



Fall/Winter 2024

Investing for Firefighters and Their Families®

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Fund Members,

As the weather is finally cooling off and we prepare for another holiday season in Houston, it is time again to share where we are and where we are going in managing your pension fund. We had a great year financially with a return of 9.5% resulting in the maximum COLA at 4%. Our investment strategy has a long-standing history of outperforming our benchmark as well as other pension plans across the nation.

As we look forward to 2025, please know that the board of trustees and I have been working diligently to build positive relationships with our local and state elected officials and plan to push forward legislation to address many of the issues created by the previous City of Houston administration. I have personally met with this administration and command staff. Their dedication to ensuring we build one of the strongest fire departments in the nation is shown each day through leadership and making hard decisions. Having a Mayor who cares about first responders is something the fire department has needed and deserved for a long time. As the Legislature kicks off in January, please keep an eye out for updates from me on the progress we are making in Austin.

As a reminder we have our annual Christmas luncheon coming up on December 5th, and I hope to see many of you there. Wishing you and your family good health and joy this holiday season! I am honored and grateful to represent all of you and remain committed to protecting and strengthening your retirement benefits.

Brett Besselman
Chairman
Houston Firefighters' Relief and Retirement Fund



Brett Besselman
Chairman of the Board



News from the Board

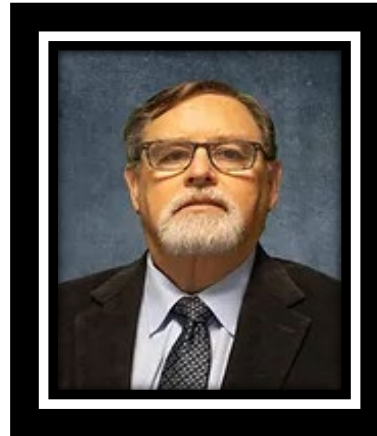
HFRRF BOARD OF TRUSTEES ELECTION

In accordance with the HFRRF Policies and Procedures, candidates for the current HFRRF Board of Trustee election were announced as follows:

Brett Besselman
Position I



David Lantrip
Position X



Both candidates will be sworn in at the January 2025 board meeting. The new 3-year term will begin on January 1, 2025, and will end December 31, 2027.

Memorial Benches – SOLD OUT!

Memorial Pavers - \$100

If you would like to purchase a paver in the Memorial Garden, the order form is available on www.hfrrf.org under HFRRF Memorial on the home page.

Investments Update

In Fiscal Year 2024, the portfolio was impacted by several risks, including heightened geopolitical tensions, ongoing global inflation, and election cycles in various regions of the world. The rise in interest rates had the effect of slowing down economic growth and deal-making activity. It is anticipated that some of the risks will be resolved to some extent in Fiscal Year 2025.

Structure	FY 2024	3 Years	5 Years	10 Years	As of Date
HFRRF Total Portfolio	9.50	4.47	9.21	7.10	6/30/2024
Total Policy Benchmark	9.28	3.69	7.04	6.48	6/30/2024
Excess Return VS Total Policy Benchmark	0.23	0.78	2.17	0.62	6/30/2024

HFRRF Office News



Dalia De La Cruz
Director of Member Services
Celebrating 30 years March 1, 2025

Save
the
Date

Annual Retiree Holiday Luncheon



December 5, 2024
11am – 1pm

HFRRF Greer & Lowdermilk Conference Center

Retirees - There is an Invitation that will be mailed to everyone's address that we have on file. The invitation will have a QR code for you to RSVP. We will also send out an email invitation (through Constant Contact) that will have a RSVP link at the bottom.

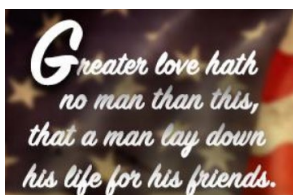
Retiree BBQ



May 1, 2025
11am – 1pm

HFRRF Greer & Lowdermilk Conference Center

HFD Annual Memorial Ceremony



October 18, 2025
11am – 1pm

HFRRF Memorial Garden

Key Dates



HFRRF Board & Committee Meetings

3rd Tuesday of every month
except November and December

Office Closings

November 11	Veterans' Day
November 28 - 29	Thanksgiving
December 24 - 25	Christmas
January 1	New Year's Day
January 20	MLK Day
February 17	Presidents' Day

Office Noon Closures

November 8	January 17
November 27	February 14
December 23	April 18
December 31	

News from Member Services

Service	Amount	Start Date
Cost of Living Adjustment	4%	October 31, 2024
DROP/PROP Interest	6.05%	September 1, 2024
Annual Supplemental Benefit (ASB)		January 10, 2025
Annual Exclusion Letters	\$3,000	January 24, 2025
PROP/DROP Withdrawal		Deadline for 2024: December 15, 2024
Reminder: 1099s are mailed out by Bank of New York (BNY) Mellon, not HFRRF		

