

DECEMBER 2018

# TRS NEWS



MEMBER  
EDITION



THE NEWSLETTER of the TEACHER RETIREMENT SYSTEM of TEXAS

## TRS Annual Statements Mailed

It's just about time for you to receive your TRS annual statement. TRS began preparing annual statements in November, and all statements should have been mailed before Dec. 1, 2018. If your friend receives theirs before or after you do, don't worry; we are mailing a statement to all active TRS members. These statements contain member contribution information pertaining to the recently completed 2017-18 school year as well as information regarding the total accumulated contributions in your member account and the amount of service credit recognized by TRS. Please review your statement carefully.

### RETIREMENT ESTIMATE MISSING OR DOES NOT INCLUDE CORRECT COMPENSATION

– If you met age and service requirements for retirement, your annual statement included an unaudited estimate of your retirement benefits. However, if you received an estimate prepared by TRS within the previous 12 months, you may not have received an estimate on your statement. If your statement does not include an estimate of your retirement benefits, you may find it helpful to log in to your *MyTRS* account and use the Retirement Estimate Calculator. The calculator is featured in the *MyTRS* portion of the website. If you were a member prior to September 2017, you can register for *MyTRS* via the TRS website at [www.trs.texas.gov](http://www.trs.texas.gov). Click on the *MyTRS* link at the top of the TRS homepage and follow the instructions for registering.

(continued on page 7)

## TRS Launches New Email Subscription Service, Subscribe!

For several years, TRS participants have signed up to receive email notices of publications and other news through the *MyTRS* members' only portal; however, TRS has launched a new subscription service that takes the subscription process out of the portal and onto the TRS website. Now, *anyone*, not just TRS members, can register. The new service is called TRS Email Subscriptions or simply put, *Subscribe!*

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 is easy to navigate. You'll enter your email address, and first and last name. There are no passwords to remember. You may subscribe to our most widely-read publications such as the *TRS News* and *The Pulse*, notice of board meetings and webcasts, legislative announcements, and more.

(continued on page 3)

## Next Legislative Session Begins in January

The 86<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature will convene on Jan. 8, 2019. As in the past, bills under consideration may affect TRS programs and operations. While the fate of many bills may not be known until June, TRS members planning to retire in 2019 may want to know about proposed legislation.

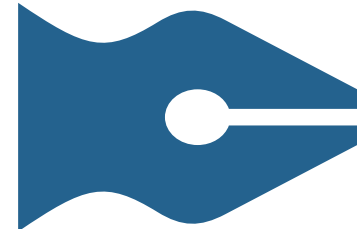
After the session begins, detailed information on bills may be obtained by calling the Legislative Reference Library's Bill Status Information Office at its toll-free number (1-877-824-7038). Please have the number or specific topic of the bill that interests you, as it will help library staff members locate the information you are seeking. You will also be able to view proposed legislation through the library's website at [www.lrl.texas.gov](http://www.lrl.texas.gov) or by visiting the Texas Legislature's website at [www.capitol.texas.gov](http://www.capitol.texas.gov).

Following each legislative session, TRS informs members of significant changes and new laws that may impact their TRS benefits or eligibility for benefits. Watch for updates published in future *TRS News* editions located on the TRS website, [www.trs.texas.gov](http://www.trs.texas.gov). Be sure to also like us on Facebook so that you can be reminded of important information after the session concludes in early June. Please know that while TRS strives to keep you informed of the impact of adopted legislation on TRS and the benefits administered by TRS, TRS is not allowed to advocate regarding legislative changes.



# Memo to Members

from  
Executive Director  
Brian K. Guthrie



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Executive Director

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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.

As we look ahead to a new year, we have some exciting news to share about enhancements to improve customer service and communications with you — our members — who remain TRS' primary focus. Along with issuing membership cards, TRS has launched a new automated telephone system. Learn about the new call center software and what to expect when you call us on page three.

In this issue, we're also announcing the official launch of the new TRS Email Subscription service called *Subscribe!* There's no need to log in to the *MyTRS* portal in order to subscribe to these emails. The service can be accessed directly from the TRS website and, for the first time, *anyone* interested in advance notice of publications, announcements, board meetings/webcasts, and more, can subscribe. See the full article on the front page of this issue.

