

APRIL 2022

# TRS NEWS



MEMBER  
EDITION



THE NEWSLETTER of the TEACHER RETIREMENT SYSTEM of TEXAS

## TRS-ActiveCare Moves to Regional Rates



### Local health care. Texas-sized benefits.

TRS knows health care is personal, not one-size-fits-all. It changes as we age, shift lifestyles or grow our families. It can even change depending on where we live. And just like gas or groceries, the cost of health care varies from place to place. This is why TRS is moving to regional rating – to ensure your rates and benefits are competitive in your area.

On Sept. 1, 2022, your TRS-ActiveCare rates will reflect where you live. The rates are set every April by the TRS Board of Trustees. Your materials about rates and benefits for the 2022-23 plan year will be available soon after. *(continued on page 2)*

## TRS Board Selects Permanent Ombuds



**Lori LaBrie**  
TRS Ombuds

The TRS Board of Trustees selected the agency's permanent Ombudsman (Ombuds) at the September 2021 board meeting.

We'd like to welcome **Ms. Lori LaBrie**! She joins TRS with 21 years of experience serving as an Ombuds. She brings member-focused orientation to her work and has demonstrated success with developing and creating goals and pathways that result in success for stakeholders.

The creation of the Ombuds role at TRS is in response to actions from the 87<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative session and the resulting Sunset Law, HB 1585. Since June 2021, TRS has had an interim Ombuds serving until a permanent Ombuds could be selected.

The Ombuds assists members and retirees by:

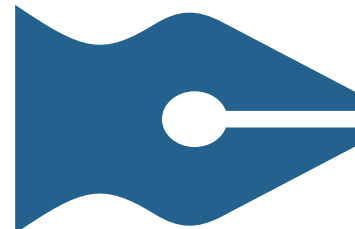
- **Listening to a member's concern** or complaint regarding a process or result they are unsatisfied with, or are concerned that the information received is incorrect, and providing information or assistance.
- **Making referrals** to appropriate TRS resources or departments.
- **Providing information** or assistance with researching a concern or issue, if normal channels were unable to resolve the item.
- **Conducting investigations** in coordination with business departments in response to a member's concern or complaint.
- **Escalating or reporting** complaints to the board consistent with privacy laws and rules.
- **Reviewing and analyzing** trends in concerns and complaints.

*(continued on page 3)*



# Memo to Members

from  
Executive Director  
Brian K. Guthrie



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## Greetings to our active members,

We hope you're enjoying everything springtime has to offer! The start of the new season brings fresh and new beginnings for us all. As we look ahead to brighter, warmer days, there are things you may want to refresh yourself on as timing can be important when it comes to taking advantage of your TRS benefits. Depending where you are in your career, this could be timelines related to planning for retirement; reviewing your tax withholding preferences; exploring the one-time reenrollment opportunity for TRS-Care Medicare; or simply staying up to date on all things TRS through our email subscription service. Explore TRS information carefully and to the fullest – to help you get the most out of your benefits.

As always, we work to provide several ways for you to stay up to date on TRS news, including our website, social media feeds and newsletters. You can also find links to the TRS board meeting webcasts and meeting materials at [www.trs.texas.gov](http://www.trs.texas.gov).

Take care,  
Brian

## TRS-ActiveCare Moves to Regional Rates *(continued from page 1)*

### TRS-ActiveCare Remains Stable and Texas Strong

The only change regional rating makes to your plan is how it's priced. You can still access 90% of Texas hospitals and the network with the most doctors in Texas. And you don't need to limit where you seek care. If you work in Region 1 but want to see a doctor in Region 2, you can!

### How Regions Were Determined

Regions were set by the 20 Education Service Centers (ESCs) in Texas. Your rate will be based on the ESC your employer is in. If you don't know which ESC that is, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has a [search tool to help](#) you find it.

