



Providing Benefits for Life

January 6, 2025

Dear PERS Retiree:

The Public Employees' Retirement System of Mississippi (PERS) is seeking petitions for candidates to fill one of two retiree representative positions on the PERS Board of Trustees. The six-year term will run from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2031. Candidates must be a retired member receiving a retirement allowance from PERS.

The Board of Trustees Candidate Nomination and Petition can be downloaded at [www.pers.ms.gov/leadership](http://www.pers.ms.gov/leadership).

**Election Schedule:**

- February 6, 2025 Deadline for receipt of nominations and petitions by PERS (5 p.m.)
- February 26, 2025 PERS Board certifies ballot at regularly scheduled meeting
- March 12, 2025 PERS mails ballots
- April 16, 2025 Deadline for receipt of ballots by PERS (5 p.m.)
- April 23, 2025 PERS Board certifies election results at regularly scheduled meeting

**Runoff Schedule:** *(If necessary)*

- May 14, 2025 PERS mails ballots for runoff
- June 18, 2025 Deadline for receipt of ballots by PERS (5 p.m.)
- June 25, 2025 PERS Board certifies election results at regularly scheduled meeting

For further details about the election process, see PERS Board Regulation 17, *Election of Members of the Board* ([www.pers.ms.gov](http://www.pers.ms.gov)). For questions, contact PERS Counsel and Policy Advisor Davetta Lee at 601-359-9516, 800-444-7377 ext. 9516, or [dlee@pers.ms.gov](mailto:dlee@pers.ms.gov).

Sincerely,

H. Ray Higgins, Jr.  
*Executive Director*

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H. Ray Higgins, Jr. <i>Executive Director</i>	<i>Board of Trustees:</i>	Kelly Breland <i>State Employees, Chair</i>	Bill Benson <i>County Employees, Vice Chair</i>	Kimberly Hanna <i>Municipal Employees</i>	George Dale <i>Retirees</i>	Chris Graham <i>Gubernatorial Appointee</i>
		Randy D. McCoy <i>Retirees</i>	David McRae <i>State Treasurer</i>	Brian Rutledge <i>Institutions of Higher Learning Employees</i>	Jay Smith <i>Public Schools Community/Jr. Colleges</i>	Terrance Yarbrough <i>State Employees</i>



c/o YesElections  
 PO Box 448  
 Mineola, NY 11501

**Electronic Service Requested**

Pre-Sorted  
 First Class  
 Postage **PAID**  
 Hicksville, NY  
 Permit No. 734

FirstName LastName  
 Address1  
 Address2  
 Address3  
 City, State, Postal Code  
 Country

**To Vote Online:**

1. To vote online, please go to: [vote.yeselections.com/MSPERS](https://vote.yeselections.com/MSPERS)
2. Enter your Election Code and Voting PIN (below)
3. Follow the on-screen instructions

**To Vote by Mail:**

1. On the ballot below, fill in the bubble to the left of the candidate of your choice
2. Tear the ballot at the perforated line and mail (no envelope necessary)
3. All ballots must be received by YesElections by 5:00 pm on April 16, 2025

**To Vote by Phone:**

1. Call **(877) 247-6979**
2. Follow the prompts to enter your Election Code and Voting PIN (below)



ElectionCode



VotingPIN

**Retiree Representative**

Your vote is vital to ensure your interests are represented on the Public Employees' Retirement System of Mississippi (PERS) Board of Trustees.

Please cast your vote for one of the candidates listed on the ballot below to serve on the PERS Board of Trustees.

All votes must be received by 5 p.m., April 16, 2025.

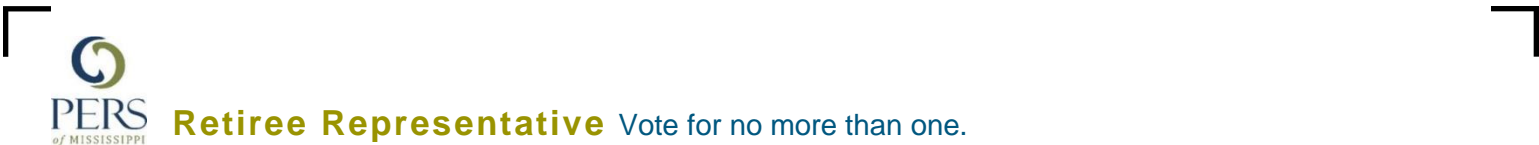
For a replacement ballot or to ask a question, contact: [help+MSPERS@yeselections.com](mailto:help+MSPERS@yeselections.com) or (866) 384-9978.

**Official Mail-in Ballot**

Mark your selection by completely filling in the circle as shown.



