Dear Colleagues,

The past year at NCPERS has been defined by significant successes and extraordinary changes. Over the past year, we celebrated our 65th year of existence as the nation’s largest trade association advocating for public pensions, while at the same time facing increasing scrutiny on our systems and attacks on public employee benefits. We were successful in having our HELPS Retirees legislation introduced, and ultimately signed into law, that provides an exceptional monetary benefit to retired public safety employees. We bid farewell to Fred Nesbitt—who was with NCPERS for six years—and welcomed Hank Kim as our new Executive Director. And we have embarked on an expansion that will carry this organization into the future and will build on its considerable history as the Voice for Public Pensions.

This year, I have made it my mission to promote education at NCPERS. I believe that the better educated our members are, the better they can work for the benefit of the 20 million public employees and retirees who are depending on them for their retirement benefits. To that end, we have increased the number and variety of educational conferences that we host. Indeed, in September of last year, we held our first Public Sector Health Care Symposium & Exhibition, which drew more than 250 attendees to learn about the numerous health care issues confronting the public sector. In July we will inaugurate the Program for Advanced Trustee Studies in partnership with the Harvard Law School’s Labor & Worklife Program, where 50 seasoned trustees will engage in an intensive day-and-a-half study of significant issues related to their fiduciary duties. And we have recently reached agreement to take over the reins of the Public Safety Employees Pension & Benefits Conference. This formalizes a long-standing relationship that NCPERS staff has had with the public safety conference. By leveraging NCPERS’ resources in the development and production of the conference, we will be able to improve the educational value and sustain the program for years to come.

We are continuing to push forward in our efforts to promote and protect defined benefit plans by forcefully advocating for the cause. Last summer, we hired Ryan Francis as NCPERS’ first director of communications to help in this effort. Ryan came to NCPERS after a two-year stint at the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, where he helped shape testimony and speeches, provided research and briefing materials on pension issues, and helped manage executive communications at the Corporation. Chief among his duties will be increasing NCPERS’ visibility and shaping the messages we use when talking about defined benefit plans for public employees.

We also have been working this past year on instituting new tools to help support our members as they engage in their duties on behalf of America’s public employees. We are striving to become a more customer-focused organization, and one of the ways that we think that can be achieved is through our interaction with our members and the general public. We are unveiling here at our 66th Annual Conference & Exhibition our new, redesigned website at www.NCPERS.org. This, too, is part of our communications strategy that will increase our visibility and ensure that we are the primary source for those interested in public pension issues. In redesigning the website, we wanted to make certain that the site was easily navigable and the information presented on it was easily accessible. We also wanted to create a platform that could more readily be improved upon as necessity required. Among the increased functionalities that we have built into the new website is the ability to review and download old issues of The Monitor and PERSist, the ability to search for corporate member contacts on the website based on the services they provide, and implementation of a bulletin board system so that members can communicate with each other, seeking guidance and counsel through an open forum. And we will continue to upgrade the site with added features that will be beneficial to NCPERS members.

This organization has never been stronger, and I give credit to the members of NCPERS for their unflagging support of our efforts. As I wrote above, the past year has been one marked by significant successes and extraordinary changes. Change is good, and I think that change brings opportunity. And I look forward to the next year as President of NCPERS, and all of the opportunities and successes that this organization will meet.

Bob Podgorny  
NCPERS President