

APERS EMPLOYER NEWS

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2016

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Focus Groups	Page 1
ACT 91: Watch for Obstacles	Page 1
Gasb 68 Resources	Page 2
Gasb Updates Via Email	Page 2
Reporting All New Hires	Page 2
Compass Employer Resources	Page 3
Employer Rates Fy2017	Page 4
Reporting By The Numbers	Page 4

Thanks to our Focus Group Participants



APERS continues to be hard at work developing the COMPASS Employer Self Service (ESS) portal, that will provide all reporting entities a central web-based interface where they can transact all their business with APERS easily and efficiently. And you are helping us do it!

Last fall, APERS hosted a focus groups made up of employer representatives who volunteered a day of their time to help us on this project. They got a preliminary tour of the features of the new system and worked with drafts of some of the training materials we are developing. We want to express our deepest gratitude for their assistance. Their feedback has been invaluable in helping us shape a system that is tailored to your needs.

It is APERS' intention to continue soliciting feedback through focus groups as we move toward the launch of the COMPASS ESS portal. We are anticipating that we will be hosting another focus group sometime in April. Upcoming focus groups will participate in pilot training in order to review the training materials and methods before they are offered to everyone. Our objective is to gain valuable feedback from employers that will shape how we develop and introduce the system and help fulfill our ultimate goal of providing you with the most effective and efficient way to interact with APERS. With the help of our focus groups, we are dedicated to making this a positive transition to a better way of doing things. So once again a big thank you to our past and future focus group members!

Act 91: Reporting Watch for Hidden Obstacles to Compliance



Although the new requirements for electronic reporting and remitting specified by Act 91 have most everyone's attention, much of the focus has been on things like training and processes -- what to do and how to do it. However, one thing you shouldn't overlook is policy. Make sure that your agency or entity doesn't have some board regulation, policy, or organizational structure that could hinder or delay compliance. For example, an agency might have a regulation that specifies using checks for remittance. This would need to be changed in order to comply with Act 91.

The July 2017 deadline will be here before you know it, so be sure you are ready on all fronts. Remember too that the law does allow employers with special difficulty in achieving compliance to request an extension to the deadline, but they will need to document the reasons for the difficulty and their plan for overcoming them. The request for extension must be filed before the deadline.

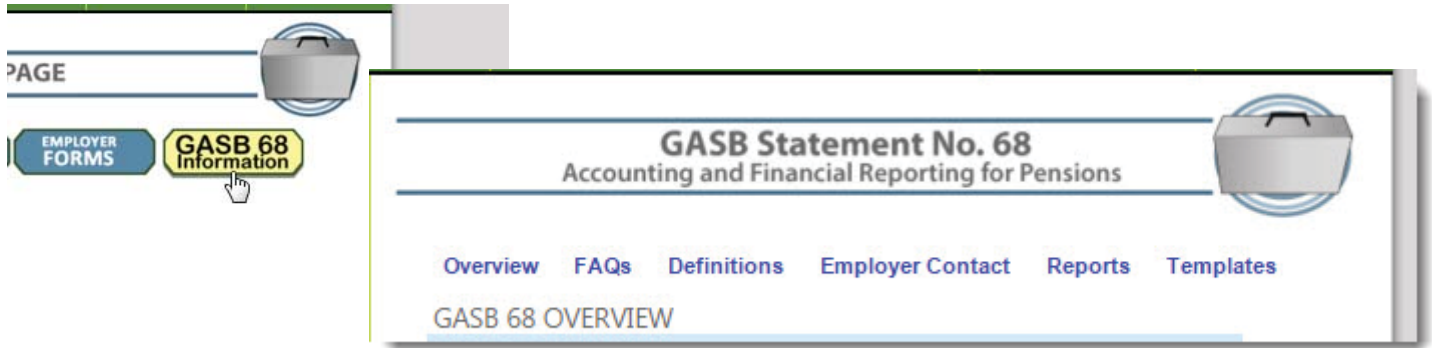
BE A PART OF OUR NEXT FOCUS GROUP!

- Spend a day learning to navigate COMPASS ESS.
- Offer suggestions on how employers will best learn this new integrated way of reporting and remitting.
- Help APERS improve its outreach to you and all employers.

