



THE DISPATCH

RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS OF WASHINGTON

APRIL 2026

President's Message



Running the Good Race

Many of you will recognize the phrase “run the good race.” It’s a simple expression, but it carries a lifetime of meaning; especially for those of us who have already run a long distance in life.

At our stage, the race is no longer about speed. It is not about medals, recognition, or proving something to others. Instead, it is about

endurance, purpose, and finishing well.

In my own small way, I have been thinking about this quite literally. As some of you know, I am training for a marathon this July. My longest effort so far was the Lake Sammamish half-marathon, which took me a little over three hours. The full marathon has a cutoff of 6½ hours, and I would be less than candid if I didn’t say that getting there feels increasingly difficult. The miles don’t come as easily as they once might have, and each step requires a bit more determination. At times it feels impossible.

I feel the same “race” when it comes to managing all that it takes to be the President of the RFFOW. There are often long days, and some long nights. Most always something to do, including writing this newsletter. I face challenges, and so do you.

But that, in itself, is the lesson.

Running the good race is not about how fast we go; it is about the decision to keep going.

Every one of you is running your own race right now. For many, it is not on a trail or a road, but in daily life. It is in the quiet, often unseen work of taking care of your health, managing doctor visits, adjusting to new limitations, or supporting a spouse who needs you now more than ever. These are not easy miles. In fact, they may be the hardest miles of all.

And yet, this is where the race matters most.

When we served in the fire service, we were trained

to respond—to act decisively, to help others, to carry burdens that others could not. That instinct does not retire. It simply changes form. Today, “running the good race” may mean showing patience when frustration would be easier, offering kindness when you are tired, or simply getting up each day and doing what needs to be done.

It also means staying connected. One of the great strengths of the Retired Firefighters of Washington is that we do not run this race alone. Whether it is through a phone call, a meeting, or a quiet word of encouragement, we remind each other that we are still part of something larger than ourselves.

There is also a deeper dimension to this idea. A good race is not just about endurance—it is about direction. It is about knowing what matters and aligning our lives accordingly. For many of us, that includes faith, family, service, and integrity. These are the markers along the course that guide us when the path becomes difficult.

And let’s be honest—the course does become difficult. There are hills we did not expect, detours we did not choose, and moments when stopping seems more appealing than continuing. But the measure of the race is not found in avoiding those challenges; it is found in how we respond to them.

So what does it mean, in practical terms, to run the good race?

It means taking care of yourself—physically, mentally, and spiritually.

It means taking care of those who depend on you.

It means staying engaged, even when it would be easier to withdraw.

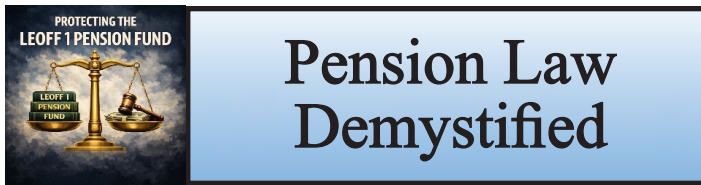
And it means finishing with dignity, gratitude, and purpose.

As for me, I will keep putting one foot in front of the other as I work toward that July marathon. Whether I finish comfortably or just beat the cutoff time, the goal remains the same: to stay in the race.

And that is my encouragement to each of you.

Stay in the race. Keep moving forward. Support one another. And remember that the value of the race is not in how fast we run, but in how faithfully we endure it.

That, my friends, is what it means to run the good race.



RFFOW Retains Nationally Recognized Counsel in LEOFF 1 Pension Litigation

On April 1, 2026, the Washington State Governor signed into law E2SHB 2034, the legislation designed to skim money from the LEOFF 1 Pension Fund to the State Treasury for budgetary purposes. Now we are officially responding to that threat.

The Retired Firefighters of Washington (RFFOW), in coordination with the LEOFF 1 Coalition and the Retired Seattle Police Officers Association (RSPOA), has formally retained the nationally recognized law firm of Hagens Berman to pursue litigation challenging the State of Washington's diversion of LEOFF 1 Pension Fund assets for budgetary purposes under E2SHB 2034.

Our lead counsel, Steve Berman, brings an extraordinary record of success in complex, high-stakes litigation. Mr. Berman served as co-lead counsel in the landmark litigation against Big Tobacco, resulting in the largest settlement in history; co-lead counsel in antitrust litigation against the NCAA, producing the largest antitrust settlement globally; a member of the Plaintiffs' Steering Committee in the Volkswagen emissions litigation, the largest automotive settlement in history; and co-lead counsel in major ERISA and securities cases that, at the time, established record-setting recoveries. His experience and demonstrated capability uniquely position him to represent the nearly 6,000 members of the LEOFF 1 system in this class action lawsuit.