DECEMBER 1, 2024 REQUIRED MINIMUM DISTRIBUTION (RMD) FORM OR FORCE

If you are 73 or older and have a DROP and/or PROP account, you are required by the IRS to withdraw a RMD or a 50% tax penalty could be assessed. The required amount is based on your age, spouse's age (if applicable), and your 12/31/2023 DROP/PROP account balance: [RMD Calculator](#) - note this calculator is not accurate if you are 10+ years older than your spouse. Remember, previous withdrawals in 2024 count toward RMD. If member services has not received your DROP or PROP Disbursement Form by December 1, 2024, HFRRF will **force** out your RMD at 10% tax withholding and deposit it to your account on file.

January 2025 Annual Supplemental Benefit (ASB)

You can expect your annual supplemental benefit payment to be disbursed on or before January 10, 2025. Your payment will be distributed to you in the same manner as your monthly pension payment unless otherwise noted. If eligible, and you will be completing a rollover form or W-4P, please have those forms submitted to the Fund no later than December 12, 2024.

Upcoming: ASB forms will be available electronically! Beginning in 2026, the ASB rollover forms and W-4P will be available to complete online through MemberDirect. This will help save you time from having to email or mail the forms. More information to come.

Online DROP/PROP Withdrawals

Did you know that you can make DROP/PROP withdrawals online? Log into [MemberDirect](#) and go to My Account. Choose Forms. For a lump sum withdrawal up to \$50k, use the Disbursement Form. If you want to set up recurring monthly or quarterly withdrawals, submit the Periodic Disbursement Form.

REMINDERS:

- If you recently got married, make sure you submit a marriage license along with your spouse's social security number and date of birth to the pension office, so we can add it to your record.
- If you are a member and have lost a spouse, please contact our office so that your file can be updated.
- If you are a survivor beneficiary and re-marry, move, or change your phone number please update your information with our office so there is no disruption in your pension benefits.
- Keep your contact information updated to help ensure we can connect with you about important information regarding your benefit or account.

Contact Member Services: 281-372-5100, 800-666-9737, or memberservices@hfrf.org

MEMBER SUPPORT-HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Kristi Marx, LCSW

Manager of Member Support & Services

When Grief Get Complicated

It is normal to experience grief after a significant loss, and most people who experience normal or uncomplicated grief can move forward eventually with support from family and friends. However, while normal grief symptoms gradually start to fade, those of complicated grief get worse or linger. If it has been several months or more since your loss and your emotions remain so intense or debilitating that you have trouble going about your normal routine you might be suffering from complicated grief. Complicated grief can lead to major depression, so it is important to seek assistance. If you need resources contact the Manager of Member Support and Services, [Kristi Marx](#).

Questions Regarding Your Deductions?

COH - HR Benefits Services 832-393-6000 benefits@houstontx.gov

Cigna 800-997-1406, 832-393-6191 cityofhoustonserviceinquiries@cigna.com

Cigna Dental 800-997-1406 www.cigna.com

Dearborn National (Life Ins.) 877-442-4207 Claims_Customer_Service@dearbornnational.com

Dennis Holder Scholarship Fund 281-385-8525 hfdscholarship@gmail.com

Standard Life 713-223-9166

HFD Honor Guard 713-376-6640

HFD Pipes and Drums 713-417-8348

HPFFA Medical Supplemental 713-223-9166 ext 1

HPFFA Dental/Vision (Humana) 1-800-833-2223

Houston Fire Museum 713-524-2526

Relative Assistance/Hosp Fund 713-223-9166 ext 5

MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

We are here to help! Regular business hours are Monday – Friday 7:30am – 4:00pm. Administrative staff and member services representatives are available by phone, email, in person, and for virtual appointments. Call member services at 281-372-5100 if you'd like to schedule an individual appointment. A wide range of self-service options are also accessible online 24/7 in [MemberDirect](#). If you need to drop off paperwork after hours, please use the gray drop off box on the front porch.

STAY CONNECTED WITH HFRRF

To Log into MemberDirect:

1. Enter your username and password
2. Answer the challenge question
3. A text message with a code will be sent to the cell phone number on file
4. Enter the 4-digit code
5. Select "trust this device" so no code will be required on that device for 3 months
6. Click continue to access your account

From now on, when you log in, you will not need to answer security questions.

In the future, when you need to update contact information, log into MemberDirect, click "Personal Information" on left side, update cell number, address, etc., then click "update" to save.