As a reminder, the 86<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature will convene on Jan. 8, 2019. As in the past, bills under consideration may affect TRS programs and operations. While the fate of many bills may not be known until June, we understand many of you are very interested in any legislation involving our health care programs and other matters. To learn how to stay informed this session, please refer to our article on page one.

It's the time of the year for our members to receive their TRS Annual Statement of Account. All members will receive an annual statement by mail. If you have not already received it, we ask for your patience. Read more in the article on page one.

**Please note:** TRS no longer sends email notice of annual statements.

Are you planning to retire, and considering employment with a TRS-covered employer after you retire? If so, take some time to plan ahead and review the *Employment After Retirement (EAR)* booklet on the TRS website. Also, we're pleased to announce the release of new member education videos — *Working After Service Retirement (Part One and Part Two)*. Find out how to access both on pages five and six.

For many of us, it may seem that there's not much we can do about rising health care costs; however, there are actually many tools you can use to plan and take advantage of extra savings. Read about tips to make the most of your TRS-ActiveCare health benefits on page three.

Reminder: The Jan. 21, 2019 deadline is approaching for TRS to accept nominations for eligible members to qualify as candidates for the election of the Public School District Employee position on the TRS Board of Trustees. The term begins as early as Sept. 1, 2019 and ends Aug. 31, 2025. Read all about the full election process on page seven.

We bid a sad farewell to our retiring Deputy Director, Ken Welch. He has served in various positions with Texas state government for 38 years, 10 of those here at TRS. His vast knowledge of agency operations, commitment to the educators and children of Texas, and his sense of humor will be greatly missed by all of us. Happy trails, Ken.

**Finally, from all of us at TRS, we hope you are having a wonderful holiday season with family and friends, and best wishes for an even better new year!**

# Tips to Make the Most of Your TRS-ActiveCare Health Benefits



## USE AETNA COST ESTIMATOR TO BUDGET HEALTH CARE

Use the online cost estimator on Aetna Navigator to see the average price of the 500 most common medical procedures. This tool can help you compare prices among facilities or providers and help you be better financially prepared. Keep in mind, the tool is useful for planned procedures – but not necessarily for emergency care, as prices can vary widely.

To use the Aetna cost estimator:

- Visit [www.trsactivecareaetna.com](http://www.trsactivecareaetna.com)
- Click on Aetna Navigator in the right-hand tool bar
- Log in to Aetna Navigator (or register for first-time users)
- Explore prices by searching for health care providers or by procedure

## ADDED SAVINGS AND VALUE WITH QUEST DIAGNOSTICS

You can take advantage of extra savings when you need a lab test. Quest Diagnostics has agreed to lower rates for TRS participants. That helps you save on out-of-pocket costs.

In addition to savings, Quest Diagnostics gives you access to:

- Locations near where you live and work
- Appointment scheduling online or by phone
- Email reminders to help you keep track of your appointments
- Saturday hours, as well as extended hours at many locations
- Free courier service to pick up lab work from most doctors' offices

*(continued from page 1)*

## TRS Launches New Email Subscription Service, Subscribe!

As another new feature, you may also subscribe to receive news from other agencies. You may choose as few or as many subscriptions as you like. You may easily unsubscribe at any time.

Please note: If you are currently signed up for *MyTRS* Email Subscriptions, you **do not** have to resubscribe for the new service. Your subscriptions will be automatically transferred. However, you may be interested in adding some of the new options, so we urge you to check them out.

Subscribe! is the latest development in a continuing effort to keep you, our members, up to date on important TRS information. To make the sign up process even easier, we've created a brief, how-to video located on the homepage of the [TRS website](#).



## A New Way to Communicate with Members

We are pleased to announce that, earlier this summer, we issued official TRS Membership Cards to participants. Now that you have received your membership card by mail, you will find that your card can be a safe and handy resource when contacting our Telephone Counseling Center. Along with issuing membership cards, TRS launched a new automated telephone system. Here's what to expect:

- When you call TRS, please be ready to provide personal information such as your Participant Identification (PID) number (found on your membership card), social security number, and date of birth.
- If you call from a telephone number that is currently on file with TRS, you will be able to easily authenticate your identity by providing the last four digits of your social security number.
- If you call from a telephone number that is not currently on file with TRS, you will be asked to provide personal information, including your eight digit PID, to authenticate your identity.
- There will no longer be a need to set up and maintain a Personal Identification Number (PIN).

