

# retiree notes

## A Message from Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli



The staff of the New York State and Local Retirement System (NYSLRS) and I are dedicated to providing excellent service to our 1.1 million members, retirees and beneficiaries. Our top priority is to provide you with the benefits you've earned, but we also have a responsibility to provide information about those benefits in a timely manner.

We are currently in the process of upgrading our 30-year-old computer system. This upgrade will help us to redesign the way we administer Retirement System benefits and provide improved service to members and retirees well into the future. As with any project of this size and scope, some difficulties will doubtless be encountered along the way. During this time of technological transition here at NYSLRS, please know that we are working hard to improve our service to you, answer your questions and keep you informed.

As you know, I have always valued and celebrated our retirees as vital contributors to the State and their local communities. Four out of five NYSLRS retirees live in New York, where they spend their pension income at local businesses and help create jobs. They also pay hundreds of millions of dollars each year in property taxes, helping to support schools, police departments and other vital services. NYSLRS retirees also contribute by volunteering and getting involved in community affairs.

As always, I'm sure you have questions about the financial state of the Common Retirement Fund. After continued growth throughout the fiscal year, our pension fund remains strong, with a value of \$210.5 billion as of March 31, 2019. The soundness of the Fund helps to ensure retirement security for our members, retirees and beneficiaries for years to come.

Sincerely,

Thomas P. DiNapoli  
State Comptroller

## Information We Provide



There are many ways to stay informed about your benefits, the Retirement System and news that might affect you.

Use *Retirement Online* to view your personal NYSLRS benefit information and update your contact information if needed. Sign in or register at [www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirement\\_online/customers.php](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirement_online/customers.php). *Retirement Online* is generally available daily from 7 am to 5 pm. Over time, we will be expanding our hours and self-service features.

Visit our website at [www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/index.php](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/index.php), where you'll find a wealth of useful information, including:

- Our Contact Us page, which has answers to many common NYSLRS questions;
- The Pension Payment Calendar, which is updated each calendar year;

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## Retirement Online

Log into your *Retirement Online* account to review your personal retirement-related information.



SUBSCRIBE TO OUR BLOG,  
[NYRetirementNews.com](http://NYRetirementNews.com)



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[YouTube.com/NYSLRS](http://YouTube.com/NYSLRS)

## Information We Provide

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- Our Forms page, where you can print Direct Deposit and W-4P tax withholding forms; and
- Our Publications page, where you can download a variety of publications specifically for retirees.

In addition, if you have direct deposit, we will mail you a notification of the net change each time your benefit amount changes. Examples of reasons your payment may change include cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) or federal withholding or health insurance deduction changes. Each year we provide your 1099-R form for your taxes. We also mail newsletters twice a year.

Finally, we have an automated information line (1-866-805-0990, or 518-474-7736 in the Albany, New York area), where you can hear account-specific information, any time of day, without talking to a phone agent.

No matter how you prefer to reach us, NYSLRS offers many ways to get the information you need when you need it.

## Featured Updates from NYSLRS

Sign up for *E-News* to receive a monthly email newsletter packed with information about the pension fund, new laws and more.

Sign up at [www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/e-news/sign-up/index.php](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/e-news/sign-up/index.php).

## Taxes and Your NYSLRS Pension

Each year, by January 31, we mail 1099-R tax forms to nearly half a million retirees. We also mail 1099-Rs to beneficiaries who receive taxable income from NYSLRS.

A 1099-R shows:

- The total benefit paid to you in a calendar year.
- The taxable amount of your benefit.
- The amount of taxes withheld from your benefit.

While NYSLRS pensions are not subject to New York State income taxes, they are subject to federal taxes. When you retired, you filled out a W-4P form (Withholding Certificate for Pension or Annuity Payments) to choose the amount of federal withholding that was right for you. You can change this federal tax withholding at any time.

You can find more tax information on our website at [www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirees/tax\\_services\\_information.php](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirees/tax_services_information.php). You can print a blank W-4P form to change your federal income tax withholding, use our federal tax withholding calculator, request a reprint of your 1099-R form from any of the past three years, or view our interactive 1099-R form tutorial.

It's important to make sure we have your correct mailing address **before December 31** each year so you have no trouble receiving your 1099-R. *Retirement Online* is the fastest way to update your address or pre-schedule a change of address. Register or sign in from our website at [www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirement\\_online/customers.php](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirement_online/customers.php).

**Note:** If you move to another state, your NYSLRS pension could be taxed in that state. The Retired Public Employees Association (RPEA) provides a list of how other states tax New York State pensions. Visit RPEA's website at [www.rpea.org](http://www.rpea.org), and click "Retirement Planning" and then "Pension Tax by State."



