

# LaVoz

The Voice of the Public Employees Retirement Association of New Mexico

## 2024 PERA Board

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## Letter from the Board Chair



Welcome to the 2024 Election edition of LaVoz.

We hope you and your loved ones are staying cool and safe in this unusually hot weather.

This LaVoz edition contains information about our current PERA Board election to fill our Retiree, Municipal, and State Member positions. You will receive your ballot in the mail in early August. We encourage you to get involved, learn about the candidates, and submit your vote before the September 13, 2024, 12:00 pm deadline, because every vote counts. This is an opportunity for you to elect who you think would best represent you as a Retiree, Municipal and State Board member. You will find more information on pages 2 through 5 about the candidates.

All PERA members and retirees are

cordially invited to the 2024 PERA Annual Meeting on Thursday, September 26th, 2024, at 9:00 am. The meeting will be held in the Senator Fabian Chavez, Jr. Board Room in the PERA office located at 33 Plaza La Prensa, Santa Fe, NM, 87507. The winners of the 2024 PERA Board election will be announced during the meeting.

As some of you approach retirement, and things in your life start to get busier, please remember that the PERA staff is available to assist you with guidance at every stage of your PERA career. The PERA staff wants to support you whether you just started your career with PERA, or if you have been retired for many years. Thank you for being a valuable PERA member!

Thank you for being valuable PERA members.

Paula Fisher, State Member  
PERA Board Chair

## 2024 Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA)

The profit-sharing COLA model went into effect in July 2023. As a result, eligible PERA retirees will be receiving a 0.5% (half of one percent) compounding COLA, which will be included with their July 31, 2024, benefit payment. A letter confirming the new benefit amount will be mailed to the recipient's current address on file or can be downloaded from the retiree's RIO Self-Service account at <https://perass.state.nm.us/SelfService/>.

PERA pension recipients under the age of 65 who have been retired no less than two full calendar years (January - December) as of December 31, 2023, will be eligible for a 2024 COLA. Retirees aged 65 or over or who retired via PERA's disability provisions and have been retired no less than one calendar year will also be eligible for a 2024 COLA.

Eligible retirees who meet the following criteria are excluded from the profit-sharing COLA and will instead receive a 2.5% COLA: (1) normal retired members who worked a minimum of 25 years whose pension benefit is less than \$25,000 annually; or (2) disability retired members whose pension benefit is less than \$25,000 annually; or (3) normal retired members who were 75 years of age on or before June 30, 2020.



## Mission Statement

The mission of the Board of the Public Employees Retirement Association is to preserve, protect and administer the Trust to meet its current and future obligations and provide quality services to association members.

# 2024 PERA Retiree Board Member Candidates

## 2024 PERA Retiree Board Election Questions

### Questions Posed to all Retiree Candidates

1. How long have you been a PERA member? How long were you employed in your most recent PERA position? What were your major responsibilities?
2. Education - What is your highest degree attained?
3. Other relevant experience:
4. What special contribution do you believe you would make to the PERA Board?

Information relating to candidates who are seeking election to the board is provided by those candidates. PERA does not endorse nor oppose any specific candidate nor does PERA validate the contents of submitted information. PERA encourages the membership to research and be active in the election of your unpaid, volunteer Board Members.

**Adolfo (Adolf) Zubia**



1. PERA member since 1986. Las Cruces Fire Chief (9 yrs.) - leading 128 fire department employees.
2. Bachelor's - Public Relations. Work toward Masters' Degree in Public Administration.
3. State Fire Marshal South Carolina - 350 employees. Fire Chief, California. Asst. Fire Chief, Clark County Nevada (Las Vegas). President, International Code Council.
4. With unquestioned integrity and commitment to ethical and transparent governance, I am committed to represent the needs of PERA retirees, including fighting to get an appropriate COLA back! I will not vote "against" you getting a 13th check or getting your COLA back. My public service career has provided opportunities to make positive impacts for those I have served. Likewise, my proven visionary leadership, analytical skills, and financial management experience allows me to provide the proper oversight required to protect and grow the PERA trust fund. I will consistently look at how to grow our fund while monitoring strategies, cost and fees.

**Francis P. Page**



1. 37 Years. Retired from Corrections Department (Budget Bureau Chief). Other: Gaming Control Board (Senior Auditor), RLD - Financial Institutions Division (Senior Examiner) and NMHTD (Senior Technician).
2. MA degree (Public Affairs/Administration - NMHU) & BBA degree (Business/Financial Management - UNM). Attended various pension and investment courses.
3. Certified Fraud Examiner (Retired) with ACFE; PERA Board Member (State: 2008 - 2011) & (Retiree: 2021 - Present). Elected Vice-Chair (2021), Acting Board Chair (2021), Current Investment Chair and have held positions on all other Committees. Also, Selective Service Board Member and Army Veteran.
4. Goals are to continue strengthening and maintaining safety of fund, fight against Legislative Board Reorganization and benefit enhancements. I want to strength the fund, so it becomes fully funded for members to have higher COLAs and/or for retirees to receive 13th Checks during these turbulent market times, stop future benefit cuts, be a voice for retirees and bring stability and experience.

