Welcome to the Annual Conference and Exhibition in Hollywood, Florida!

This is my first full year of leading this great organization, and I am eager to confront the challenges that we face. The challenges began almost immediately in 2017. One of the stated goals of the majority party – which controls all levers of power in Washington, D.C. – is to undo a Department of Labor (DOL) regulation that provided legal clarity as to whether states can establish retirement savings programs for small businesses that currently don't provide an employer-sponsored plan to their employees. The DOL regulation stated that in DOL's opinion, states can sponsor such plans and they would not be preempted by the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA).

As of the time this book is headed to print, House Joint Resolution (H.J. Res.) 66, which would undo this regulation and inject legal uncertainty into this space, is being actively pursued in the US Congress. H.J. Res. 66 passed the US House of Representatives on February 15, 2017. The senate majority leader has deliberately kept the vote schedule on H.J. Res. 66 hidden, so we don’t know exactly when it might come to the Senate floor for a vote.

Sadly, challenges to public pensions continue as well. Currently, we have 27 states on a watch list of states with adverse public pension legislation moving through the legislative process. Further, the 2016 national elections resulted in the Republican Party’s picking up four trifectas: Iowa, Kentucky, Missouri, and New Hampshire. Two states – Nevada and North Carolina – changed from Republican trifectas to divided government, while one state – Vermont – changed from a Democratic trifecta to divided government. The 2017 state legislative sessions began with a total of 25 Republican trifectas, 6 Democratic trifectas, and 19 states under divided government.
We are very proud of our long history and that of our member plans. What public pensions have achieved for tens of millions of hardworking public employees over 150 years is nothing short of amazing. Providing retirement security in an efficient, low-cost, and sustainable way to teachers, public safety personnel, and other state and local public servants is a major achievement.

Those who seek to undermine our plans still refuse to acknowledge our mission, history, and success. They attack public pensions as dinosaurs that have outlived their usefulness or as special interests pitting public pensions against taxpayers. These assaults come from a variety of places, including the US Congress, federal bankruptcy courts, state legislatures, and well-known foundations with positive public personas but dark and – until recently – hidden agendas.

NCPERS is undaunted! I am excited about the challenges and opportunities ahead. While I cannot see the future, I am certain that NCPERS will continue to play a leading role in that future.

I encourage you to attend the sessions and take back to your plans all that you have learned. Our future depends on you actively exercising your fiduciary responsibility of learning (and applying what you’ve learned) for the benefit of your participants. Have a great conference!

Daniel Fortuna
NCPERS President