This litigation centers on fundamental legal protections governing pension assets. As many of our members are aware, the LEOFF 1 Pension Fund has long been understood to operate under principles akin to a trust for the exclusive benefit of its members and beneficiaries. These protections arise from multiple sources, including Washington statutory law, constitutional contract protections under both the United States and Washington Constitutions, and federal tax qualification requirements—particularly the Internal Revenue Code's "exclusive benefit rule" under §401(a)(2). Collectively, these authorities establish that pension funds must be preserved for the benefit of members and cannot be repurposed for general governmental expenditures.

Importantly, members should understand that this class action is being structured so that attorneys' fees will not be borne directly by LEOFF 1 retirees. Instead, counsel intends to seek an award of reasonable

attorneys' fees from the State of Washington in the event of a successful outcome, consistent with recognized legal doctrines applicable in cases vindicating important statutory and constitutional rights. This approach allows the class to retain premier legal representation without imposing additional financial burden on members.

Separately, however, RFFOW will continue to evaluate and, where appropriate, undertake independent legal advocacy efforts in support of this litigation. This likely will include the preparation and filing of amicus curiae ("friend of the court") briefs. Such advocacy may address, among other issues, the application of the exclusive benefit rule, the trust-like nature of LEOFF 1 assets, and the constitutional prohibition against impairment of vested pension rights. These efforts are intended to reinforce the legal framework supporting the claims advanced in the primary litigation and would result in related additional legal expenses.

This is a significant and consequential step. RFFOW remains committed to protecting the integrity of the LEOFF 1 Pension Fund and the rights of its members. We will continue to keep you informed as this matter progresses.



Retired Battalion Chief, George Moody passed away March 15, 2026 at the age of 89. George joined the Seattle Fire Department in October of 1959 and retired in March of 1986 after 26 years of service.

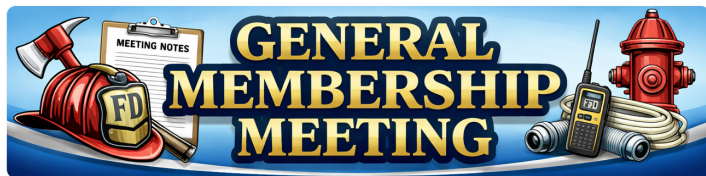
Retired Lieutenant, David Stamper, passed away March 18, 2026, at the age of 84. David joined the Seattle Fire Department in August of 1963 and retired in July of 1986 after 22 years of service.

Priscilla Nolf, widow of Firefighter Harold Nolf Jr., passed away March 5, 2026. No further information at this time.

Retired Battalion Chief, Wesley Goss, passed away March 30, 2026, at the age of 78. Wesley joined the Seattle Fire Department in July of 1968 and retired in December of 2007 after 39 years of service.

Edward Welch, March 28, 2026, for further information

Ronald Sams, Firefighter, Walla Walla Fire no further information at this time



RFFOW General Membership Meeting Notice

Please join us for our next General Membership Meeting on Wednesday, May 13, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. Pacific Time, held via Zoom only.

As a reminder, this invitation will be sent to you two days prior to the meeting and again on the morning of the meeting so it is easy to locate at the top of your email inbox when it's time to join.

We are honored to welcome a Special Speaker from the UW Medicine Memory and Brain Wellness Center at Harborview in Seattle. This medical doctor will speak on dementia and conditions such as Alzheimer's disease—a topic that touches many of our members, whether personally or through a spouse, family member, or close friend. The presentation will be practical, compassionate, and focused on helping us better understand what these conditions are, what to expect, and how to respond.

Following our speaker, we will conduct our regular business meeting, including important organizational updates. This will include a status report on the ongoing class action litigation involving the LEOFF 1 Pension Fund, along with other matters affecting our membership.

This promises to be a meaningful and informative meeting. We strongly encourage you to attend and take part in both the educational discussion and the important updates that follow.

We look forward to seeing you there.



Turning Air Into Water

Turning Air Into Water: A Breakthrough That Could Change the World

Imagine being able to pull clean drinking water right out of thin air—even in the middle of a desert. It may sound like science fiction, but thanks to a remarkable scientific breakthrough, it is becoming reality.

A team of scientists, led by Nobel Prize winner Omar Yaghi, has developed an extraordinary material called a metal-organic framework, or MOF. While that name sounds complicated, the idea

Retired Firefighters Of Washington

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behind it is surprisingly simple. Think of MOFs as incredibly tiny sponges—so small you can't see them—but packed with millions of microscopic holes. These holes can trap things like gases, including water vapor in the air.