AES will mail out ballots to eligible Retiree members on August 9, 2024. Ballots must be received by the Rio Rancho Post Office by noon on September 13, 2024, to be counted. Ballots received after this date are invalid and will not count toward the election results. Please make sure you vote early so your vote will count.

# 2024 PERA Municipal & State Board Member Candidates

## 2024 PERA Municipal & State Board Election Questions

Questions Posed to all Municipal & State Candidates

1. Who is your current employer? What is your current position and how long have you held it? What are your major responsibilities?
2. How long have you been a PERA member? (Which agencies or affiliates and the type of work?)
3. Education- What is your highest degree attained?
4. Other relevant experience:
5. What special contribution do you believe you would make to the PERA Board?

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## 2024 PERA Municipal Board Member Candidates

**Ernesto Apodaca**



1. In my 20-year tenure at the City of Albuquerque, my current position is an Administrative Assistant in the General Services Department's Security Division overseeing the access control system and I've been at it for a little over two years now. However, throughout the years I have had positions ranging from supervisor, dispatcher, records technician, and many other responsibilities gaining insight into city operations.
2. 20 Years
3. I have a CNM Liberal Arts Associate Degree and a positive outlook, I'm prepared for challenges.
4. I also served as a union steward and vice president of AFSCME Local 2962 advocating for municipal workers. Rooted in my faith, I'm driven by a strong work ethic and moral compass.
5. If elected to the NM PERA Board, I'll prioritize fiscal responsibility, accountability, collaboration, and retirement supporting all municipal workers. I'll shape policies reflecting New Mexican values, aiming for a better and brighter future for the PERA community.

**Roberto Ramirez**



1. ABCWUA, journeyman.
2. 22 years
3. Attended NMSU
4. I have proudly served as your elected PERA Municipal member for the last 4 years. As Chair of the Legislative Committee, I have worked for members on significant legislation, allowing members to earn up to 100% of their final average salary and legislation that benefits our police and firefighter members. I will continue to work with the legislature to bring relief to our retirees.
5. On the Board, I have focused on the integrity of the Board by working with fellow members to support staff and operations. This includes hiring a new Executive Director and adopting the first Board strategic plan since 2006. NM employees are fortunate to have one of the best retirement systems in the country. I will work to ensure the solvency of the PERA Fund for current employees and retirees. Please call my cell phone with any questions, 505-507-0975.

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# 2024 PERA State Board Member Candidates

**Edwardo Castillo**



1. NMDOT for 24 years, with multiple promotions. Operational, regulatory and supervisory duties. Experienced with both NMDOT and private-sector employers. Promotions and duties are the result of years of training, commitment to job-related excellence and diverse experience in all job classifications.
- 2.
3. Attended NMSU. Multiple job-related advanced certifications. Efficient with Microsoft Suite.
4. Safety Inspector – Bowen Contractor
5. As a long-time public servant & state employee, I am well positioned to contribute to the oversight & governance of the PERA Trust. As a fiduciary to the trust, I commit to all state employees that I will fulfill my duties on the Board with the highest level of integrity as an educated member of the board with a focus on protecting the fund and ensuring its solvency for current and future members and beneficiaries. I understand the critical need to monitor Trust investments and PERA administration, and I am prepared to handle those key functions.

**J. Michael A. Sisneros**



1. I am currently employed with the First Judicial District Court in Santa Fe, NM as a Pretrial Services Officer II since August 2022.
2. PERA Member since 2013; CYFD - Juvenile Probation Officer I and II; Sate Personnel Office -- Training and Development; New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department - Training and Development; Capital High School - Special and Secondary Education Teacher; City of Santa Fe - Paratransit Division Supervisor.
3. Master of Education in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies; Master of Public Administration; Bachelor of Science in Management; Teacher Certification in Special and Secondary Education.
4. I am born and raised in Santa Fe, NM and have deep strong roots in our State. I offer my life experience and education. I understand the importance of relationships, communication, and transparency to remain strong and viable.
5. I will be a strong voice for safeguarding our retirement for the future generations.

**Nicholas Koluncich**



1. New Mexico State Land Office - Office of General Counsel. I have focused on business law, contracts and negotiations on diverse matters from real estate to renewable energy.
2. Six years.
3. BA USC and Juris Doctor – 1997
4. I have over 25 years of legal experience and education in the very investments which make up PERA members' trust fund and recovered hundreds of millions of dollars in the State of New Mexico and nationwide.
5. My contribution will be to lobby for higher performing investments, lower fees and a contribution to the trust fund from the state budget surplus. I intend to promote transparency and member involvement in PERA's future operations, as I have done for my own clients for decades. Currently lacking an attorney on the Board, my 25 years of securities law experience will complement the PERA Board's numerous financial professionals' skills and bolster investment returns.

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