Cybersecurity Best Practices for Using Biometrics on your Smartphone

By Kevin Watkins



One thing I constantly preach here at the Fund, NEVER use biometrics to open your phone. ALWAYS use a passcode. Only use biometrics to open apps once you are in your phone.

Biometric authentication methods, such as fingerprints and facial recognition, offer a convenient and secure way to access your mobile device. These technologies can significantly enhance the security of your device by ensuring that only you can unlock it. However, to maximize their effectiveness and protect your personal information, it's crucial to use these features wisely. Here are some key points to consider:

1. Enhanced Security:

- **Unique Identification:** Biometrics provide a unique identifier that is difficult to replicate, making it harder for unauthorized users to access your device.
- **Convenience:** Using biometrics can be faster and more convenient than entering a passcode, encouraging users to secure their devices more consistently.

2. Wise Usage:

- **Selective Application:** Use biometrics primarily for securing sensitive apps rather than for unlocking your device. This adds an extra layer of security, ensuring that even if someone gains access to your phone, they still need your biometric data to open critical apps.
- **Disable for Device Unlocking:** Consider disabling biometrics for unlocking your device to prevent unauthorized access if your phone is lost or stolen.

Using biometrics like fingerprints or facial recognition can enhance the security of your mobile device. However, it's important to use these features wisely to protect your personal information. Here's how to set these features up:

1. Use Biometrics for App Security, Not Device Unlocking

- **iPhone:**
 - Go to **Settings > Face ID & Passcode** (or **Touch ID & Passcode**).
 - Enter your passcode.
 - Scroll to **Other Apps** and enable biometrics for specific apps.
- **Android:**
 - Go to **Settings > Biometrics & Security > App Lock**.
 - Follow the setup instructions and enable biometrics for selected apps.
 - Alternatively, use a third-party app like AppLock to secure individual apps.

2. Disable Biometrics for Device Unlocking

- **iPhone:**
 - Go to **Settings > Face ID & Passcode** (or **Touch ID & Passcode**).
 - Enter your passcode.
 - Toggle off **iPhone Unlock**.
- **Android:**
 - Go to **Settings > Biometrics & Security > Screen Lock Type**.
 - Disable options like **Fingerprint** and **Face Recognition**.

3. General Tips

- **Regularly Update Your Device:** Ensure your device's operating system and apps are up to date to protect against vulnerabilities.
- **Use Strong Passcodes:** Always use a strong passcode in conjunction with biometrics. This provides a backup security measure if biometric authentication fails or is bypassed.
- **Be Cautious with Third-Party Apps:** Only download apps from trusted sources and review their permissions carefully.
- **Monitor App Permissions:** Regularly review and manage app permissions to ensure that only trusted apps have access to your biometric data and other sensitive information.

By following these practices, you can enhance the security of your mobile device and protect your personal data more effectively. Again, use biometrics for apps not to unlock your phone!



New Memorial Plaque

Need help finding an honoree? The Wall of Honor is now searchable! Visit the Memorial and scan the QR code from the new plaque. It will give you location information for where to find each honoree on the wall.



Take advantage of **member exclusive savings** and create unforgettable memories!



Is your family gearing up for a special celebration in 2025? Whether it's your daughter's wedding, nephew's graduation, spouse's family reunion, or your retirement party, now's the time to secure space! Popular spring and summer dates are filling up quickly— so, make your reservation today!

Call now 281-372-5124

MEMBER RATES:

Saturday \$2,925 and Friday/Sunday \$2,275

includes 35% discount

HFD MEMORIAL CEREMONY

October 19, 2024



How to Use Social Media Successfully in Pension Fund Causes

By Joe Gimenez

Social media has been a game-changing platform for Americans to voice their concerns about the issues which affect them daily, like taxes, inflation, and, in the pension fund context, benefits and contributions. Social media has leveled the playing field by making politicians more responsible to the people they serve, when the people express their thoughts and concerns.

But what are the best ways to express those thoughts and concerns on X and Facebook?

HFRRF Trustee Lisa Slagle and I last year attended a seminar hosted by the Texas Association of Public Employee Retirement Systems. The seminar featured Larry Gonzales, a former state Representative who represented Williamson County from 2011-18 in the Texas Legislature. Trustee Slagle and I were really impressed when he said:

“If there is one thing that can really work against you in the Legislature, it is the misuse of social media to harass and abuse lawmakers personally as they go about making important decisions about state laws.”

Gonzalez now operates his own business consulting and public affairs business, Desk 138, LLC. He’s seen how social media affects politicians.

