page 2

Continued from page 1

Executive Director, took an unprecedented step and voted to stop collecting annual dues for RPENM. Our Board was faced with an existential crisis and voted to file a lawsuit as we believed the way this action was taken, clearly violated New Mexico's Open Meetings Act. That lawsuit was initially denied by a judge in Santa Fe and the RPENM Board of Directors strongly considered filing an appeal. Without the annual dues from our members, we only had limited funds to operate and the Board made the decision to greatly limit expenses, including delaying publishing and mailing newsletters. We continued to communicate via email and through the RPENM website.

After the outrageous and retaliatory decision of the former PERA Board, RPENM renewed our efforts to get a new and more responsive PERA Board and we are pleased to report that those efforts were highly successful. Many of the candidates we supported were elected and the PERA Board once again began working cooperatively with us on matters of mutual concern. They agreed to reinstate the annual dues deduction process and your annual dues for 2021 were deducted in November of last year. We understand this was unusual timing and may have surprised some members, but it was necessary to get our organization back on track. The normal dues deduction process will once again occur in July, beginning in 2022. The PERA Board's decision to reinstate the automatic deduction process negated the need for an appeal and there is now a formal agreement in place to continue this process that had been in place informally for many decades.

I also want to thank all of you for making calls and sending emails during the recent legislative session. Your efforts along with the personal efforts of our Executive Director, Miguel Gómez were successful in stopping a concerted effort by Representative Phelps Anderson to change the makeup of the PERA Board, from a board elected by all PERA members to a board appointed by politicians and unions.

An early attempt to support this effort was the focus of a meeting of the Investments & Pensions Oversight Committee this summer. Mr. Gómez and I formally presented on behalf of RPENM at that

meeting in Santa Fe. We worked closely with several members of the PERA Board, AFSCME retirees and legislators to raise significant concerns regarding this proposed change. This key legislative committee declined to endorse the proposal. Most of the committee appeared to agree with RPENM that such a proposal should not move forward until there was a thorough and complete analysis that looked at all potential concerns and outcomes for PERA, including unintended consequences.

I look forward to working with you and we hope to have an in-person annual meeting this Spring. Thank you again for your membership and commitment to RPENM.

Join, Revitalize or Start an RPENM Local Chapter

RPENM has a long history of supporting Local Chapters throughout New Mexico. Local Chapters are an important part of influencing legislators, building communities, and supporting each other. Please consider joining, revitalizing or starting a Local Chapter. Below is the contact information for some of the active Local Chapters. If you have an active Local Chapter that is not included or want help starting a Local Chapter, please contact RPENM Executive Director, Miguel Gómez at 505-280-8459 or via email at rpenm@rpenm.org.

Albuquerque/Bernalillo County/ Sandoval County/Valencia County

John Rivers

jrivers118@gmail.com

Las Cruces

Ken Erhard

575-639-0405

ke187@comcast.net

Ratón

Lee Caruana

575-445-9550

leecaruana13@gmail.com

2022 RPENM Annual Membership Meeting

The 2022 RPENM Annual Membership Meeting will be held on Saturday, June 11, 2022 from 9:00am - 12:00pm at the Albuquerque FOP lodge (4120 Cutler Ave., NE). Due to the pandemic and State health regulations we have not been able to have an in-person meeting for a couple of years, but everything looks good for an in-person meeting this year. Please attend this meeting to hear from the RPENM Board of Directors and Executive Director regarding RPENM legislative issues, PERA issues and more.

Please Provide Your Email Address

Our strength is our members and we continue to move to a process where all communication will be via email and/or through the RPENM website, rather than mailing traditional newsletters.

If we do not have your email address, please send us an email at rpenm@rpenm.org

Please provide your name and current email address.

Legislative Update and Other News

Although we thought RPENM was going to have an uneventful legislative session in 2022, it ended up being another hectic session. Before the start of the session, we worked closely with our legislative allies and the Governor not to address PERA board issues during this legislative session. Unfortunately, Representative Phelps Anderson, from Roswell, attempted to circumvent the normal process and introduce legislation (HB 51) that was not related to the State budget or dealing with fiscal matters and thus was not germane for a short legislative session.

In his latest attempt, Representative Anderson proposed changing the PERA board from a board elected by all PERA members, into a largely appointed board. In some cases, the appointments would be made by a couple of labor unions that only represent small numbers of current employees from the Albuquerque area. Other appointments would be

made by a few politicians. More alarming and disingenuous, when Representative Anderson's original bill (HB 51) was found not to be germane, he attempted to use an

unrelated bill dealing with the judicial and magistrate judges' retirement funds and hijack it for his PERA board scheme (HB 110).

We immediately asked RPENM members to call and email legislators and the Governor. Our members responded with dozens, if not hundreds of calls and emails and we quickly demonstrated the strength of RPENM and our partners. Thank you for your quick and strong opposition to both bills! Representative Anderson and his allies from organizations like, Think New Mexico engaged in a non-transparent, improper, and potentially illegal manner. Of course, we also believe this legislation is not good public policy. It is undemocratic, disenfranchises thousands of PERA members, places the entire PERA fund at greater risk and concentrates control of PERA in the hands of a small number of individuals.

This type of work and the need for a rapid response is one of the reasons we need email addresses from all RPENM members. If you have not done so already, please provide RPENM with your current email address.

RPENM also strongly supported legislation introduced by Senator Michael Padilla eliminating state taxes on social security benefits. There were some compromises made regarding income limits, but we are happy to report this initiative was passed as part of an omnibus tax bill. State taxes on social security earnings only kicks in on earnings of \$100,000 or more for single seniors and \$150,000 or more for married couples filing jointly.

We continue to work cooperatively with PERA on several issues, however, PERA is currently no longer providing RPENM with information regarding deceased RPENM members and thus we can no longer include the "In Memoriam" section in our newsletter. We are, however, sad to report the death of Charles Miller from Ratón, NM. Charles was a past president of RPENM and served on the RPENM Board of Directors as well as the PERA Board for many years.

Retired Public Employees of New Mexico

4120 Cutler Ave NE
Albuquerque, NM 87110

Phone: 505-280-8459

E-mail: rpenm@rpenm.org

www: www.rpenm.org



**BENEFITS
STILL FIT?**

TIME TO EXPAND YOUR COVERAGE.

As your life changes, consider some of these benefits and discounts from **RPENM & AMBA**:

- Dental & Vision Insurance
- Long-Term Care
- Home Health Care
- MASA (Air and Ground Ambulance Plan)
- Cancer, Heart & Stroke Policy
- Medicare Supplement Policy
- Easy Issue Life Policy
- Tax Deferred Annuity
- Hearing Benefits
- Discounts on Travel, Dining & more

Learn more: **1-877-556-4582**

myambabenefits.info/rpenm

RETIRED PUBLIC EMPLOYEES OF NEW MEXICO