## How Your Retirement Benefits Can Change

There are several reasons why your retirement payment amount could change. Here are some of the most common:

**Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA)** — A COLA is an annual adjustment, based on the cost-of-living index, that permanently increases your retirement benefit. To be eligible for annual COLAs, you must be age 62 or older and retired five or more years, age 55 or older and retired ten or more years for uniformed employees, or a NYSLRS disability recipient retired for five or more years.

For more information, call our automated information line, or read our Permanent COLA webpage at [www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/publications/vo1863.php](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/publications/vo1863.php).

**Health Insurance** — We do not administer health insurance programs. However, we will deduct premiums from your monthly pension to pay for your health insurance coverage if we are instructed to do so by your former employer. Please direct questions about changes to your health insurance coverage or premium deductions to your former employer. New York State retirees can call the New York State Department of Civil Service at 800-833-4344 or 518-457-5754, or email Civil Service at [pio@cs.ny.gov](mailto:pio@cs.ny.gov).

**Medicare** — (Updated 12/20/19) Unless they are receiving reimbursement from another source, the Department of Civil Service reimburses retired State and public authority employees, who are enrolled in the New York State Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP), for the usual cost of the Medicare Part B (medical insurance) premium through their retirement benefit. The reimbursement amount can change. Please note that Civil Service does not reimburse Medicare Part B premium costs to local government retirees. If you are enrolled in NYSHIP and have a question about why your amount changed, call or email Civil Service.

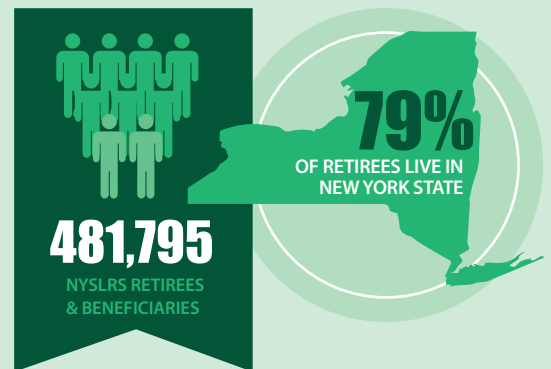
**Federal Income Tax Withholding** — If you chose to have your withholding dependent on your marital status and number of exemptions, your pension payment may be affected by changes to the IRS's withholding tables. You can change your withholding at any time by sending us a W-4P form. Visit our Taxes and Your Pension page at [www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirees/tax\\_services\\_information.php](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirees/tax_services_information.php) for the W-4P form and other tax information.

If you have a question about your pension amount, sign in to *Retirement Online* to see a breakdown of your monthly payment. If you don't have an account, sign up on our website at [www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirement\\_online/customers.php](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirement_online/customers.php).

## Retirees Contribute to New York State's Economy

NYSLRS retirees make significant contributions to our State and local economies. Their purchases of goods and services represent opportunities for new businesses, help grow existing companies and create jobs. The pension money they receive — 73 percent of which comes from the investment earnings of the Common Retirement Fund, not taxpayers — flows right back into their communities, stimulating and growing our local economies. You can learn more about how our retirees contribute to New York State's economy by visiting [www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirees/retirees-contribute.php](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirees/retirees-contribute.php).

As of March 2019, there were **481,795 NYSLRS retirees** — **79 percent** of whom live in New York State.



### In 2018, NYSLRS retirees and their beneficiaries:



Paid an estimated \$710 million in State and local sales tax.



Paid \$1.5 billion in property taxes.



Were responsible for \$12.6 billion in economic activity in New York State.



Were responsible for an estimated 76,000 jobs as a result of this spending.

SOURCE: 2019 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report; U.S. Census Bureau; OSC Analysis.



*Thomas P. DiNapoli*  
**State Comptroller**

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**Retiree Notes** is a semiannual newsletter for retirees of the New York State and Local Retirement System.

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Send your comments by email to:

[nysretnews@osc.ny.gov](mailto:nysretnews@osc.ny.gov)

Or write to:

NYSLRS

Retirement Communications

110 State Street

Albany, NY 12244-0001.

## Sign Up for Direct Deposit

If you haven't signed up for direct deposit of your pension payment, here are a few reasons why you should.

- Direct deposit is safe.
- Your money is available immediately on the last business day of the month.
- You'll avoid standing in bank lines or dealing with bad weather to cash a check.
- You won't need to worry that a check might be lost in the mail or stolen.



Here's another reason to sign up. If you do not cash three consecutive checks, we stop sending them, for your security, until we hear from you. If your health insurance premiums are deducted from your NYSLRS pension, suspended checks may cause your health insurance coverage to be disrupted.

Join the 93 percent of retirees who have signed up for direct deposit. For more information or to sign up, visit our Direct Deposit Program webpage at [www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirees/direct-deposit-program.php](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirees/direct-deposit-program.php).