### Why Health Care Costs Vary Across Regions

The main reasons health care costs are different from place to place are:

- Demographics of the local population
- Type of care needed by the population
- Number of doctors and hospitals in your area
- How much local providers and hospitals charge for medical services

For example, if your region has a high rate of chemotherapy treatments, this could make the costs higher than a region where that service isn't as common.

### Personal, Simple Health Care

Your TRS-ActiveCare benefits customize health care to your needs and help remove confusing barriers. You have access to things like:

- 24/7 customer service through Personal Health Guides
- Health advocates who can work directly with your doctors
- One-on-one coaching to help you reach wellness goals
- Copay plans so you pay a set amount for your medical visits
- Zero-to-low-cost telemedicine for care anytime, anywhere
- And more!

### Learn More

This is a big change, and we know you may have questions.

Visit [www.trs.texas.gov/regional-rates](http://www.trs.texas.gov/regional-rates) for more information and plan materials.

## TRS Board Selects Permanent Ombuds *(continued from page 1)*

You may be wondering when the appropriate time is to contact the Ombuds. The Ombuds may be contacted when a member or retiree has been unable to obtain information or is dissatisfied with the customer service received through normal TRS channels. The Ombuds serves as an escalated resource as opposed to a first point of contact. For more information and ways to contact, please visit the [Office of the Ombuds](#) webpage.

### Who to Contact and When

We're committed to achieving the highest levels of customer satisfaction by delivering services consistent with our mission and in a manner that actively encourages honesty, integrity and ethical behavior among our employees.

With that commitment and mission in mind, we welcome input and have a number of offices and departments to help address your requests, questions or concerns. Please refer to the table below to determine which area you should reach out to and when.

Area of Interest	Description of Service	Who to Contact
General Questions and Comments	General comments and questions about TRS including those regarding member benefits, TRS website, other suggested improvements, and more.	Email general questions and comments to <a href="mailto:comments@trs.texas.gov">comments@trs.texas.gov</a> .
Customer Service Center	Our benefit counselors are available 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Friday to answer questions about your member benefits. Automated information is available day or night, seven days a week.	Call 1-800-223-8778. Low-peak days are Wednesdays and Thursdays.
TRS Health Customer Service	Questions about TRS-ActiveCare and TRS-Care.	For TRS-Care eligibility and enrollment, call TRS at 1-888-237-6762. For questions about your plan's medical or pharmacy benefits, it's best to <a href="#">contact the administrator of those benefits</a> .
How to Submit a Complaint	A complaint is a communication that involves a dissatisfaction with TRS' actions or inaction of service.	Notify us of your issue through our <a href="#">Compact with Texans</a> webpage or the <a href="#">Ombuds Office</a> .
Other Helpful Contact Information	This includes fax information and more.	Visit the <a href="#">Contact Us</a> webpage.

## MyTRS Updates Coming Soon



As you know, we've been working to update the systems, business processes and technologies we use to administer our pension and insurance programs. As a member, you will also have improvements to customer service options to look forward to.

If you are a *MyTRS* user, you will soon notice a new look and feel to the online portal. The new *MyTRS* experience will offer enhancements including web self-service options, helpful resources and tools, the ability to view and update your member account information in real time, and more.

At TRS, the security and safety of our members and their sensitive information remain a top priority. It's now more important than ever to make sure strong security measures are in place so that your information remains private. The upgraded system allows us to do just that.

**Please note, the first time you visit the new *MyTRS*, you must establish your online account by creating a new account which will verify your status as a TRS member.**

For a brief demonstration of the *MyTRS* portal, tune in to the [archived presentation](#) (timestamp 1:24:35) from the February TRS board meeting. Continue to watch for more resources in future newsletters and on our [website](#).

Thank you for your patience as we all transition to using the new systems and technologies.

# Planning for Retirement



The TRS retirement plan is a defined benefit plan for eligible employees of public school employers. Upon eligibility, you can receive a monthly annuity payment for life. As a member, understanding your benefits and planning for retirement are some of the most important things you can do to secure your future.

