Welcome to the Annual Conference & Exhibition in New Orleans! We look forward to welcoming you and providing you with a first-rate education and a venue to network with your colleagues and other pension professionals.

The theme of this year’s Conference is *Banding Together for Retirement Security*. This theme plays on a couple of different levels. There is of course retirement security for public employees. That naturally centers on preserving defined-benefit pensions for our members. During the past year, new assaults on public pension plans and the financial well-being of our beneficiaries have arisen. NCPERS and its leadership have devoted significant time and resources to addressing those challenges.

The assaults came from a variety of places, including the US Senate, federal bankruptcy courts, state legislatures, and even well-known foundations with positive public personas but with dark and — until recently — hidden agendas. The political drumbeat for so-called reform — which is really an organized campaign to demonize and discredit our defined-benefit plans and replace them with defined-contribution plans, or worse — was injected with new energy by these high-profile actors. But NCPERS, trading on its status as the official spokesperson for our sector and as an information source trusted by the media, has risen to the challenge, with positive results.
LETTER FROM THE NCPERS PRESIDENT

Banding Together for Retirement Security also applies to efforts to bring up retirement security to those in the private sector who do not have access to any employer-sponsored retirement plan. Our Secure Choice Pension initiative is gaining significant momentum. There are currently eight states that have passed legislation to implement or at a minimum study the feasibility of implementing a Secure Choice plan. And there are an additional 10+ states that hope to enact legislation in 2015.

There is no shortage of challenges and opportunities ahead. And for many of us, this Annual Conference & Exhibition is a continuation of our commitment to Banding Together for Retirement Security. I encourage you to attend the sessions and take back to your plans all that you have learned. Our futures depend on your actively exercising your fiduciary responsibilities of learning (and applying what you’ve learned) for the benefit of your participants. Have a great Conference!

Melvyn Aaronson
NCPERS President