FALL 2013
VOL. 35 NO. 4

THE Mentor

News from the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System

MARYLAND
STATE RETIREMENT
and PENSION SYSTEM

State Trooper trustee election nominations due

MARYLAND STATE TROOPERS seeking a seat on the Board of Trustees of the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System must submit completed nomination petitions to the Maryland State Retirement Agency by January 31, 2014.

The State Police representative elected to the board next year must be an active member or retiree of the Maryland State Police Retirement System. He or she will serve a term in office from August 1, 2014 through July 31, 2018.

Using an official nomination petition, potential candidates must obtain the signatures and dates of birth of 100 persons who are eligible to vote in this election. Petitions must be returned to the State Retirement Agency by 4:30 p.m. EST on January 31, 2014. As reported in the summer *Mentor*, these documents may be requested by calling Megan Myers at 410-625-5608 or toll free at 1-800-492-5909 no later than 4:30 p.m. EST on December 6, 2013.

For more information on the Board of Trustees, log onto the State Retirement Agency Website at sra.maryland.gov and click on **Agency**.

Are your beneficiary designations up to date? Here's how to make sure

SINCE YOU ENROLLED IN THE MARYLAND STATE RETIREMENT AND PENSION SYSTEM, have you experienced a marriage, a divorce, a birth or the death of a loved one? If so, you may wish to update your beneficiary designation on file with the retirement agency. If you don't, and you die during membership, your loved ones may receive an unpleasant surprise at an already stressful time.

To change your beneficiary designation, submit a new *Designation of Beneficiary* (Form 4) with the retirement agency. This form is available online at sra.maryland.gov, from your employer's personnel department or by calling the retirement agency.

Why is my beneficiary designation important?

You designated your beneficiary(ies) when you enrolled in the system. By keeping your beneficiary designation up to date throughout your career, you identify the person(s) who you wish to receive any eligible benefits if you die during membership.

Beneficiary FAQ's

Q. Who is my beneficiary on file?
A. Your Personal Statement of Benefits, mailed to your home earlier this fall, lists your beneficiaries on file with the agency. You also may confirm your beneficiary designation using the retirement agency's automated phone system. Simply dial 410-625-5555 or toll-free 1-800-492-5909. Members using TDD/TTY should call 410-625-5535.

Q. I notified my employer's personnel office of my new dependents. Is that enough?
A. No. You must notify the retirement agency by submitting a properly executed Form 4. Your new designation goes into effect when it is received by the retirement agency. Benefits will be paid according to the most recent Form 4 on file with the retirement agency.

Q. Must my beneficiary be a person?
A. No. While most members designate a person or persons, benefits also may be paid to your estate or to an organization such as a charity. Under certain police and judicial plans, members are required to designate their spouse as beneficiary.

Retirement Checklist

MEMBERS PLANNING TO RETIRE within the next 12 months should now be taking specific steps toward that goal. This checklist provides a general timetable for retirement preparation for members of the Employees' and Teachers' Retirement and Pension Systems. It also is a useful guide for members of other systems.

One to three years prior to retirement

- ❑ Attend one of the Retirement Agency's pre-retirement seminars. Registration forms are available online. Seminars are conducted in the spring and fall.

Twelve months prior to retirement

- ❑ Request an *Application for an Estimate of Benefits* (Form 9). Keep in mind that this form is not a retirement application. It is designed for planning purposes only. You may request an estimate only during the 12 months prior to your planned retirement date.

  Note: You are not required to obtain an estimate before retiring. However, it is strongly recommended, as retirees are not permitted to change their option after their first monthly benefit is paid.
- ❑ Apply to purchase any eligible service by submitting a *Request to Purchase Previous Service* (Form 26) along with your request for an estimate.
- ❑ Apply for any eligible military credit using a *Claim of Retirement Credit for Military Service* (Form 43).
- ❑ Contact the nearest Social Security office for an estimate of your Social Security benefits. You can obtain an estimate request form by calling the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213.

Six months prior to retirement

- ❑ If desired, schedule an appointment with a retirement benefits specialist to review your estimated benefits. You may meet at the Retirement Agency's Baltimore offices or at a location near you. It is recommended that you bring a copy of your latest estimate so you and the specialist can discuss this information at the meeting.
- ❑ Discuss your estimated benefits and options with your family and financial advisor.
- ❑ Obtain proof of birth for beneficiary (for allowance Option 2, 3, 5 or 6).
- ❑ Contact your personnel office to inquire if you may continue employer-provided benefits, such as health insurance, after retiring.
- ❑ Prepare a retirement budget, estimating your retirement expenses against your state pension benefit, Social Security and any other income.
- ❑ Update or prepare a will and, if desired, a power of attorney.

Three months prior to retirement

- ❑ Contact Social Security to file for benefits (if age 62 or older).

Two months prior to retirement

- ❑ Contact your personnel office and file your actual retirement application, *Application for Service or Disability Retirement* (Form 13-23).
- ❑ Provide proof of birth for designated beneficiary (for allowance Option 2, 3, 5 or 6).
- ❑ If eligible, complete authorization forms to continue your health coverage and any other benefits provided by your employer.
- ❑ Complete and submit a *Direct Deposit Electronic Fund Transfer Sign-Up* (Form 85) for the electronic transmission of your payment to your bank, savings institution or credit union.

  Note: Direct deposit is mandatory for all retirees.
- ❑ Complete *Reemployment After Retirement* (Form 127) to acknowledge an understanding of any consequences of reentering the workforce.
- ❑ Complete a *Federal and Maryland State Tax Withholding Request* (Form 766).

One month prior to retirement

- ❑ Submit a formal letter of retirement to your employer.

The Mentor is published by the
Maryland State Retirement Agency
120 East Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21202-6700
410-625-5555
1-800-492-5909
TDD/TTY 410-625-5535
sra.maryland.gov

EDITOR: Benjamin Robb