Not sure where to start? As you consider retirement, we encourage you to check out some of the helpful resources available to you.

## Planning for Retirement Timeline

Dive in to the [Planning for Retirement timeline](#)! It will help you create an action plan; then you'll be able to mark your calendar for important deadlines. Once you've determined your retirement date, follow the steps in the timeline to ensure a successful transition to retirement.

## Life Event Resource Kit

Over time, you will experience many personal and professional life events. We're here to help you navigate these situations by explaining decisions and steps you may need to take for various milestones. Explore the [Life Event Resource Kit](#) as you move throughout the course of your career and into retirement. Here, you will find useful instructions, videos, forms, contacts, and more for all stages of your career and life.

## Pillars of a Secure Retirement

There are three pillars used to describe your retirement savings. A secure retirement would depend on two (or in some cases three) of those pillars – **your TRS pension, your personal savings and social security**. Remember, your income in retirement is a joint responsibility

between you and TRS. [Read more about the three pillars](#) so you know what it takes to be on track for a financially secure retirement.

## Explore the TRS-Care Health Plans

TRS-Care is the health care program for retired public-school employees. It features two plans: TRS-Care Standard for those not eligible for Medicare, and TRS-Care Medicare for Medicare-eligible participants. Even if you were not enrolled in TRS-ActiveCare, you can still enroll in either of these plans if you're eligible. Visit the [TRS-Care resource page](#) to learn more about how TRS-Care is the care you can count on.

## More Resources Available to You

[TRS Annual Statement](#)

[MyTRS Online](#)

[Statewide Retirement Sessions](#)

[In-Person Office Visits](#) (conducted in Austin) and [Virtual Office Visits](#)

[Member Education Videos](#)

[Financial Awareness Videos](#)

[Online TRS Tier Placement Map](#) and [Retirement Eligibility Requirements](#)

[TRS Publications](#)





# Location Set for TRS El Paso Regional Office

As shared in our [August 2021 issue of TRS News](#), TRS received funding for a regional office in El Paso, Texas.

After exploring next steps, we're pleased to announce the agency has determined the site for the TRS El Paso Regional Office. The office will be located within the Region 19 Education Service Center. As part of the services, we will provide on-site office visit counselors for members. We look forward to better serving members in this area and reaching them closer to where they live.

TRS expects to open the regional office and begin serving our members at the El Paso location sometime in fall 2022. If data suggests the office is valuable to TRS members, TRS will present options to stakeholders to consider establishing additional regional offices in strategic locations across Texas during the 2024-25 biennium.

Watch for more information in future newsletters on our website. You can also tune in to future board webcasts to follow the discussion. Find links to webcasts and all meeting materials at [www.trs.texas.gov](http://www.trs.texas.gov).



## Mark Your Calendar!

### Group Office Visits Planned in Austin

This May, TRS will conduct **Group Office Visit Sessions at the TRS building in Austin**. These sessions will be conducted for small groups of members considering retirement on or before **Jan. 31, 2023**.

- We will conduct two sessions (9 a.m. and 2 p.m.) on each day listed on the schedule below.
- Each session is limited to 10 members.
- Members may register by calling TRS at 1-800-223-8778 and speaking with a benefit counselor. Our benefit counselors are available for calls from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. [Visit our website for more information on the best times to call.](#)

Group Office Visits	
Session Date	Deadline to Register
Tuesday, May 3, 2022	April 25, 2022
Wednesday, May 4, 2022	April 26, 2022
Thursday, May 5, 2022	April 27, 2022

## New! Coming Soon: Retirement Forms Sessions

Have you already received your TRS retirement packet and are looking for help completing the required forms? We're happy to announce we'll soon be offering **virtual Retirement Forms Sessions** to help review and complete your paperwork.

In addition to saving time and travel, you can benefit from attending these sessions in several ways. TRS staff members will present all required retirement forms, explain how to complete them and answer all your questions.

