

Empower Retirement Plan Advisor

Q & A with Justin Hoffman



Justin Hoffman is a Retirement Plan Advisor for State of Alaska plan members in the Southeast region and remote areas of the state. His office is in the State Office Building in Juneau, but often travels when circumstances allow.

Justin was born in San Diego, California and moved with his parents to Nebraska as a child. After moving back to California to attend college at California State University San Marcos, Justin completed his studies in 2012 and began teaching. In 2016, Justin was recruited by a friend in the Kansas City office of Empower Retirement to help educate adults about retirement. For the first few years, he helped people all over the country, but in 2019 he was asked to move to Juneau, Alaska and work exclusively with members participating in the State of Alaska

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PERS Performance in Fiscal Year 2020

The Division of Retirement and Benefits (Division) prepares a Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) which is available online at [Alaska.gov/drb/pers/employee/resources/cafr.html](https://alaska.gov/drb/pers/employee/resources/cafr.html). The Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) CAFR provides comprehensive financial, investment, actuarial, and statistical data.

The Division also posts the results of the annual actuarial valuation online at [Alaska.gov/drb/pers/employee/resources/actuarialValuationReports.html](https://alaska.gov/drb/pers/employee/resources/actuarialValuationReports.html). This report contains the funding status of the PERS, as well as the data, assumptions and methods used to develop contribution rate recommendations. As of June 30, 2019, the date of the latest actuarial valuation, the Defined Benefit Unfunded Accrued Liability was \$4,803,690,000.

Tiers I, II & III include a defined benefit pension plan and the Alaska retiree healthcare trust. The PERS DCR plan includes a defined contribution pension plan, occupational death and disability plans for peace officers/firefighters and for all other employees, a healthcare reimbursement arrangement, and a retiree medical plan.

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PERS Performance in Fiscal Year 2020

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Changes in PERS Assets During Fiscal Year 2020		
Additions and Deductions	<u>Tiers I-III</u>	<u>PERS DCR</u>
<i>Fiduciary Net Position at June 30, 2019</i>	\$ 17,257,097,000	\$ 1,809,206,000
Additions		
Employer Contributions.....	\$ 457,326,000	\$ 129,962,000
Plan Member Contributions.....	74,514,000	109,124,000
State of Alaska Contributions.....	79,487,000	-
Net Investment Income.....	696,277,000	81,116,000
Other.....	<u>81,789,000</u>	<u>83,000</u>
Total Additions	\$ 1,389,393,000	\$ 320,285,000
Deductions		
Pension Benefits Paid.....	\$ 885,252,000	\$ 479,000
Healthcare Benefits Paid.....	439,785,000	267,000
Member Refunds and Disbursements.....	10,271,000	49,620,000
Administrative Expenses.....	<u>28,510,000</u>	<u>4,255,000</u>
Total Deductions	\$ 1,363,818,000	\$ 54,621,000
<i>Fiduciary Net Position at June 30, 2020</i>	\$ 17,282,672,000	\$ 2,074,870,000
Statement of PERS Assets as of June 30, 2020		
Assets	<u>Tiers I-III</u>	<u>PERS DCR</u>
Short-Term Investments.....	\$ 159,395,000	\$ 10,194,000
Securities Lending Collateral.....	22,205,000	844,000
Empower Account.....	-	1,051,000
Other Receivables.....	17,574,000	11,433,000
Investments, at Fair Value.....	17,142,655,000	2,053,224,000
Other Assets.....	<u>982,000</u>	<u>-</u>
Total Assets	\$ 17,342,811,000	\$ 2,076,746,000
Liabilities		
Securities Lending Collateral Payable.....	\$ 22,205,000	\$ 844,000
Accrued Expenses and Other Liabilities.....	<u>37,934,000</u>	<u>1,032,000</u>
Total Liabilities	\$ 60,139,000	\$ 1,876,000
<i>Fiduciary Net Position at June 30, 2020</i>	\$ 17,282,672,000	\$ 2,074,870,000

Summary of Fiscal Year 2020

- There were 152 PERS employers.
- At June 30, 2019, there were 12,152 PERS Tier I-III employees and 21,902 PERS Tier IV employees.
- PERS employers paid 22% of each employee's gross salary in addition to the contributions paid by the covered employees. The State paid an additional \$159,055,000 to meet the actuarially determined contribution rate of 28.62%.
- Based on the June 30, 2019 actuarial valuation, there were 36,310 people who received monthly PERS pension benefits, an increase of 2.4% over the prior year. PERS retirees and beneficiaries received an average annual pension benefit of \$29,882. 🐦

Counseling Resources for Employees

If you participate in the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS), the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS), Judicial Retirement System (JRS), Elected Public Officers Retirement System (EPORS), the Alaska Supplemental Annuity Plan (SBS-AP), or the Alaska Deferred Compensation Plan, you have a team of specialists ready and prepared to help you understand the benefits available to you.

