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Preliminary Year-to-Date Investment Returns as of 7/31/2020

Core Fund	2.6%
Variable Fund	-0.9%

Preliminary returns are estimated returns, subject to final portfolio and benchmark valuations. Returns are gross of fees. Final monthly performance will be posted on SWIB and ETF websites as soon as available.

Stay Safe, Be Well and Keep Informed About Your WRS Benefits

Despite the uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Employee Trust Funds wants you to know that our commitment to providing services and protecting the health and safety of Wisconsin Retirement System members, our staff, and business partners has never wavered.

Here are some highlights of how we've been doing as an agency: In March ETF staff successfully transitioned to working remotely; the governing boards began meeting exclusively via teleconference; and all in-person retirement appointments are

now conducted online or by phone. In addition, we are:

- paying benefits without disruption, in full, and on the first of every month;
- answering calls and emails—our call center is fully staffed and trained;
- reducing wait times for retirement appointments and requests for benefit estimates;
- processing retirement applications and other account-related transactions;
- counseling members entering

Stay Safe, continued on page 2

SWIB Response to COVID-19

As the world continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, the State of Wisconsin Investment Board, with its highly diversified strategy, is well positioned to weather the current market volatility. We continue to actively monitor investments and seek out market opportunities to keep the Wisconsin Retirement System trust funds strong for the long term.

Even as operations have moved remotely, our staff continues their normal investment and trading activities without disruption. In addition to internal management and operations, we remain connected to our external

managers to evaluate performance and capitalize on timely opportunities that other less liquid funds may not have the capacity to do. As a long-term investor, we have navigated market downturns in the past, both large and small. We are proud that our management of the trust funds has helped the WRS provide the promised benefits to its participants and be one of the very few fully funded public pension systems in the nation.

For the safety of our staff and visitors, and because we can work effectively from home, our offices remain

SWIB Response, continued on page 11

Stay Safe, continued from page 1

the retirement pipeline;

- collecting and reconciling WRS contributions;
- setting up new retirees “on payroll”;
- working with employers to administer WRS benefit programs; and
- planning and executing internal projects that will enhance the customer experience.

Like all state office buildings, our office remains closed to the public until further notice. We do not expect to resume in-person services until 2021. In addition, ETF is following the state’s social distancing guidelines and executive orders. Our Bounce Back plan is flexible and follows state and federal guidelines for managing operations and services in the future.

We encourage you to stay informed about



your benefits. Consult our online resources, especially our COVID-19 resource page at <https://etf.wi.gov/etf-response-covid-19>. As always, feel free to contact us via email or phone as well.

Above all, please stay safe and be well. ETF is strong and remains committed to the high level of customer service and professionalism you have come to expect from us. We are here for you.

Living Our Values

It is the mission of the Department of Employee Trust Funds to deliver quality benefits and services to Wisconsin Retirement System members—more than 652,000 strong—and their families around the state and nation while protecting the integrity of the Public Employee Trust Fund. We value the diversity of those we serve, and we believe our greatest asset is our workforce.

Racism and injustice erode the legitimacy of our public institutions and decay the fabric of our society. We stand firmly against them and have recommitted to ensuring that ETF is a just and safe place for our diverse membership and staff by living our Values: Integrity, Respect, Quality, and People.

To learn more about who we are as an agency, including our leadership, what we do, organizational structure, governing boards, and more, visit the About ETF section of our website, <https://etf.wi.gov/about-etf>.



How Will Market Performance Affect My WRS Pension?

Volatility in the financial markets from January to the end of July has been on quite a rollercoaster ride. The year began with near-record highs but quickly plunged to some of the worst single-day losses ever in March, spurred by global fears about the COVID-19 pandemic and its myriad economic impacts. Although there has been some market recovery since then, no one can predict how the next four months will pan out.

Despite the volatility thus far, keep in mind that the only timeframe that matters, in terms of Wisconsin Retirement System annuity adjustments, is the full calendar year, January 1 to December 31.

The ETF Board annually reviews and discusses our projections for annuity adjustments and effective rates (for active employees), at its March meeting. Some WRS retirees find this information helpful for anticipating the magnitude, not the exact amount, of future adjustments. We know that strong Core Fund investment performance in 2019 will provide a “cushion” in the calculation for 2021. In addition, our projections indicate it would take a return of approximately -12% (a loss) to generate a negative Core annuity adjustment for retirees.

Here are a few more highlights from ETF’s presentation to the Board about Core annuity adjustments in 2021:

- Projections for 2021 include 2016-2019 investment gains and losses carried forward;

- If the Core Fund returns 7.0% in 2020, then the Core annuity adjustment is projected to be between 3.0% and 3.4%;
- If the Core Fund returns 0% in 2020, then the Core annuity adjustment is projected to be between 1.6% and 2.0%;
- If the Core Fund returns -12% (a loss) in 2020, then the Core annuity adjustment is projected to be between -0.8% (a loss) and 0% (no adjustment); and
- Keep in mind that only an actuarial valuation can accurately calculate WRS annuity adjustments.