*(Fold and detach along the perforated line)*



- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Dr. Johnny L. Allen | <input type="radio"/> Attorney Barbara M. Blackmon | <input type="radio"/> Dr. Melody L. Fortune |
| <input type="radio"/> Dr. Randy D. McCoy  | <input type="radio"/> Mr. Fred Nelson, Jr.         | <input type="radio"/> Dr. Sherry M. Ponder  |

ControlNumber

<p><b>Dr. Johnny L. Allen</b></p> <p><b>Biography:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Northeast Mississippi Community College, president</li> <li>Mississippi State University, doctorate, agricultural education</li> <li>High school &amp; community college agriculture instructor</li> <li>Community college dean, vice president, and president</li> </ul>	<p><b>Rienzi</b></p> <p><b>Candidate Statement:</b></p> <p>My fellow retirees and I have spent our working lives in the service of others. The beneficiaries deserve to know that the Board of Trustees of PERS is dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the trust fund that provides the funds from which their retirement benefits are drawn. The contributions, investments, and earnings of our retirement system must be maintained for the exclusive benefit of current and future retirees. The security of my fellow retirees is my only purpose for seeking a position on the Board of Trustees.</p>	<p><b>Retired 2015</b></p>
<p><b>Attorney Barbara M. Blackmon</b></p> <p><b>Biography:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mississippi State Senator</li> <li>New York University, LL.M. in taxation</li> <li>University of Mississippi, J.D.</li> <li>University of Alabama, master’s, business administration</li> <li>Jackson State University, bachelor’s, business administration</li> </ul>	<p><b>Canton</b></p> <p><b>Candidate Statement:</b></p> <p>As State Senator, I served on the Finance Committee for 20 years where all PERS legislation was assigned. I was Vice Chair of Finance at one time. I handled pertinent PERS legislation that became law. My business administration background and taxation advanced law degree uniquely equip me to evaluate recommendations from actuaries and brokerage firms to guarantee the soundness of PERS. My educational, legal and legislative training make me suited to insure you are well represented. As a retiree, I humbly ask for your vote.</p>	<p><b>Retired 2024</b></p>
<p><b>Dr. Melody L. Fortune</b></p> <p><b>Biography:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delta State University, associate professor</li> <li>Mississippi State University, doctorate, public policy &amp; administration; master’s, health prom &amp; education</li> <li>Associate Professor Emeritus</li> <li>Certified Public Manager</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ridgeland</b></p> <p><b>Candidate Statement:</b></p> <p>I believe in fiscal answerability. In my previous jobs at the MSDH, I wrote and attained millions of dollars of grant funding. I strongly believe in being a good steward of monies and ensuring financial accountability. When initially hired as the Director of Breast and Cervical Cancer Program at MSDH the funding level was about \$691 thousand dollars. When I left MSDH to take a professor job at Delta State University, funding exceeded \$2 million. I will work to ensure that the interests of members in PERS are represented and their voices heard.</p>	<p><b>Retired 2023</b></p>
<p><b>Dr. Randy D. McCoy</b></p> <p><b>Biography:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PERS Board, 12 years</li> <li>Mississippi State, accounting degree</li> <li>Vanderbilt, doctorate</li> <li>37 years in education, 21 as superintendent (Brookhaven; Clinton; Oak Ridge, TN; Tupelo; Meridian interim)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Tupelo</b></p> <p><b>Candidate Statement:</b></p> <p>Having served twelve years on the PERS Board, I am seeking re-election to continue serving you. During these twelve years, I have become the second most senior board member and have served as chairman of the board twice. RE-ELECT me to continue the work of stabilizing our retirement system’s financial status, to protect and assure the continued distribution of benefits retirees have been promised, to assure that the current working members will have their benefits available to them when they retire, and to be a positive voice for PERS to the public and to the Legislature.</p>	<p><b>Retired 2009</b></p>
<p><b>Mr. Fred Nelson, Jr.</b></p> <p><b>Biography:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Jackson Police Department, lieutenant</li> <li>Jackson State University, bachelor’s, business administration</li> <li>Jackson Police Academy 1994</li> <li>Certified through Mississippi Law Enforcement Officers Training Academy</li> </ul>	<p><b>Jackson</b></p> <p><b>Candidate Statement:</b></p> <p>I am Fred Nelson Jr, married to the former Kimwana Collins. We share 8 children &amp; 3 grands. As a proud 2015 Retiree of the Jackson Police Department and contributor to PERS, my Family depends on the benefits, that You and I have Invested in Our Public Employees Retirement System, which to most of Us has spanned, what seems to be a Life Time.</p> <p>As a Retired Law Enforcement Officer, I pledge to safeguard “OUR” Investments &amp; Contributions for All the Past, Present, &amp; Future Retiree’s of the Great State of Mississippi &amp; it’s contributing Agencies.</p>	<p><b>Retired 2015</b></p>
<p><b>Dr. Sherry M. Ponder</b></p> <p><b>Biography:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Biloxi Schools, teacher and administrator</li> <li>University of Southern Mississippi; bachelor’s, special education; master’s and doctorate, administration</li> <li>Career K-12, IHL educator</li> <li>School Board, chair 14 years</li> </ul>	<p><b>Waveland</b></p> <p><b>Candidate Statement:</b></p> <p>As a fresh new voice on the MS PERS Board, I am committed to continue the stability of financial investments important to our current and future retirees. With leadership experience on both library and health foundation boards, I have worked with financial advisors to lead in the growth management of multifaced million dollar investments. I am a capable leader eager and willing to use my life-experiences to be a strong voice for PERS. It is my pledge to work tirelessly with the Board of Trustees to support our PERS mission.</p>	<p><b>Retired 2010</b></p>

*(Fold and detach along the perforated line)*

**BRM ART  
PLACEHOLDER**