In addition, our new call center software provides members with interactive, voice response self-service options available any time of the day or night. For TRS staff, the software will enable the contact center to operate more efficiently, increase the quality of customer service, and ensure focus on TRS members.

*A friendly reminder: Please keep your membership card handy as this will allow us to serve you more efficiently and quickly over the phone.*



# Planning for Retirement – What to Consider Beforehand

Retiring can be less stressful if you plan ahead. To assist you, the TRS website has information that not only helps you decide the right time for you to retire, but also guides you in selecting the retirement option that best serves your needs.

To view information that will help you plan your retirement, click on “Active Members” in the top blue bar of the TRS website. Then click on “Planning Your Retirement” to find the following information:

**Eligibility Requirements** – Describes TRS retirement eligibility requirements for normal-age and early-age service retirements and disability retirements.

**Things to do Before Retirement** – If you are within one year of retirement, this information will help you prepare for a smooth transition to retirement.

**Annuity Payment Options** – Explains the TRS standard annuity as well as five optional forms of annuities available from TRS.

**Checklist for Retiring Members** – After you have requested and received your retirement packet, this checklist may be useful to ensure that you have completed the retirement application process.

**Retirement Deadlines Chart** – Provides information regarding the date your employment must be terminated, the deadline for filing your retirement application and the deadline for purchase of additional service credit. This chart allows you to submit your paperwork up to two months after your retirement date. However, in order to improve your ability to receive your first payment on time, you should submit all required paperwork as early as possible. TRS can accept your paperwork as early as twelve months prior to your retirement date.

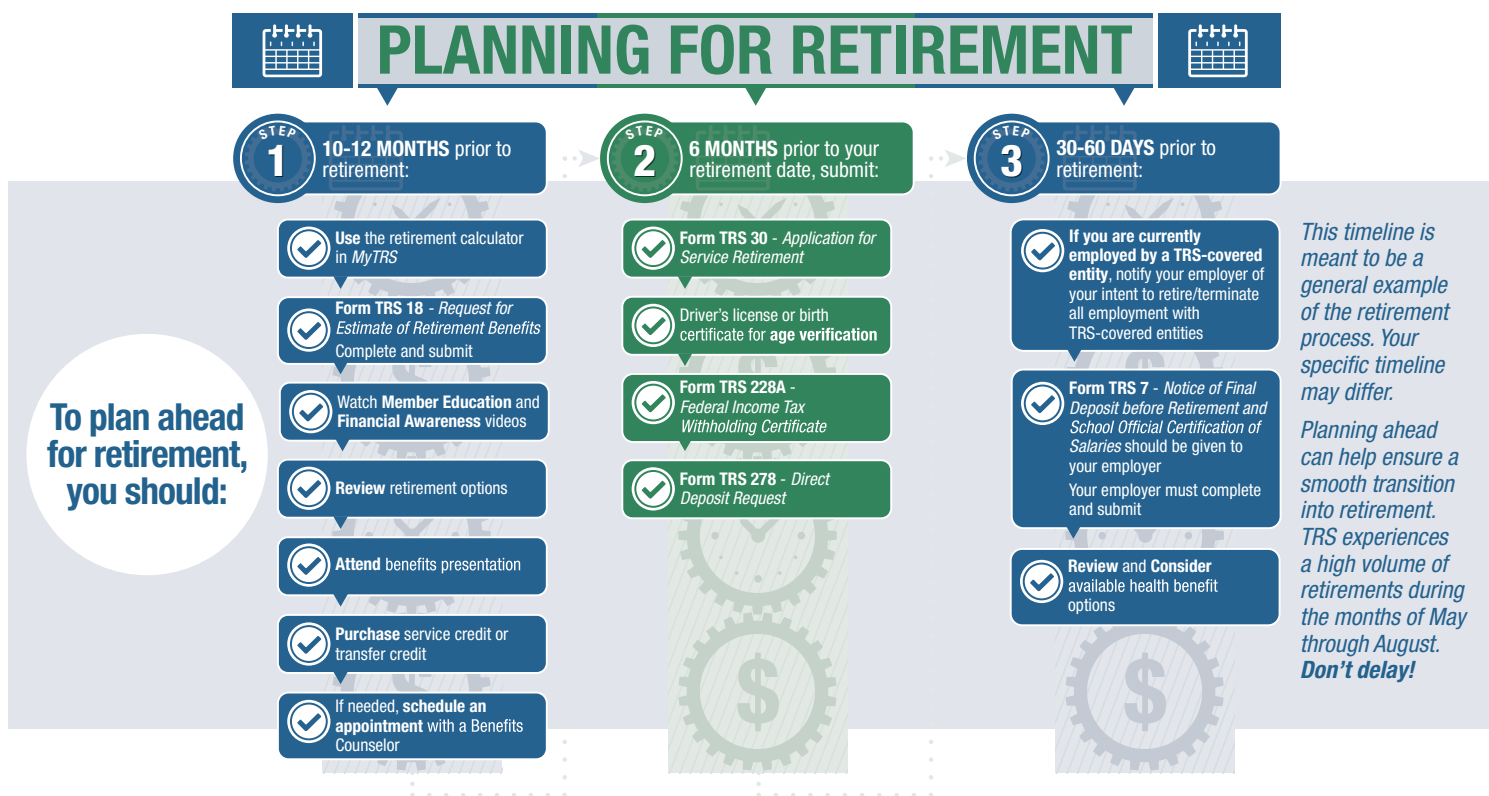
**Retirement Estimate Calculator** – If you were a member prior to September 2017, you can register for *MyTRS* via the TRS website, and use this tool to help you estimate your retirement annuity. TRS Online