Meet Your Counselors



Natalia Golovatiuk grew up in Odessa City, Ukraine. She joined the Division of Retirement and Benefits as a Member Service Center agent in 2011 and was promoted to a position of counselor in 2013. The retirement and benefits world can be flooded with complex rules, policies, procedures, and statutes and regulations, but Natalia believes it can be transparent and simple. She enjoys helping members and presenting complex things in a simple way.



Joshua Hartman joined the Division of Retirement and Benefits in 2018. A fan of “20 Questions,” the role of counselor is a perfect match for him and the members he meets with. He enjoys the variety this position brings and is ecstatic to have the opportunity to talk with and help people across the great State of Alaska.



Brandon Roomsburg is a lifelong Alaskan and has been with the Division for almost nine years. Brandon truly enjoys helping his fellow Alaskans achieve their retirement goals, assisting them through the process, and helping them understand their benefits. His intention is to remain working in the Division until his own retirement, due to how rewarding and meaningful this work is to him.



Mark Rosier loves Alaska and working with the awesome team at the Division of Retirement and Benefits. Originally from Michigan, Mark was imported to Alaska 16 years ago after meeting his Alaskan-born wife at the University of Michigan. After nine years of retirement counseling, he still loves helping State of Alaska retirement plan members understand their benefits.



Debbie Bialka-Benedict started with the Division of Retirement and Benefits in 2001. Debbie believes that the members are the best thing about her job—knowing she is able to assist someone with their retirement planning is very rewarding to her. Debbie loved her job when she was first hired in 2001, and still loves it today.



Becky Sheridan has been a retirement counselor at the Division for six years. Before joining the team, she was at Empower Retirement for five years. There are many decisions members must make regarding their retirement, and she enjoys helping everyone learn about their retirement benefits. Becky enjoys breaking down all the different things they need to know into more easily digestible information.



Michelle Holland-Zenger came back into State service in the summer of 2016 after working in the human resources field in private industry. She absolutely adores her job as a retirement counselor—it is interesting, challenging, and very rewarding. Michelle feels privileged to help members by providing personalized information that can assist them in making major life decisions. She also truly enjoys the team of professionals with whom she works.

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PERS and TRS Receives the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Award

Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada has awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting to the State of Alaska Public Employees' Retirement System and the Teachers' Retirement System for its comprehensive annual financial report (CAFR) for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2019. The CAFR has been judged by an impartial panel to meet the high standards of the program, which includes demonstrating a

constructive "spirit of full disclosure" to clearly communicate its financial story and motivate potential users and user groups to read the CAFR.

The Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management. 

Empower Retirement Plan Advisor

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retirement plans.

Justin finds great satisfaction in helping and teaching people about retirement, and likes to think that most who talk with him find the time well-spent.

When he is not advising and educating Justin likes testing new recipes, reading obsessively, playing games, and exploring hiking trails in Juneau.

Q & A with Justin

(edited for clarification)

What motivates you to work as a Retirement Plan Advisor?

I love getting to help people. I went to school to be a teacher so this feels like a continuation of that kind of work, where I can teach people how to retire.

What credentials do Retirement Plan Advisors who work with EMPOWER hold?

All of us are registered federally, as well as with all 50 states and the US territories. We all have the series 6, 63, 65, and SEI licenses.

What plans does Empower administer?

Empower specifically administers the Defined Contribution (DCR) accounts within the State, so

most commonly PERS and TRS accounts for members who entered service after June 30, 2006, as well as the Supplemental Annuity (SBS-AP) and Deferred Compensation (DCP) accounts, and several of the local municipality and specialist accounts.

What direct services can you provide for a member of PERS or TRS who has defined contribution accounts?

We assist members in both the Defined Contribution (DCR) and Defined Benefit (DB) plans with planning for retirement. Our main job is to help pull income and projections from all sources to see what people are on track for, from a monetary perspective, in retirement, and what they might do now to improve their future financial situation.

Do you, as an EMPOWER Representative, provide fiduciary advice to plan participants?

We are fiduciary advisors, meaning it is our obligation to act in the best interest of the people we assist. In addition, we are non-commissioned salaried advisors, so we're not trying to push or sell anything. At any point in time, the advice or guidance we provide is what we believe to be in the best interest of the member.

What advice do you have for new members who

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Retirees in Touch

Meet Roger Lockwood

Retirement as a Forest Fire Lookout



One of the first questions asked by tourists on Roger Lockwood's fire lookout is, "Don't you get bored up here?" His answer is simple: "No."

