



October 13, 2023

The Honorable Governor Greg Abbott
State Capitol Building
1100 Congress Ave., Room 25.1
Austin TX 78701

Dear Gov. Abbott:

With the special legislative session now underway, we are writing on behalf of thousands of retired state workers to urge you to add another vital item to the call: **a 13th check for the 122,000 Texans who struggle to live on their Employees Retirement System (ERS) pensions.**

A 13th check would benefit all Texas retirees immediately. It would provide real relief as we deal with the continued impact of record inflation.

Providing a one-time 13th check to ERS Retirees would alleviate some of the financial hardship these Texans face and help them afford the basics of life, such as food, gas, housing, and utilities. A 13th check for all ERS retirees would cost about \$250 million — a fraction of the funds from the recent budget surplus left unspent by the 88th Texas Legislature and a fraction of the expected surplus in the current 2024-2025 biennium.

The retired state workers who are members of our organizations made Texas great. They protected public safety, built and maintained parks and roads, served the most vulnerable populations, and provided health care to millions. They dedicated their careers to establishing Texas as the best state to live, work, and do business.

But we are failing them: the average state retiree pension is barely \$1,800 per month, and thousands of retirees live on pensions much lower than that. They have not received any pension stipend or increase in more than 20 years.

In those decades, the cost of living has risen nearly 40%, and the state has found the money to provide multiple 13th checks to retired teachers. Retired state employees deserve the same.

A recent survey of state retirees highlighted some disturbing trends:

- **58%** returned to work even after they “retired,” most of them full-time.
- **63%** of those who have worked in retirement did so to support their family financially.
- Most disturbing, **16%** have received some public assistance since they retired.

This is not the standard we should hold for Texas.

A 13th check would be separate and different from the Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) already in law that could automatically be triggered if the ERS fund becomes more financially stable in the next two years. That COLA would only go to those who have been retired for at least 20 years — leaving out 70% of retirees — and would be capped at \$100 a month. A 13th check would benefit all retirees right away.

We appreciate what you have done for current and retired state workers in recent years, including signing Senate Bill 321 in 2021, which helped stabilize ERS.

We also recognize and appreciate your ongoing support for retired teachers — and we now ask that you provide the same support to the retired state workers who make Texas safer, stronger, and healthier. Our need is deep, and the resources are available.

Sincerely,

Lt. Richard Jankovsky, **Department of Public Safety Officers Association**

Lt. Billy Shelton, **Texas State Troopers Association**

Jeff Ormsby, **AFSCME Texas Correctional Employees Council**

Larry Young, **Texas Game Warden Peace Officers Association**

Bill Hamilton, **Retired State Employees Association**

Joe “Dan” Maxwell, **Texas Public Employees Association, Retirees Chapter**

Luther Elmore, **AFSCME Texas Retirees**

Judy Lugo, **Texas State Employees Union**

Handwritten signatures of the individuals listed above, including Larry E. Young, Dan Maxwell, Jeff Ormsby, Luther Elmore, William C. Bill Hamilton, and Billy A. Shelton.