

# Retiring Right

A Publication of the Oklahoma Public Employees Retirement System

Judicial Edition

**URSJJ**  
newsletter

Summer 2004

## Legislative Summary Edition

### 2004 Legislative Session Brings Changes, Including Retiree COLA

The 2004 Regular Session of the Oklahoma Legislature produced several retirement-related changes to the plans administered by OPERS, including a cost of living adjustment (COLA) for most URSJJ retirees.

Senate Bill 1134 provides the COLA in the form of a 4% increase that applies to any person who was receiving benefits as of June 30, 2003 and who con-

tinues to receive benefits on or after July 1, 2004. Retirees will see this increase with their July 2004 benefit payment, which is sent or deposited the last working day of July.

The bill also provides a COLA to OPERS retirees ranging from 2.5% to 4.5%, depending on the retiree's years of service and amount of monthly benefit.

### Survivor Benefits – Past and Present

Beginning October 1, 2004, certain surviving spouses of deceased justices or judges are eligible for additional monthly survivor benefits if specific conditions are met. This increase applies only if the justice or judge died or retired on or after July 1, 1999. The change is in response a situation created in 1999 when URSJJ survivor coverage rules changed.

Effective July 1, 1999, spousal survivor benefit cov-

erage became mandatory for all married URSJJ members. Many elected this coverage voluntarily prior to that time – so, essentially, others were suddenly getting the same coverage for less cost. Now in 2004, Senate Bill 1134 provides a benefit increase to those who paid the voluntary contributions before July 1, 1999. The longer the contributions were paid, the higher the percentage increase will be. (See below)

Voluntary Survivor Benefits Paid Before July 1, 1999	Increase*	Total Benefit
1 month – 9 years, 11 months	+5%	55%
10 years – 19 years, 11 months	+10%	60%
20 years +	+15%	65%

## Disability Retirement Salary Cap Raised from 70% to 100% of Salary

Formerly the disability retirement benefit for a justice or judge could not exceed 70% of final average salary. Under the amendment, if the justice or judge incurs a disability after June 30, 2004, his or her retirement disability compensation is not to exceed 100% of the average monthly salary for the highest 3 years of active service.

## Study of Contribution Rates to Provide for Survivor Benefits

OPERS is required to conduct a study of restructuring contribution rates to provide for survivor benefits in the URSJJ. The study is due to the Legislature no later than December 1, 2004.

## Salary Cap Raised from 72.5% to 100% on Highest 3 Years Salary

Retirement benefits for members of URSJJ will now be calculated based on the highest 3 years of salary during active service. A retired justice or judge will now receive a monthly benefit up to 100% of his or her average monthly salary based on the highest 3 years of service.

## Right of Offset

The Board may offset from any benefits payable to a member or beneficiary, for amounts owed from judgments or settlements involving a crime against the System, fraud or breach of fiduciary obligation to the System, or for overpayments by the System to a member or beneficiary. Such offsets must be consistent with the Internal Revenue Code and will apply to any benefit otherwise payable to the member or beneficiary from any Plan administered by the Board.

## Why Should I Update My Beneficiary?

Beneficiary designations are important. Like many, you may have forgotten to update your designation after experiencing a life-changing event. The beneficiary you named when you were hired may not be the same person you would want benefits paid to today. Remember, divorce voids the designation of a spouse as beneficiary.

You should consider updating your beneficiaries if you have recently experienced:

- The birth of a child;
- A marriage;
- A divorce; or,
- A death in your family.

Updating your beneficiary is easy. All you need to do is complete and submit a Designation of Beneficiary form. You can request one by calling us at (405) 858-6737 or (800) 733-9008.

Updating your beneficiary with URSJJ doesn't change the designation of your SoonerSave beneficiaries or your life insurance beneficiaries with OSEEGIB. These are separate designations requiring different forms.

## How Do I Update My SoonerSave Beneficiary?

To update your SoonerSave Deferred Compensation beneficiaries, complete SoonerSave's Beneficiary Change form. Use it to change beneficiaries for either the 457 or the 401(a) Plan or both. It's available at [www.soonersave.com](http://www.soonersave.com) or by calling the SoonerSave offices at (405) 858-6781 or (800) 733-9008.

## COLA Assumption in Actuarial Report

The Board of Trustees must include a cost of living adjustment assumption in its annual actuarial report. (The Board has been doing this by policy for several years.)

## Administration Clean-Up Provisions

The Oklahoma Public Employees Retirement System (OPERS) is responsible for the administration of URSJJ and shall have the powers and duties to effectively administer the Plan. The Board is responsible for the policies and rules, in accordance with the Administrative Procedures Act, necessary to administer URSJJ. All decisions of the Board as to questions of fact are final, subject only to the right of judicial review, or in cases of fraud.

## Final Benefit Check to the Estate of Members

The final benefit check issued in the month a retired member dies, if not already paid to the member, shall be paid to the member's estate or to the member's beneficiary if there is no estate.

## Employer Contribution Deadline & Penalty

All participating employers must remit retirement contributions to OPERS monthly.

The Administrative Director of the Courts is to submit to the System all required retirement contributions that are due on a monthly basis. The documentation is due and must be received by the System on or before the 15th day of the month following the month for which the contributions are payable.

If the contributions information is over 30 days late, they are subject to a monthly late charge of 1.5%.

## Falsifying Record a Crime

Any person falsifying a record that is necessary to the intent of the URSJJ Retirement Act is guilty of a misdemeanor.

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## URSJJ/OPERS has Moved

In April, OPERS moved its office quarters to the 4th floor of the Paragon Building at 5801 N. Broadway Extension in Oklahoma City.

The new location is only accessible via Robinson Street. Visitors are advised to use the following route: exit Broadway Extension on N.W. 63rd Street; travel one block west to Robinson; turn south on Robinson and continue to the Paragon Building.

The OPERS mailing address and telephone numbers did not change and continue to be:

**P.O. Box 53007**  
**Oklahoma City, OK 73152**  
**(405) 858-6737**  
**(800) 733-9008**





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