Calculator automatically imports current data from your TRS computer records such as your years of service credit, highest reported salaries, etc. for your use in estimating the amount of your retirement benefit.

**Withholding Calculator** – This calculator is for estimating the amount of federal income tax to be withheld from your annuity. You can enter your gross annuity, select your marital status, and enter the number of exemptions and other deductions you’d like used in estimating your withholding. This calculator does not require a User ID or password. If you have already retired and if you have a *MyTRS* User ID and password, you may also log in to *MyTRS* to estimate change in your withholding. The *MyTRS* calculator imports the current annuity and withholding elections from your TRS account. You can modify your information for tax withholding purposes such as your marital status, the number of exemptions and other deductions to estimate changes in your withholding.

**Request for Estimate of Retirement Benefits** – Allows you to electronically submit your request and information needed to have TRS prepare a retirement estimate. Submitting your request electronically is an alternative to completing the *Request for Estimate of Retirement Benefits* form (TRS 18) by hand and sending the form to TRS at 1000 Red River St., Austin, TX 78701-2698.

For additional information, please refer to the *TRS Benefits Handbook*, located on the website’s homepage ([www.trs.texas.gov](http://www.trs.texas.gov)).



# Employment AFTER Retirement

## What's important to know and when!

Are you planning to retire, and considering employment with a TRS-covered employer after you retire? If so, take some time to plan ahead and review the *Employment After Retirement* (EAR) booklet on the [Publications](#) page of the TRS website. Additionally, TRS recently released two videos – *Working After Service Retirement (Part One and Part Two)* – that answer some of our members' and retirees' most common questions about returning to work after a service retirement. Watch videos in our Member Education Video Series today by visiting the [TRS Member Education Videos](#) page on the TRS website, or subscribe to our YouTube channel [TRSoTexas](#).

TRS laws and rules that pertain to working for a TRS-covered employer or a third-party entity providing personnel to a TRS-covered employer are different. The different laws and rules are based on:

- 1) The date you retired, **and**
- 2) Whether or not you retired under Service Retirement or Disability Retirement.



## KEY REMINDERS

### DON'T REVOKE YOUR RETIREMENT

If you go back to work — any kind of work, even working as a substitute or volunteering — for a TRS-covered employer in the calendar month following your retirement (or within two months following your retirement if you worked into June but retired in May), you can actually **REVOKE** your retirement. You can also revoke your retirement by contracting too soon to return to work. If this happens, you'll be required to resubmit your paperwork.

If you revoke your retirement, you forfeit any benefits paid to you because you were not eligible for any benefits. You are required to pay back all of your annuities, any Partial Lump Sum Option (PLSO) or Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP) payments, and health benefit payments made by TRS-Care on your behalf or on behalf of your dependents. If you can't pay back the amount owed, TRS must permanently reduce your monthly benefit by an actuarial reduction to cover the benefits you were not eligible to receive.