“Bad social media etiquette, where posters basically treat elected officials in a demeaning manner – like they are less than human beings -- can work against your cause. Lawmakers take their jobs seriously and want to make the best effort to do what is right in public policy,” he said. “Name-calling and misrepresenting the motives of officials can set them on edge and become counterproductive.”

Trustee Slagle asked me to offer a few thoughts on how to use social media to help the pension fund, now and in the future, when critical issues come before elected officials, whether at the City, State, or National levels.

1. **Personal stories about how current laws are affecting you – in either a good or bad way – are very influential.** For example, if current benefits are not helping you to meet basic needs, like medicine and food, you should tell your story (but you should also be careful about sharing too much information). Personal stories about a direct experience with current or proposed laws matter greatly to lawmakers. No matter which party they represent, they ran for office to fix problems. They don’t want to create more.
2. **Public safety is incredibly important to politicians.** As a firefighter, your description of how current or proposed laws would help or hinder public safety are incredibly valuable to elected officials. They get a lot of statistical information about public safety. But stats can be helped by your real-world stories. Firefighters are in a unique position to tell those stories.
3. **Praising a politician for their effort should always be a priority.** After giving them some recognition for taking up an issue, you can then gently “correct” them if you’d like to see legislative changes take a different direction. Like Rep. Gonzales indicated, you don’t want to be so negative that lawmakers close off and then work against you.

In sum, be positive and creative on social media. Negativity can work against the issues you most want to succeed in. Your HFRRF leadership team, especially your Chairman Brett Besselman and Executive Director Tim Schauer, are superbly skilled at working with legislators. Supporting them with these social media tips will help HFRRF in City Hall, the Texas Legislature, and the U.S. Congress.

Joe Gimenez operates G3 Public Relations, a full-service communications firm that assists public employee pension funds. Gimenez has worked intermittently with HFRRF since 2003 and was asked to provide this perspective by HFRRF Trustee Lisa Slagle.

IN MEMORY

Our condolences & heartfelt sympathies are extended to families of our members who recently passed away.

DATE	RETIRED MEMBERS	HFD SERVICE
6/8/24	Arthur Calley	1961-1987
6/19/24	Kenneth Denman	1968-1993
7/10/24	Thomas Roberson	1968-1988
7/17/24	Jessie Cortez	1980-2004
7/20/24	Michael Whitney	1980-2003
8/17/24	Richard J. Gillory	1970-1991
8/19/24	Charles Wheeler	1975-2001
8/26/24	Larry Black	1973-2010
8/30/24	Richard C. Sadler	1950-1980
8/31/24	Roy Moore	1982-2021
9/4/24	Roy M. Caudillo	1959-1989
9/12/24	Michael Wayne Roquemore	1980-2013
9/16/24	Billy Bromonsky	1973-2003
9/19/24	Kenneth Richburg	1984-2013
9/30/24	William Curl III	1965-1991
10/2/24	Lawrence Benson	1963-2005
10/3/24	Edmund Trevino Jr.	1972-2011
10/4/24	Robert Pecht	1969-2012
10/6/24	Darryl Tice	1967-1977
10/9/24	Tommy Shelton	1968-2005
10/12/24	Steven M. Lostumbo	1980-1996
10/12/24	Robert Putnam	1974-2002
10/16/24	Charlie Benson	1964-1991
10/16/24	Ronald Worsham	1975-2000
10/17/24	John S. Runnels	1969-1988
10/27/24	Kenneth R. Martin	1969-2003
11/4/24	Victor Peschke Jr.	1972-2008



Gone, but not forgotten.

DATE	ACTIVE MEMBER	HFD SERVICE
11/7/24	Marcelo Garcia III	2016-2024

DATE	BENEFICIARY
7/18/24	Pamela Bazile
8/18/24	Helen D. Gilbert
8/25/24	Ruth Chandler
8/27/24	Darlene Gilley
9/10/24	Laura Cline
9/12/24	Reba Kent
9/23/24	Erma Jean Tucker
10/2/24	Bonnie Stanford
10/5/24	Helen Peacock
10/31/24	Wanda Atchison

HOUSTON FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF AND RETIREMENT FUND

HFRRF's mission is to provide a secure retirement benefit plan for our members through professional administration, prudent management of system assets, sound investment practices, & prompt, courteous delivery of accurate benefits & useful information.



Brett Besselman
Chairman



David Lantrip
Vice Chairman



Lisa Slagle
Secretary



David Riegor
Active Member



Ed Llewellyn
Active Member

HFRRF
Board of
Trustees



Pete Ng
Active Member



Gerard Daniels
Active member



Al Mays
Citizen Member



Arif Rasheed
City Treasurer
Designee

Vacant
Mayor's
Representative

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www.hfrrf.org