Here's what makes this discovery so amazing: even in very dry air, where humidity is extremely low, these MOFs can still capture water. In fact, they work in conditions drier than places like Death Valley. At night, when the air cools, the material pulls water vapor out of the air and holds onto it. Then during the day, as temperatures rise, the water is released as liquid—clean, drinkable water.

This isn't just a laboratory experiment. The technology is already being built into units about the size of a shipping container. Each unit can produce up to 1,000 liters of water per day—enough to supply drinking water for about 500 people.

To understand how important this is, consider the global water crisis. Scientists estimate that billions of people around the world struggle with water shortages, sometimes for months each year. Rivers are drying up, groundwater is being depleted, and climate change is making the problem worse. This new technology could provide water in places where wells, pipelines, or rain simply aren't available.

The possibilities are enormous. These systems could be placed in remote villages, disaster zones, or even military and emergency operations where access to clean water is critical. They could reduce the need to transport bottled water and help communities become more self-sufficient.

Of course, there are still challenges. Right now, the technology is expensive and not yet widely available. But scientists and engineers are working to scale it up and bring costs down, with broader use expected soon.

What makes this discovery truly inspiring is not just the science—it's what it can do for humanity. Turning air into water could help solve one of the most urgent problems on Earth. It's a powerful reminder that innovation, persistence, and a little imagination can lead to solutions that once seemed impossible.



Sleep, Shift Work, and the Long Night

Sleep, Shift Work, and the Long Night: A Lifelong Challenge for Firefighters and Their Spouses

At our recent General Membership Meeting, we had the privilege of hearing from Dr. David Corley, a specialist in sleep medicine. His message was both simple and profound: sleep is not just rest—it is a critical biological function that affects nearly every system in the body. For those of us who spent decades working 24-hour shifts, and for the spouses who adapted to those schedules, the impact of disrupted sleep can last well into retirement.

Normal sleep is governed by the body's internal clock, known as the circadian rhythm. This rhythm is heavily influenced by light, especially morning sunlight, which signals the brain when it is time to be awake. During a healthy night of sleep, the body cycles through stages of deep and REM sleep. These stages are essential for physical repair, memory, and emotional balance. When sleep is consistent and uninterrupted, it supports heart health, immune function, and brain performance. When it is disrupted, problems begin to emerge.

For firefighters, rotating 24-hour shifts often meant living in direct conflict with this natural rhythm. Sleeping during the day and staying alert at night places the body in a state of biological confusion. Over time, this can lead to what is known as shift work sleep disorder. Even after retirement, many find that their sleep patterns never fully normalize. Difficulty falling asleep, waking frequently during the night, or rising too early are common complaints. Spouses were affected as well, often experiencing years of interrupted sleep, schedule changes, and the simple reality of sharing life with someone on shift work.

Poor sleep is more than an inconvenience—it carries real medical consequences. Chronic sleep disruption has been linked to an increased risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes. It can weaken the immune system and contribute to depression and anxiety. Of particular concern for many of our members is the growing body of evidence connecting poor sleep with cognitive decline and an increased risk of Alzheimer's disease. Sleep is when the brain clears waste products and consolidates memory. Without adequate sleep, that process is impaired.

Insomnia is a common companion after years of irregular schedules. It may show up as difficulty falling asleep, frequent awakenings, or the inability to return to sleep after waking. Often, insomnia is reinforced by habits developed over time, such as irregular sleep hours or spending long periods awake in bed.

The encouraging news is that sleep can improve, even later in life. One of the most effective strategies is exposure to natural daylight early in the day. A simple morning walk outdoors helps reset the body's internal clock and signals that it is time to be awake. Maintaining a consistent sleep schedule—going to bed and waking up at the same time each day—also strengthens this rhythm. Limiting daytime naps, especially long ones, can help preserve nighttime sleep. Creating a cool, dark, and quiet bedroom environment is equally important, as is avoiding bright screens and stimulating activities before bedtime.

Regular physical activity, particularly earlier in the day, can improve both the quality and duration of sleep. And if you find yourself lying awake for long periods, it is better to get out of bed and return only when you feel sleepy, rather than training your mind to associate the bed with wakefulness.

I have always had a hard time with sleep and experienced this exact thing lately. I could not sleep. So instead of just laying there, I got up and made an egg sandwich and sat at my table, nearly in the dark, and tried to enjoy myself (and actually I did). After about a half hour I went back to bed and miraculously fell asleep quite quickly.