If you plan to retire within the next year, you are encouraged to attend a Retirement Forms Session.

Please visit the [Retirement Sessions](#) page on the TRS website for more details as they are announced.

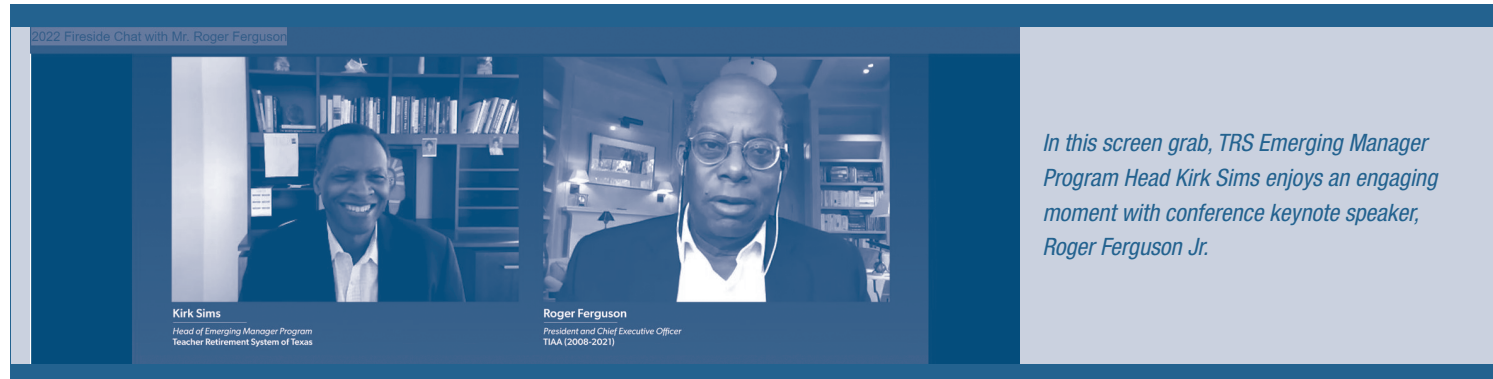
***We hope to see you at a session soon!***

## 2021 Popular Annual Financial Report (PAFR) Available on TRS Website

TRS' summary of its 2021 *Annual Comprehensive Financial Report* (ACFR) is now available online.

The *Popular Annual Financial Report* (PAFR) breaks down and highlights the crucial financial information otherwise presented in our more detailed ACFR. The summary features easy-to-read charts, graphs and other key information relating to the TRS pension fund and health care programs. To view the [2021 PAFR](#), visit the Publications page on the TRS website.

# IMD Stages Second Annual Virtual Emerging Manager (EM) Conference



The new year brought continued, strong interest in TRS' annual conference dedicated to connecting young investment management companies with allocators like TRS looking to place fund dollars where they can do the best for you, our members, over time.

TRS and Texas' Employees Retirement System (ERS) jointly hosted the second virtual EM Conference on Jan. 19. The EM Team along with sponsors Grosvenor Capital Management and RockCreek, put on another all-virtual outstanding event.

*"The sheer size of this annual event is staggering. TRS was able to increase the number of allocators who participated in 2022 compared to last year's conference,"* said TRS Emerging Manager Program Head **Kirk Sims**.

The conference staged **3,072** meetings with potential managers. Contrast that against the 2,100 booked in 2021 and it's clear how the event continues to scale. In all, 2,220 participants attended along with 65 allocators.

The day was highlighted by a conversation with **Roger Ferguson Jr.**, former Federal Reserve vice chair and recently retired CEO of the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America-College

Retirement Equities Fund (TIAA-CREF), a financial services provider in the academic and other fields.

The event also featured numerous panel discussions and a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) presentation by **Dr. Derrick Gay**, a Diversity and Inclusion strategist and university lecturer who has led efforts in over 800 organizations around the world. Dr. Gay discussed the importance of firms reframing diversity in ways that includes all individuals, while distinguishing representation from inclusion. These efforts, he argued, must support and drive business outcomes.