In 1995, after teaching in a small, one-room Hutterite school in rural Montana, Roger made the life-changing decision to move to Alaska. For many years, he taught students in small communities from Manakotak to Nuiqsut before retiring from education in Alaska. Roger moved to Florida in 2004, where he continued his teaching career for 12 more years.

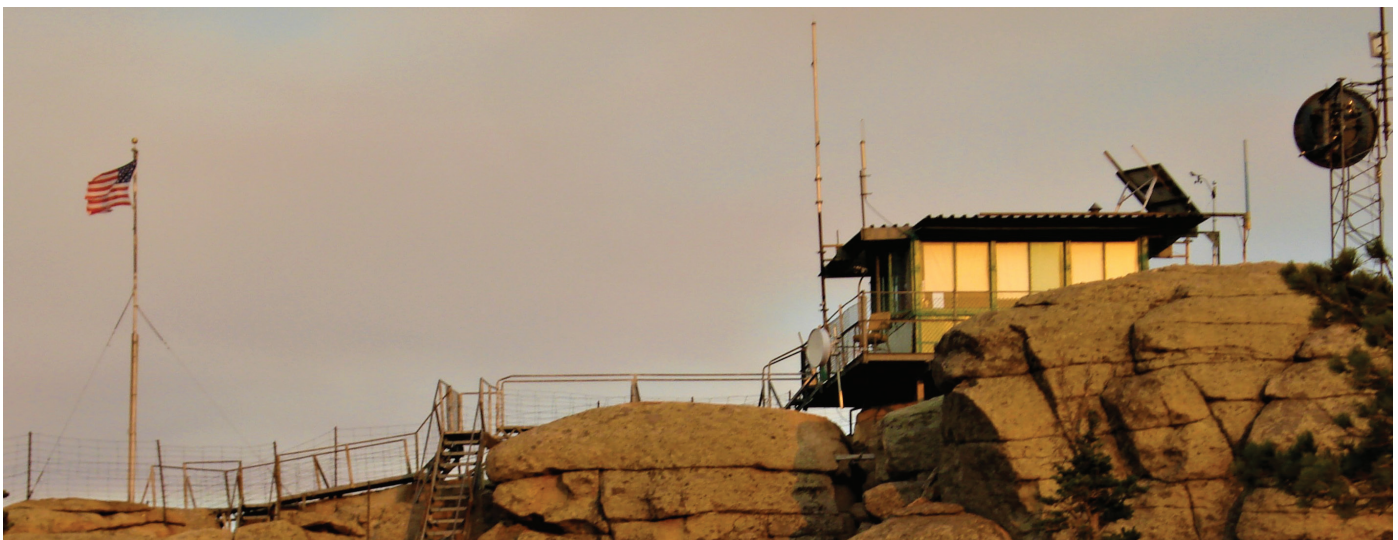
After spending 24 years in special education classrooms, Roger decided to pursue something he had always wanted to do—working on a fire lookout. He was hired by the U.S. Forest Service a week after he left his last teaching position. Roger feels lucky to work in one of the few remaining

manned fire lookouts, working the east side of the Laramie Mountain range in Wyoming. Roger sits at 8,040 feet in the Black Mountain lookout from May to October, which is accessible only by four-wheeler, three miles up a very rocky and steep road.

One of Roger's favorite things to do is observe the daily weather. He sees many extremes from atop his lookout, including severe wind gusts (one measuring 130 mph), extreme temperatures, thunderstorms, and dead calm—the number one enemy on the lookout. The calm brings the heat and the insects, like flying ant swarms, throughout the summer. During thunderstorms, Roger's lookout has been struck by lightning three times! Roger insists, however, that despite their intensity, the thunderstorms are also beautiful.

Before Roger became a teacher, he was a wildland firefighter for 15 seasons, which comes in handy when working with the fire crew. Once smoke is discovered, Roger uses the Osborne Fire Finder—an alidade, or type of a sighting device used to determine directions—to pinpoint the location, and then contacts dispatch. To stay in contact with dispatch and the fire crews, Roger uses three base radios and two portable radios.

It is the best of both worlds for Roger, spending winters in Florida and the rest of the year on a mountain top in Southeastern Wyoming. In Roger's own words, "I can't think of a better way to retire, and I enjoy every minute." 🐦



Empower Retirement Plan Advisor

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are just starting to save for retirement? What about a member who may be planning to retire soon?

For a new person, I would say start as early as possible and save more than is mandatory. With new participants even small contributions can make a HUGE difference. For people closer to retirement, it is never too late to save! There are several options for catch-up contributions and most State employees are a lot better off than they realize because of mandatory contributions. For people in all categories, they should talk with me or the other advisors as early on as possible. If there are things that need adjusting, we can figure out what they are and we're always here to help.