For couples, especially those who spent years dealing with disrupted sleep, a practical solution may be worth considering. The Scandinavian “two duvet” approach allows each partner to have their own blanket. This simple change reduces disturbances caused by movement, temperature differences, or blanket sharing, and can lead to more restful sleep while still maintaining the comfort of sharing a bed.

After a lifetime of answering alarms at all hours, many firefighters and their spouses continue to live with the effects of disrupted sleep. But it is important to remember that it is never too late to make meaningful improvements. Sleep is not a luxury—it is a foundation of good health. By making a few consistent adjustments, you can improve not only how you sleep, but how you feel, think, and live each day.



You Are Never Too Old

You Are Never Too Old

Few things cut deeper than being told—directly or indirectly—that your best days are behind you. That you're “over the hill.” That what you have to offer no

longer measures up. For men and women who spent a lifetime in the fire service—and for the spouses who stood beside them through long shifts, missed holidays, and constant uncertainty—that message can feel especially hollow.

Because it simply isn't true.

There has never been a time in life when someone isn't willing to tell you what you can't do. The difference, as the years go on, is that the voice may sound more convincing. It may even sound like your own. But age does not diminish worth. It does not erase purpose. And it certainly does not define what you are still capable of becoming.

Consider the story of Harland Sanders. Most people know him as the face of Kentucky Fried Chicken, but far fewer know when his success actually began. Sanders didn't build his iconic brand in his 30s or 40s. In fact, at age 65—an age when many are settling into retirement—he was nearly broke, living off a small Social Security check. His roadside restaurant had failed, and he found himself starting over.

It would have been easy—understandable, even—for him to accept the idea that his time had passed. Instead, he chose a different path. With a pressure cooker, a handwritten recipe, and determination, he began traveling from restaurant to restaurant, pitching his fried chicken method. He was rejected over and over again—reportedly more than 1,000 times before anyone said yes. But he persisted. And eventually, he built one of the most recognizable food brands in the world.

His story isn't really about chicken. It's about refusing to accept the verdict that others tried to place on his life.

That lesson applies just as powerfully today. Retirement from the fire service is not a closing chapter—it is a transition. The same discipline, courage, and resilience that carried you through decades of emergency calls are still part of who you are. And for spouses, whose quiet strength held families together through those demanding years, that reservoir of character is just as deep.

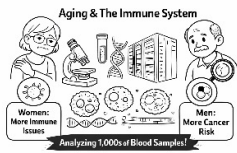
Life after retirement brings its own set of challenges—health concerns, changing roles, caring for one another, and sometimes facing loss. But it also brings opportunities that didn't exist before: time to invest in relationships, to mentor others, to serve in new ways, and to grow in wisdom and perspective.

The world may try to measure value by speed, strength, or youth. But real value—the kind that matters—comes from experience, perseverance, and the ability to endure and still move forward.

So when you hear that voice—whether from others or from within—suggesting that you’re no longer capable, no longer relevant, or no longer needed, remember this: that voice has been wrong before.

You are not “over the hill.” You are standing on a lifetime of experience, with a view that only a few ever earn.

And from that vantage point, there is still more to do.



Women’s Immune System Disorders

Why This New Immune System Study Matters—Especially for Our Spouses

A recent scientific study has uncovered something both fascinating and important about how our bodies age—especially for women. While the original report is filled with technical language, let’s break it down in a simple, clear way so anyone can understand why this matters to all of us, and particularly to the spouses of our RFFOW members.

First, what is the immune system? Think of it as your body’s personal defense team. It’s made up of tiny cells that travel through your blood looking for trouble—things like viruses, bacteria, or even cancer cells. When they find a threat, they attack it to keep you healthy.

Sometimes, however, this system can get confused. Instead of attacking harmful invaders, it mistakenly attacks your own body. This is called an autoimmune disease. In simple terms, it’s like your body’s defense team turning on its own players.

Examples of autoimmune disorders include Rheumatoid Arthritis, which affects the joints, Lupus, which can affect multiple organs, Multiple Sclerosis, which attacks the nerves, and Type 1 Diabetes, which destroys insulin-producing cells in the pancreas.

Now here’s where this new research becomes so important.

Scientists studied nearly 1,000 people of different

ages and examined over a million individual immune cells—an incredibly large and detailed effort. Instead of averaging everything together (which is what older studies did), they looked at each cell one by one. This allowed them to see patterns that had never been clearly understood before.

What they found is remarkable: women’s immune systems change more dramatically with age than men’s.

In many ways, women start off with a stronger immune system. That’s why women often respond better to vaccines and may fight off infections more effectively. But there’s a trade-off. Because the system is more active, it is also more likely to “misfire” and attack the body itself. In fact, about 80% of autoimmune diseases occur in women.