*"Companies must reframe DEI from a forced and polarizing series of events and workshops to a meaningful strategy that includes hiring and retaining the best talent representative of the entire talent pool, fostering an inclusive culture where that best talent thrives, and leveraging diversity as a competitive advantage."*

To learn more about what your TRS EM Program team does for members, please go to this web link: [https://www.trs.texas.gov/Pages/investment\\_team\\_emerging\\_managers.aspx](https://www.trs.texas.gov/Pages/investment_team_emerging_managers.aspx). You may also find the latest EM Program presentation to the TRS Board of Trustees at their February meeting online at the web link [here](#). See from page 317.



## 2021 Actuarial Valuation Report Available Online

The [2021 Actuarial Valuation Report](#) (as of Aug. 31, 2021) for the pension fund is now available.

The primary purpose of this report is to determine the adequacy of the statutory contribution rates. This is done by measuring changes in the funding period, describing the system's current financial condition, and analyzing changes in its condition. Valuations are prepared at the end of each fiscal year.

You can find the report on the Publications page of the TRS website.

# Beware of TRS Imposters

Some members and retirees have contacted TRS to ask whether TRS employees or representatives initiate meetings with members — whether at home or online — to discuss TRS benefits.

The answer is no – TRS staff members and representatives do not go to members' and retirees' homes or offices. If someone asks to meet with you in your home, that person does not represent TRS. TRS also does not initiate meetings with members by sending an electronic request such as an email or Zoom meeting request. TRS will only meet with a member if the member requests to schedule an appointment by calling TRS Member Services.

Please note that some organizations use names that sound like TRS and solicit TRS members and retirees for the purpose of offering supplemental insurance or investment services. These vendors may send you postcards and email messages. They may also represent that they work with TRS benefits or can advise you regarding TRS benefits and the retirement process. These communications are often sent by private, for-profit groups that may wish to sell you something or promise printouts containing tax or retirement information for those who respond.

Again, TRS does not initiate contact with you to offer retirement services or promise to advise you regarding the best retirement strategy for you. Please carefully review the materials these solicitors provide before responding. Respond to the solicitors only if you believe their information or services would be to your advantage and you do not mind receiving follow-up information. Information about your potential retirement benefits from TRS is available to you at no cost from TRS.



## Here are some tips you may wish to follow with any unsolicited vendors:

- Carefully review the materials these solicitors provide before responding.
- Respond to the solicitors only if you believe their information or services would be to your advantage and you do not mind receiving follow-up information.
- Do not divulge personal or financial information unless you have an established business relationship with the requestor or are certain of the trustworthiness of the representative.
- Before clicking on a link in an unsolicited email or providing personal information to any requestor, consider how it may be used or misused, including what assurances you have received that your information will be confidentially maintained rather than sold. Some links embedded in emails from unknown senders are used to mine data from your personal computer.
- As with any unsolicited telephone calls, emails, or in-person contact, use caution providing information and/or access to your home.



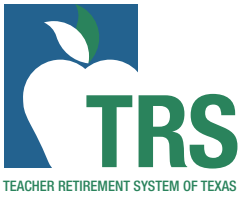
## Miss a TRS Board Meeting? We've Got You Covered

Did you miss a previous TRS board meeting or do you want to revisit a specific discussion?

We provide access to on-demand viewing of 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).



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When you sign up, you can choose what topics you would like to receive emails about. Topics include new publications, notices of new videos and board meeting webcasts, legislative announcements, and more. Plus, this service is easy to use and is open to anyone, not just TRS members and retirees.

To sign up, visit the TRS website homepage and click on [Subscribe!](#) at the top of the page. There's also an easy-to-find icon of an envelope with the word [Subscribe!](#) at the bottom of the page. The process takes minutes and there are no passwords to remember.