I don't know a lot about investing and don't have the time or energy to learn, how can EMPOWER help me make the most of my invested funds?

For investing, we are here to help and provide guidance depending on people's preferences--from the default automatic 'Target Date' mutual funds, to helping with education so people who want to pick their own investments can, all the way to us just picking investments or you. There are lots of options and we're happy to help people find the right fit.

If I leave employment and am no longer contributing to one of the defined contribution accounts, are there services still available to me?

Members who leave service still have full access to me and the other advisors at no additional cost. We are happy to help retirees as well as active

members, and the only real difference to the plan is that retirees can no longer make contributions.

Although you are available to assist members across the great state of Alaska, you are in Juneau and serve as local representation for Southeast. After our rainy and cool summer, how do you like living in Juneau? Are there other representatives located in Alaska?

I do live here in Juneau, so I get to "enjoy" all the drizzle nature throws at us. The rest of team Alaska for Empower works out of Anchorage (with three agents), and the Mat-Su/Fairbanks (with one agent).

Is there anything else you'd like to share with PERS and TRS employers and members?

The only thing I would like to say to folks is to come talk with us. Our sole job is to help, and we generally can assist with most of the accounts and go over how people can improve, and if they need more information, we can point them in the right direction.

Questions?

You can contact Justin by email at Justin.Hoffman@empower-retirement.com*, by calling the Anchorage office at (907) 276-1500, or by visiting the Meet Your Representative page on akdrb.empower-retirement.com, where contact information for all of the Alaska-based representatives is located.

**Please do not put any confidential or personal account information in an email request. 🐦*

Have questions about your retirement and benefits?

Visit Alaska.gov/drb.

2021 Retiree Benefit Mailing Dates

Retiree benefits will be mailed on the following dates in 2021:

- January 25
- February 25
- March 25
- April 22
- May 25
- June 24
- July 22
- August 25
- September 23
- October 25
- November 23
- December 22

The mailing date is also the date that funds are available from your financial institution. If you would like to have your benefit directly deposited, complete the Electronic Direct Deposit Authorization for Retirees form and return it to the Alaska Division of Retirement and Benefits. You can find the form at [Alaska.gov/drb/checkDates](https://alaska.gov/drb/checkDates).



Counseling Resources for Employees

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Stacey Voorhees joined the Division of Retirement and Benefits in 2019 after working in human resources for the City and Borough of Juneau. She loves her role as a retirement and benefits counselor and feels lucky to have the

opportunity to assist members in navigating the details of their retirement so they can make informed decisions about their future. She considers the work fulfilling and rewarding and is happy to be part of this amazing team, with whom she finds to be both knowledgeable and professional, as well as fun!



Lisa Templeton was born in Juneau, Alaska and has lived there most of her life. She first came to work for the Division in 1999 and held various positions before going to work in the private sector, managing an optical dispensary. She

has been back with the Division for more than six years and has been a retirement counselor for approximately five of those years. Altogether, she

has over ten years' experience with the Division. Lisa finds it extremely rewarding to serve members by providing them with as much relevant information as possible so they may fully understand their benefits and available options, enabling them to make informed decisions when planning for their future.

Reach Out

Do you have questions about a particular benefit? Are you beginning to think about retirement and want to understand the process? Don't hesitate to make an appointment using the online scheduler to have a personalized discussion about your retirement benefits. Visit [Alaska.gov/drb](https://alaska.gov/drb), then click the green "Make an Appointment" button on the left-hand side of the page.

We are here for you! 

PERSnewsbreak

for PERS Tiers I, II, and III members

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The Alaska Department of Administration complies with Title II of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The PERS Newsbreak is available in alternative communication formats upon request. DRB ADA Coordinator: (800) 821-2251; in Juneau: (907) 465-4460, or contact the TDD for the hearing impaired at (907) 465-2805.

Note: The Division of Retirement and Benefits is unable to unsubscribe members from our mailing list at this time. The Division has a fiduciary duty to provide both its active and retired members with information regarding their health and retirement benefits, including—but not limited to—benefit education, plan enrollment, and any changes in the plans. While we acknowledge that it can be frustrating to receive a high volume of communication from the Division, it is necessary to keep our members up to date on current information and educational opportunities concerning their health and retirement benefits. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause you.

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We Want to Share Your Retirement Story

We want to share your retirement story with your fellow members. Are you volunteering, traveling, involved in the community or just enjoying life? Let us know where you are living now, what you are involved in, where you were employed, and how your State of Alaska retirement has allowed you to enjoy new adventures in retirement. Submit your stories on our website at Alaska.gov/drb/retirement/retireesInTouch.html, email your stories to doa.drb@alaska.gov, or mail your stories and photos to the address on this newsletter, Attention: Newsbreak Editor. Please keep your stories to 500 words or less. 



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