As women age—especially after menopause—the immune system becomes more “inflammatory.” That means it stays more active than it should, which can lead to increased health problems, including autoimmune conditions and other inflammatory diseases.

Men, on the other hand, showed fewer overall changes in their immune systems as they age. But the study found something else concerning: certain blood cells in older men may develop early changes that could lead to blood cancers.

So, in simple terms:

- Women: stronger immune systems early on, but more risk of autoimmune issues later
- Men: less dramatic immune changes, but higher risk for certain cancers with age

Now, why is this especially important for spouses of retired firefighters?

Many firefighter families spent decades living with irregular schedules, stress, and sleep disruption. These factors can affect the immune system over time. For spouses—many of whom carried the burden of managing households, raising children, and adjusting to unpredictable routines—this research shines a light on something often overlooked: their long-term health risks may be different and, in some ways, greater.

This study also highlights something else that is truly amazing—the methodology. The researchers didn’t just look at a few samples. They used cutting-edge technology to analyze 20,000 genes across more than a million cells, and they needed a powerful supercomputer to handle the data.

That level of detail is like going from looking at a forest from far away... to examining every single leaf on every tree.

The takeaway is simple but powerful:

Aging is not the same for everyone. Men and women experience it differently—especially when it comes to the immune system.

Understanding these differences can help doctors develop better treatments, earlier diagnoses, and more personalized care.

And for all of us in the RFFOW family, it's a reminder to pay close attention—not just to our own health—but to the health of the spouses who have stood beside us every step of the way.



Most fire stations never had a Dalmatian. No spotted mascot lounging by the engine, no four-legged “probationary firefighter” sneaking snacks or posing for photos. And yet—ask almost any firefighter, and they’ll swear they should have had one.

Because every station has its own version of “Sparky.”

Maybe it wasn't a dog at all. Maybe it was the rookie who could eat anything in the fridge and deny it with a straight face. Maybe it was the captain who “supervised” drills from a lawn chair. Or the guy who could sleep through anything—until the tones dropped, when he'd beat everyone to the rig like he'd been awake all along.

The Dalmatian, in many ways, is just a symbol. Not of firefighting itself—but of the personality inside the firehouse. The humor. The mischief. The unspoken understanding that in a job filled with real pressure, you'd better find ways to laugh—or you won't last long.

Sure, a Dalmatian might have chased the rigs, greeted school kids, and howled at the siren. But in stations that never had one, those roles were filled just fine by the crew themselves. Someone always played the clown. Someone always lifted spirits. Someone always made the long shifts feel shorter.

So maybe you never had a Dalmatian curled up by the bay door.

But you definitely had a Sparky.



Pizza Man Donations

In a world that often feels hurried and impersonal, a simple act of kindness can still ripple outward in extraordinary ways.

Recently, a pizza delivery driver named Dan quietly demonstrated what it means to go the extra mile—literally. On a routine delivery, Dan discovered that the store was out of a customer's drink. Rather than shrugging it off, he took it upon himself to stop and purchase the item elsewhere before completing the delivery. To him, it was nothing special—just doing the right thing.

What he didn't know was that this small decision would touch thousands of lives.

The customers, deeply moved by his thoughtfulness, shared the moment online. What followed was nothing short of remarkable. Strangers from across the country responded—not just with kind words, but with overwhelming generosity. In a matter of days, more than \$145,000 was raised to support Dan as he entered retirement.

But the real story here isn't the money—it's the reminder.

Dan didn't act out of expectation. He didn't know he was being watched. He simply chose integrity, compassion, and service in an ordinary moment. And in doing so, he reminded all of us that goodness still exists—quietly, consistently, and often unnoticed.

For many of us in retirement, it's easy to wonder what difference we still make. This story answers that question clearly: every act matters. Every kindness counts. And sometimes, the smallest gestures leave the biggest legacy.

In the end, Dan wasn't just delivering a pizza—he was delivering hope.

April 2026

Retired Firefighters of Washington

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NEXT GENERAL MEETING
May 13th at 9:00 A.M. (Pacific)
Zoom Only — link to be emailed

2026 Retired Firefighters of Washington Membership Dues

Mail to: P.O. Box 12324 Mill Creek, WA 98082

Dues paid by Payroll Deduction, only updating contact information

Name of current member: _____

Name of spouse: _____

Department Retired From: _____

Prior Act LEOFF 1 LEOFF 2

Address: _____

_____ Check No: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

2026 Dues: \$57 Legislative Fund Donation: \$3 Amount Enclosed _____ (Date) _____

Name and date of death of former member if deceased:

