

From: [Elizabeth Jones](#)
To: [Janet Wood](#)
Subject: FW: Suggested Improvements to the Texas Teacher Retirement System (Sunset Advisory Commission)
Date: Monday, July 6, 2020 6:52:26 AM

From: Mike Caudle
Sent: Thursday, July 2, 2020 7:41:16 PM (UTC-06:00) Central Time (US & Canada)
To: Sunset Advisory Commission
Cc:
Subject: Suggested Improvements to the Texas Teacher Retirement System (Sunset Advisory Commission)

Texas Sunset Advisory Commission:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit information to you for review and, hopefully, implementation as appropriate.

While my wife and I are both thankful for the TRS system, there is one big concern we both have. It involves the difficult communication system internal to TRS. They make it extremely difficult to communicate, often requiring use of the USPS mail system, aka Pony Express. Wait times on phone calls to TRS (they provide only one number for administrative actions) can be excruciatingly long. It might be easier just to drive to Austin (but, we live in Florida). Having been retired from Texas A&M for 4 1/2 years, my need to contact them isn't frequent, but when I need to, it is an antiquated methodology they use. Case in point: we recently moved from Bryan, TX to Lady Lake, FL. We established new bank accounts here, and need to have our retirement funds sent here instead of our previous bank in Bryan. When one tries to find information about changing direct deposit, their plethora of automated Q&A's does not address that. So, I decide we need to contact them. Wait times on phone calls are excessively long, so I determine I need to send an email to ask for assistance. I cannot find my password, so I go to the reset password link. I get an automated message saying that they have sent a message to my email address so I can reset it. Only one problem. Their message has gone to my email address of record, the TAMU email address that I had while working there. Even though I had given them my suddenlink email address after retirement, they didn't have it on record. And now I'm trying to update my information to include email address. If they had updated my previous information, it would have gone to the suddenlink email (our previous one), and I could still access that. However, they didn't update my information as I had requested in the first place. So, this leaves me no option but to send them a Pony Express letter to help me to update my email contact information. This should be an easy process online. It is not. It is like an infinite Do Loop. (The TRS system seems to reinforce failure by forcing you back into the link that just failed you, so you are in a repeat sequence leading to the same conclusion - failure).

I looked at some of the reviews of TRS, and, frankly, they are eye-opening. There seems to be a customer service issue in the benefits and insurance offices. Accusations are those of rudeness, over-talking the customer, and inefficiency. I trained customer service for several years in team building. These are classic signs of organizational lack of accountability. So, my question regarding this is, does management know of these issues? (They should because they are easily accessed online) Does management even care? They are a service organization under the general grouping of HR. In the first place, humans are not resources. They are people, people with needs.

If COVID 19 has taught us anything, besides its dangers, it is that being able to function efficiently and effectively online is paramount. The virus makes doing transactions via technology paramount. In my opinion, TRS isn't cutting it.

Recommendations:

One - conduct an in depth review of customer needs and problems with the system. Determine levels of satisfaction, find fixes and enforce them via management and higher level reviews.

Two - conduct an in depth review of the TRS web pages and allow customers sit on review panels to provide their inputs into making the access, review and editing processes easy to find, easy to access, and assist online customers with easier means to directly contact the various offices without all the hassle. With regards to this action,

remember something; My perceptions are my Truth (even if wrong). Until TRS improves its standing with its customers to their satisfaction, my perception of TRS (true or not) is that their staff doesn't really care about the retirees, especially. Prove me wrong. Until then, my perception is that they are lazy, not people oriented, and sit behind this invisible shield that doesn't allow communications to reach them in a timely manner, and frequently leads to customer failures with their system.

Three - establish positions designed to follow up with customers on the status and/or issues with their need satisfaction; call them customer liaisons or case workers. Be personal to the customers, not bureaucratic. I retired from military service after nearly a quarter of a century. If there is one thing I detest, it's inefficiency, rudeness, and begrudging performance of duties and mission.

Four - review other service models and design a model specifically designed for your unique customer base. The VA used to be a horrible example of efficiency and effectiveness, but under our current President, they have been forced to turn things around for the servicemen and women, and it seems to be working MUCH better than ever now. I'm sure there are others, but help TRS change their service paradigm. It is clunky, user unfriendly, and just outdated. They are there to serve, so, serve with a smile.

I appreciate this opportunity to provide feedback to you. It is my hope that somebody will take these issues seriously and make much-needed improvements.

If I may be of further service to you, feel free to connect with me. Here is my current information:

Dr. Michael E. Caudle
Lieutenant Colonel, US Army (Ret)

God bless Texas, and God bless the USA