GASB 68 Resources available on the web

APERS is committed to providing employers and their auditors with all of the information needed to understand the technical concepts of GASB 68 and to successfully implement the new pension financial reporting requirements.

To this end, we have added a new GASB 68 section to the employer area of our website (www.apers.org). It contains an overview of the requirements, answers to common questions, explanations of terminology, and some useful documents and templates



When the information becomes available, APERS will also publish to the site the net pension liability allocation, the schedule of pension amounts, the required disclosures, and the independent auditor's opinion.

You will also find links to several government publications that address various topics related to compliance as well as a link to a highly useful GASB 68 "toolkit" on the official GASB 68 website.

GASB 68 Email Updates

The Division of Legislative Audit is currently auditing the June 30, 2015 GASB 68 information. APERS anticipates that the data needed by employers will be available before the end of February 2016.

Unless otherwise requested, APERS will provide employers the employer allocations, pension amounts, and related note disclosure information they need via email.

If you did not receive the audited June 30, 2014 GASB 68 employer information or you have not completed our online survey, you may not be on our mailing list.

If you need to be added to the list or want further information on your responsibilities under GASB 68, please contact APERS CFO Jason Willett by email at the following address -- Jason.s.willett@arkansas.gov.

Inform APERS of ALL New Hires

Occasionally we need to remind our employers that, whenever they hire someone, APERS must be informed of the new employee, even if he or she is not eligible for enrollment in the system*. If the new employee is ineligible, the employer must file an Employee Exclusion Acknowledgement and give the reason for the exclusion (see the form for the specific exclusions).

If the new employee is eligible (including those who are already active members of APERS), the employer must file an Employee Enrollment Request. The bottom line is that you cannot hire anyone, whether eligible for membership in APERS or not, without reporting that hire to APERS using the proper form.

* College/universities are excluded if their new employee chooses an alternative retirement plan.



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Have Questions? Need Help?

Arkansas Public Employees Retirement System
124 West Capitol, Suite 400 • Little Rock, AR 72201
501-682-7800 • 1-800-682-7377

Upcoming Compass Employer Self Service (ESS) Training and Resources

Starting in the fall of 2016, APERS will begin offering online training materials on using COMPASS Employer Self Service (ESS). The online training should be available by October, and it will provide a permanent resource for self-directed learning. Classroom training will follow in early 2017.

Training and Support

In January and February 2017, will be ready to conduct classroom sessions both in our Little Rock offices and at various locations around the state. We will announce the dates and locations in future correspondence.

Classroom Training

As we have done in the past, APERS will continue to host training classes several times a year at our Little Rock offices and satellite locations in various parts of the state. APERS will assist employers in transitioning to and using the COMPASS Employer Self Service (ESS) portal with a variety of training and support services, including classroom tutoring, online instruction, and centralized support that will cover the following topics:

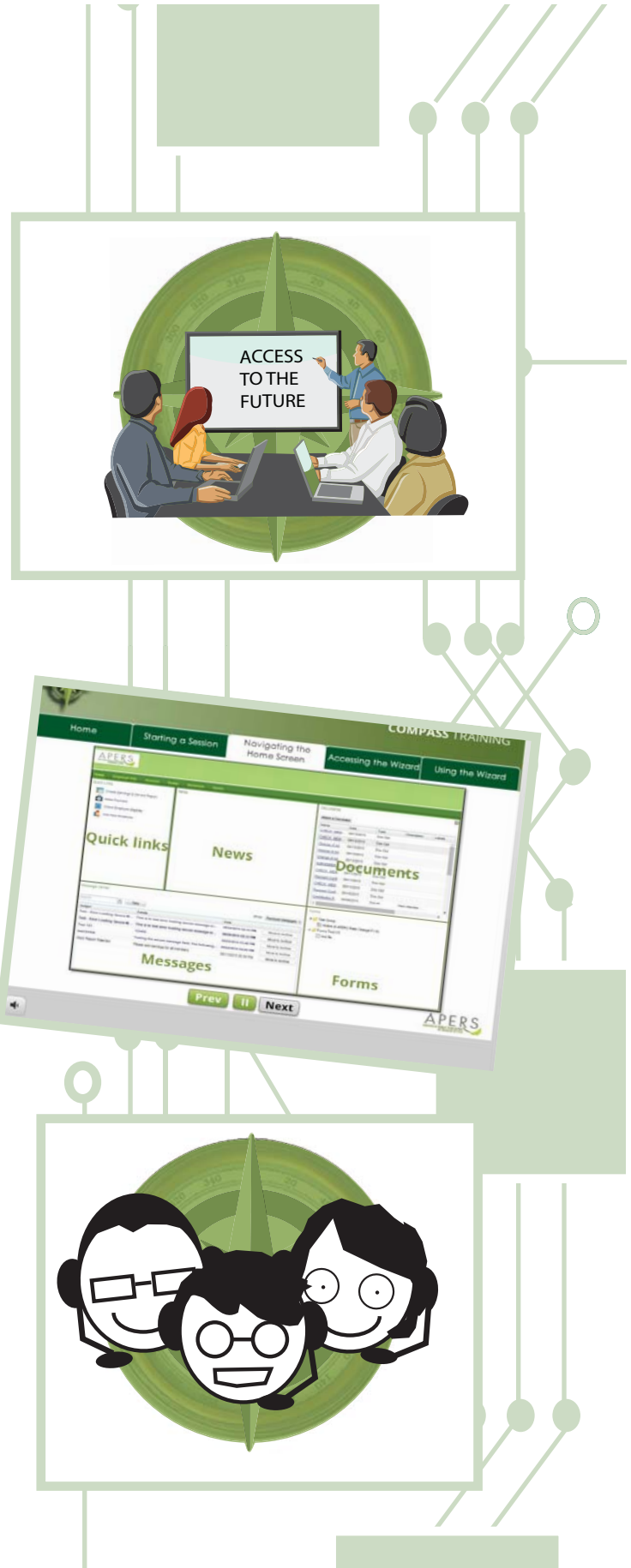
1. Accessing and navigating COMPASS ESS
2. Reporting through COMPASS ESS
3. Enrolling members through COMPASS ESS
4. Remitting ACH bank payments through COMPASS ESS

Online Instruction

APERS is currently developing a library of training and support materials you will be able to access online whenever and wherever you need them. Each process will have its own support module that demonstrates how to accomplish the necessary tasks. The materials will vary depending on the subject being covered and may include audio and video instruction as well as step-by-step tutorials complete with quizzes to help users gauge their progress. The library of training materials is scheduled to go online in October of 2016.

Centralized Live Support

As we roll out the portal, we will also be consolidating our live support for employers. Currently, different processes are handled by different sections of APERS, and requests for assistance have to be directed to the right place. For example, our Member Records section answers queries about enrollment, whereas reporting issues need to be routed to our Accounting and Reporting section. Once the portal is in operation, all employer support will be handled by a single point of service that can help you with any of the responsibilities of a participating employer.





124 West Capitol Ave, Suite 400
Little Rock, AR 72201

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In this Issue

Thamks Focus Groups - Watch for hidden Obstacles - GASB
68 Resrouces - GASB 68 Email Updates - Reporting New Hires
- Compass Resources Coming - Employer Rates - Reporting
Employers Numbers

Employer Rates FY2017

In accordance with Arkansas Code § 24-2-701(c)(3), the Arkansas Public Employees Retirement System (APERS) Board of Trustees, at its regularly scheduled meeting on November 18, 2015, accepted the August 19, 2015 actuarial valuation and approved the employer contribution rates listed below, which are all effective July 1, 2016.

For payroll processing, the rate change should be effective beginning the first pay period in July, which may include earnings from June 2016.

APERS	14.50%
Wildlfe Officers	26.50%
Military Departemnt Civilian Fire Fighter	26.50%
District Judges (under ADJRS provisions)	25.50%
School Employers	4.0%

Employer Reporting by the Numbers

APERS covered employers who reported to APERS in FY2015 through AASIS, online reporting, or APERS reporting forms fell into the following divisions for a grand total of 709 reporting entities!

Reporting Entities 2015

