

Final Release

Long-Standing Detroit Retiree Associations Continue Retiree Advocacy in Detroit Bankruptcy

DETROIT, Mich. -- Two associations representing retired Detroit city employees and retired Detroit police and fire fighters remain committed to advocating for retiree interests in Detroit's bankruptcy proceedings.

The Retired Detroit Police and Fire Fighters Association (RDPFFA) and the Detroit Retired City Employees Association (DRCEA) have served the interests of thousands of Detroit retirees for decades and continue to do so during Detroit's bankruptcy proceedings, according to Brian O'Keefe, a founding partner of Lippitt O'Keefe.

"The City of Detroit's Chapter 9 bankruptcy petition clearly represents a threat to the retirement benefits earned by thousands of retired city employees," notes O'Keefe. "These two associations are dedicated to representing those interests, as they have for decades."

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Background Information

Both associations have been intricately involved in the pre-bankruptcy filing and bankruptcy proceedings relative to the City of Detroit and Emergency Financial Manager (EFM). Prior to the city's Chapter 9 filing, the associations attended, with counsel, multiple presentations by the EFM and his staff. Since the city's filing, the associations, through counsel, have filed appearances, filed a joint response to the city's Motion to Appoint a Retiree Committee and presented arguments at an August 2nd hearing. The associations are committed to representing retiree interests as they have since their inception. Lippitt O'Keefe, PLLC serves as general counsel for both associations and along with Silverman & Morris, P.L.L.C. represent the associations in connection with the bankruptcy case.

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RDPFFA -- The predecessor of the RDPFFA was founded in 1946 and became known as the RDPFFA in 1970. Membership of the RDPFFA is approximately 6,500 which, is approximately 80 percent of eligible retirees.

The RDPFFA maintains a staffed office at 2525 E. 14 Mile Road in Sterling Heights, Mich., and is recognized as the representative association for all Detroit police and fire retirees (and their widows/widowers) nationwide. The RDPFFA utilizes the services of lobbyists in Lansing, has advanced the interests of its members through litigation, maintains a website, www.RDPFFA.com, holds monthly informational meetings and publishes a quarterly news magazine.

The association has an elected board of directors and officers and is headed by President Don Taylor, a former police officer and union steward. A retiree representative and a member of the RDPFFA, also sits on the board of the Police and Fire Retirement System of the City of Detroit (DPFRS).

DRCEA – The DRCEA was founded in 1960 and over the past 53 years has played an active role in improving and protecting retiree pensions and benefits. The DRCEA maintains a watch on the city administration, mayor, city council and GRS Board of Trustees, continually monitoring actions that may affect pension or retirement benefits.

In 1971, DRCEA's importance in city government was recognized when the mayor appointed a retiree to the Board of Trustees of the General Retirement System. In 1974 the Detroit City Charter required that the retiree representative on the General Retirement System Board of Trustees be elected by retirees. The association became the acknowledged organization representing civilian retiree interest in legislative and budget matters.

Today, there are approximately 12,100 City of Detroit retirees of whom approximately 65 percent are dues-paying members of the DRCEA. In addition to those dues-paying members, it has always been available to assist all retirees with retirement-related issues, regardless of whether they are members of the DRCEA.

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The DRCEA is and has always been a volunteer-based association and all services provided by directors and officers are done in the spirit of services and not compensation. Shirley V. Lightsey, a former manager of the Detroit Water and Sewer Department, volunteers her time to serve as the elected president of the DRCEA. The DRCEA has an operational structure that includes a pension liaison, a political action committee and a medical benefit committee. The DRCEA keeps in contact with its membership and retiree constituency through mailings, newsletters, meetings, its website and other sponsored events.

Further information regarding both associations is available at www.drcea.org and www.rdpffa.org.

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