These situations and more are covered in the EAR booklet.

### DON'T FORFEIT AN ANNUITY PAYMENT

If you work more than allowed, you will lose your annuity for each month that you exceed the limits.

If you retired after Jan. 1, 2011 and you have not had a 12 full, consecutive-calendar-month break in service from any type of work for all TRS-covered employers, you are limited to working no more than:

- one-half time,
- working only as a substitute for an unlimited number of days in a calendar month or in the school year, or
- working only one half the number of workdays in that calendar month if you combine work as a substitute and any other type of work for a TRS-covered employer in the same calendar month.

For more information about the limits, please review the [Employment After Retirement Limits](#) chart located in the Active Member and Retirees tab on the TRS website.

You cannot work in ANY capacity — even as a substitute — during the 12-month break in service before returning to work in a position where you would be employed more than one-half time. If you retired before Jan. 1, 2011, you may work without limit without risking loss of your monthly annuity.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Avoid jeopardizing your retirement benefit or forfeiting annuity payments and any health benefits paid on your behalf by TRS-Care. Know the facts — there are different limitations on full-time employment, substitute work, and half-time employment.

The EAR booklet is currently being revised. If you have questions about your individual situation after you read the EAR booklet, please call TRS at 1-800-223-8778 to speak with a benefit counselor.

## Tune in to our Member Education Video Series today!

Earlier this spring, TRS kicked off our Member Education Video Series! The videos in this series are designed to provide information and answers to the most commonly asked questions about TRS member pension benefits. If you are a new, mid-career, late-career, or a retired member, you'll find something useful in each video. During the course of your career and into retirement, it's important to know about your benefits. Staying in touch with TRS and understanding your benefits will pay off in the long run.

TRS staff welcomes you, as they narrate these videos, to watch the first videos in the series – *Welcome to Membership*, *Naming a Beneficiary* and *What Tier Am I?* More recently, TRS released *Working After Service Retirement (Part One and Part Two)* videos. These videos answer some of our members' and retirees' most common questions about returning to work after a service retirement.

The next video to be released in the series, *Selecting a Retirement Benefit Option*, explains why choosing a benefit option is one of the most important things you will need to do when applying for retirement with TRS. In this video, a TRS Benefit Counselor walks through the different options that are available to you when you retire.

Other future videos will include:

- *What Every Named Beneficiary Needs to Know*
- *Purchasing Service Credit*
- *Disability Retirement*
- *Steps to Retirement*

To watch complete videos as they are released, visit the [TRS Member Education Videos](#) page on the TRS website or subscribe to our YouTube channel [TRSoftexas](#).

# Summary of Required Four-Year Rule Review and Notice of TRS Rule 25.26 Change

Section 2001.039 of the Texas Government Code requires all state agencies to review their rules every four years and consider whether the rules should be readopted. As part of this review, state agencies are instructed to consider whether the reasons for initially adopting each rule continue to exist. The agency must then decide whether to readopt, readopt with amendments, or repeal each rule.

TRS must review a rule not later than the fourth anniversary of the date on which the rule takes effect and every four years after that date. The adoption of an amendment to an existing rule does not satisfy the rule review requirement, unless the amendment is adopted as a result of the rule review.

TRS completed its last statutory review of the above-referenced rule on Dec. 12, 2014. Therefore, the next review of this rule must be completed by Dec. 12, 2018. Staff has completed a thorough review of the rules, and their final recommendations were presented to the board at the Sept. 20-21, 2018 board meeting. This project is led by the Legal and Compliance Team with significant input from each TRS business division that is affected by the rule.

At the September board meeting, the Policy Committee recommended that the board adopt the proposed amendment to TRS rule 25.26, which was published in the *Texas Register* on Aug. 17, 2018, and authorize publication of the board's final adoption of the amended rule.

Rule 25.26 establishes how TRS will determine a member's annual compensation for benefit calculation purposes. The most basic requirement is that a member's annual compensation is the sum of the 12 months of compensation paid from Sept. 1 through Aug. 31, which is TRS' standard school year. The adopted amendments permit TRS to credit an additional month of compensation to a TRS member who loses a month of salary credit due to an employer changing payroll reporting dates to comply with TRS' "report when paid" rule contained in rule 25.28. In 2014, TRS amended rule 25.26(e) to address anticipated consequences of TRS standardizing its employer reporting to require that all employers report compensation in the same month it is paid. TRS anticipated that, when the "report when paid" rule went into effect, TRS members could lose one month of compensation credit in the year of transition. As a result, in 2014, TRS adopted amendments to rule 25.26(e) that allowed TRS to attribute an additional month of compensation to a member in the 2014-15 school year for the purposes of benefit calculation, but this was limited only to the 2014-15 school year. Following implementation of its new employer reporting system in the fall of 2017, TRS discovered that some employers had not yet complied with the "report when paid" rule. The adopted amendments to rule 25.26(e) will encourage employers to comply with the "report when paid" rule and ensure that no TRS member loses a month of salary credit due to an employer changing reporting dates to comply with the "report when paid" rule. The adopted amendments to rule 25.26 do not limit the ability of TRS to attribute an additional month of compensation to any particular time period. The recently adopted text of TRS rule 25.26 can be found in Title 34, Part 3, Chapter 25 of the Texas Administrative Code or under Laws, Rules, and Legislation on the [TRS website](#).



# Nominations Sought for TRS Board of Trustees Public School District Employee Position

TRS is now accepting nominations for eligible members to qualify as candidates for the election of the Public School District Employee position on the TRS Board of Trustees. The term begins as early as Sept. 1, 2019 and ends Aug. 31, 2025.

For the first time, TRS is offering two ways in which a nominee may collect the required 250 signatures of eligible members for nomination. An eligible member for this election is a current employee of a public school district, charter school, or regional education service center.



A nominee may collect the 250 signatures electronically by declaring his/her interest to be a nominee to the [Secretary to the Board of Trustees](#). Once the member's eligibility is validated, the member's name will be posted on the [nomination site](#) where the nominee may direct eligible members to sign the nominee's electronic petition. The names of nominees will be listed on a first-come, first-listed basis. To sign the electronic petition, eligible members will need to provide identifying information in order to verify their eligibility to sign the petition. The process is easy and only takes a few minutes. For an electronic petition, the nominee does not need to submit anything further to TRS but must have 250 eligible member signatures by Jan. 21, 2019 to be considered a candidate.

TRS will also continue to allow nominees to collect 250 signatures of eligible members with paper petitions. TRS must receive the nominee's paper petitions **no later** than Jan. 21, 2019. You may download a [petition \(pdf\)](#) from the Resources section on the Nominations for TRS Board of Trustees Public School District Employee position page on the [TRS website](#); or if you do not have access to a printer, please contact the [Secretary to the Board of Trustees](#) to request a petition be mailed to you.

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## TRS Annual Statements Mailed

Please note that improvements to the *MyTRS* self-service portal are underway. These changes will provide you with several self-service options that are sure to be extremely helpful to you in conducting business with us. Until the new portal is available, you will not be able to view your current statement through *MyTRS*. In addition, those who signed up to receive advanced notice of annual statements being posted will no longer receive an email message through *MyTRS* Email Subscriptions.

**NO ANNUAL STATEMENT** – If you became a new member of TRS or recently returned to TRS-covered employment after the end of the 2017-18 school year, you will not receive an annual statement until the fall of 2019.

When you receive your annual statement, please review it carefully and promptly notify TRS if your records are inconsistent with the reported compensation or number of years of service credit shown on your statement. It is important that you review your annual statements carefully. You have a limited opportunity to have corrections made to your service and compensation credit for the 2017-18 school year without having to pay the actuarial cost for the additional credit.

Please refer to the [TRS website](#) for additional information.



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## ***2018 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report on website; Summary Annual Report Coming Soon***

In November, TRS published its *2018 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report* (CAFR). The report may be found on the What's New page and Publications page of the TRS website at [www.trs.texas.gov](http://www.trs.texas.gov).

In early 2019, TRS will also publish a high-level summary of the 2018 CAFR. The *2018 Summary Annual Report* is produced for members who do not wish or have time to read the entire document but would like to know the highlights. It will feature easy-to-read charts, graphs and other key information relating to the pension fund and health care programs. This summary can also be viewed by visiting the TRS website.