Important Notes

Your Core annuity can be adjusted if the increase or decrease would be at least 0.5% (or -0.5%). For those who participate in the Variable Fund, this portion of their annuities can be adjusted if the increase or decrease would be at least 2.0% (or -2.0%). In addition, your Core annuity is guaranteed to not be reduced to an amount below the original value set at retirement (your “Core Floor”). There is no such guarantee for the Variable Fund. If you participate in this optional fund, the Variable portion of your payment can be reduced to an amount below your starting point.

To receive notifications of monthly investment performance, sign up for *ETF Email Updates* or follow ETF on Twitter. To review annual investment returns, rates and adjustments for the WRS trust funds since 1986, visit the WRS Performance page on our website.

Timing of November Payment and Tax Withholding

November 1 Pension Payment

Here is a reminder that because November 1 is a Sunday, this may affect when your payment for that month is listed in your bank account. The “settlement date” for these funds is Monday, November 2. Please contact your financial institution if you have questions about settlement dates.

Change Tax Withholding

If you need to change tax withholding from

your WRS pension payment, file a new *W-4P* tax form (ET-4310) with ETF. To download the form from our website, go to <https://etf.wi.gov/benefits/taxes-and-my-benefits> or call us toll free at 1-877-533-5020.

Tip: Use our online income tax withholding calculator to determine how much to withhold. Go to <https://etf.wi.gov/retirement/calculators>.

WDC News and Information

CARES Act

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act contains two provisions affecting WDC participants:

- **Optional required minimum distribution waiver for 2020:** Affected WDC participants have been notified that the RMD for 2020 has been waived and they have been informed of their options. Likewise, those who have received an RMD this year have the option to keep it or roll the RMD to an IRA or a qualified plan and have been notified.
- **Expanded access to WDC account funds if affected by the coronavirus:** COVID-19-related distributions will be processed for eligible WDC participants, regardless of employment status. A coronavirus-related distribution is similar to—but not the same as—an unplanned financial emergency withdrawal. Participants will self-certify their eligibility for a coronavirus distribution and must self-monitor to ensure their coronavirus-related withdrawals remain under the federal limit of \$100,000 across all retirement plans. These withdrawals are taxable as income, but the tax can be spread over three years, and the participant can elect to repay it within three years.

Consult with a Retirement Plan Advisor

When was the last time you looked at your investments or thought about your spending plan? Set up a meeting today with your local plan advisor. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the WDC has temporarily suspended in-person meetings, but it's easy to meet online or by telephone. Contact the WDC or schedule the meeting yourself using the online meeting scheduler. Find your plan



advisor's schedule online at <http://bit.ly/2pnznvu> or call the WDC.

New: WDC Videos and Webinars

Check out the WDC's new line up of recorded presentations designed to help you increase your investment savvy. Look for these video titles at <https://etf.wi.gov/education/videos>:

- *Basic Investment Education*
- *Taking Charge of Your Money With a Budget*
- *Learn More About Bonds*
- *A Conversation About Mutual Funds and Collective Trusts*

And check out the following WDC webinars on saving and investing:

- *Market Volatility* – Wednesday, Sept. 16
- *Basic Investing* – Tuesday, Sept. 29
- *Women and Investing* – Wednesday, Oct. 7

All webinars run 30 minutes and begin at 11:30 a.m. Find all webinars and registration links on the Events page of the ETF website at <https://etf.wi.gov/events>.

For More Information

Wisconsin Deferred Compensation
Visit www.wdc457.org or call toll free 1-877-457-9327.

International Mail Delayed or Suspended

International mailings may be delayed or temporarily suspended because of country-specific restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. If you are experiencing issues receiving Wisconsin Retirement System payments or mailings from

the Department of Employee Trust Funds to an address outside the United States, please contact ETF via secure email or call us toll free at 1-877-533-5020 for assistance.

What to do if You Are a Victim of Identify Theft or Benefit Loss

Fraud can include a variety of sham activities that result in your benefit funds being lost or stolen. If you believe fraud may have occurred or is about to occur on your Wisconsin Retirement System account, please immediately notify your financial institution, local law enforcement, and the Department of Employee Trust Funds.

ETF will review the matter and may be able to stop further fraudulent activity by freezing payments or suspending impacted accounts. ETF has limited authority or ability to return or reimburse you for lost or stolen benefits. Work with your local law enforcement and/or your financial institution to recover lost or stolen funds.

For additional information and resources, contact the Federal Trade Commission or the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. The FTC is responsible for protecting consumers by preventing de-

ceptive, fraudulent, or other unfair or misleading practices leading to identity theft or data security issues.

The Consumer Protection Bureau at DATCP is responsible for unfair or deceptive practices against Wisconsin residents. It reviews consumer complaints and provides education and investigative resources related to identity theft.

For More Information

Federal Trade Commission

<https://www.ftc.gov>

Wisconsin Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

<https://datcp.wi.gov>

Reminder: Do Not Use Old ETF Telephone Number

Six years ago, the Department of Employee Trust Funds discontinued a toll-free number to a self-service line that Wisconsin Retirement System members could use to request forms and publications. **Please do not use this old telephone number, 1-877-383-1888. It is no longer associated with ETF!**

That number is now used by an organization that has no affiliation with ETF. Moreover, ETF has received complaints from members who have inadvertently called that number and shared their financial information. ETF has reported this issue to telecommunications authorities.

We ask that you take a few minutes to go through your WRS benefits-related paperwork and, if you see this number anywhere, cross it out. Better yet: Securely recycle any document that is no longer needed. Remember:

- Always be cautious when someone asks for your personal information over the phone or online.



- ETF will never ask you for your credit card, debit card, or banking information.

For information about your WRS benefits, always call ETF toll free at 1-877-533-5020, from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Send a secure email through the Contact Us page of our website at <https://etf.wi.gov>.

'Conditional' Variable Cancellation Explained

If I choose the “conditional” option for cancelling my Variable Trust Fund participation, ETF will then set the effective date of my cancellation when I am “ahead or even,” correct? Your cancellation would be effective the January 1 after ETF receives your cancellation form; however, ETF will not actually transfer your past Variable contributions to the Core Trust Fund until the value equals or exceeds the Core amount as if you had never participated in the Variable Trust Fund.

Here’s an example: Retired member and Variable Fund participant Julie sends the cancellation form to ETF in 2020, choosing the conditional option. The effective date will be January 1, 2021. The following happens next:

1. In March 2021, after 2020 investment performance is in and annuity adjustments are set, ETF will review Julie’s annuity and if she is still “behind” (her Variable annuity amount does not equal nor does it exceed the amount that she would receive if she had never participated), then no transfer is made. ETF notifies Julie via her April annuity mailer that she is still in the Variable.

2. In April 2022 ETF will again review Julie’s annuity to see if she has “pulled ahead” of where her annuity would be if she had been in Core only all along. In this example, Julie has pulled ahead, so ETF will transfer the Variable portion of Julie’s annuity to the Core fund and notify her via the April 2022 annuity mailer. The change will first affect her payment on May 1, 2022.

Note: If you participate in the Variable Fund and want to cancel participation with an effective date of January 1, 2021, complete and send to ETF a *Cancelling Variable Participation* form. This form must be received at ETF by January 4, 2021.

For More Information

Cancelling Variable Participation
(ET-2313)

How Participation in the Variable Trust Fund Affects Your WRS Benefits (ET-4930)

Find these materials on our website or call us to request them.

Living in Retirement

Enjoy the beauty of retirement! Visit our Living in Retirement web page when you need a refresher on how Wisconsin Retirement System benefits work in retirement, including annual annuity adjustments, health insurance, taxes, accessing your Wisconsin Deferred Compensation Program account, and much more.

And be sure to notify ETF of any changes to your information, such as address, beneficiary or direct deposit account. Visit our website, <https://etf.wi.gov> or call us toll free at 1-877-533-5020.



Ramzan, a retired state employee (Dept. of Administration), enjoys spending time tending his fruit and vegetable gardens.

Group Health Insurance Program Update

It's Your Choice Open Enrollment Set

The annual It's Your Choice open enrollment period is set for September 28 to October 23. This is the time to make changes for next year, including changing health plans, coverage levels, or adding/deleting certain dependents, for an effective date of January 1, 2021. Watch for your It's Your Choice materials, which the Department of Employee Trust Funds will distribute in a few weeks. Additional information will also be available on our website.

Minor Benefit Changes for 2021

In May the Group Insurance Board approved benefits for 2021 and discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the group health insurance program. The Board approved the following minor benefit changes:

- Vision coverage: DeltaVision is the new administrator for the supplemental vision benefit. If you currently have supplemental vision, your enrollment will automatically transfer to DeltaVision for plan year 2021. Keep an eye on your mailbox for details and your new DeltaVision member card.

- New medical benefit: Biofeedback for urinary incontinence will now be covered.
- Well Wisconsin Program: Participants have more options to complete the "health check" activity—including a routine dental exam or a health coaching call—to earn the \$150 Well Wisconsin incentive. These new options, which are already in effect, are in addition to the biometric health screening or health care provider form. Reminder: The deadline to earn the incentive payment in 2020 is **October 9**. For more information, log in to <https://www.wellwisconsin-staywell.com> or call StayWell toll free at 1-800-821-6591.

Telehealth and Nurseline Reminders

Most health plans offer telehealth services to diagnose and treat common illnesses or conditions. Telehealth is ideal if you have a common illness and wish to limit your interaction with others; it is also available to most members without any out-of-pocket costs. Ask your health plan about its telehealth options or visit our handy web page at <https://etf.wi.gov/telehealth-options>. Many

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Get a Flu Shot, Not the Flu

Flu season is approaching and typically runs through May. While the flu vaccine won't protect you from developing COVID-19, it's still a good idea to get one so that you stay as healthy as possible. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends:

1. Get a flu shot—it will provide the best protection against influenza. Because viruses are constantly changing, influenza vaccines are updated each year to better match viruses expected to be circulating in the United States. A yearly vaccination is needed for the best protection. There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19.
2. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid exposure. Avoid close contact with sick people. If you do get sick, limit your contact with others. Wear a mask to avoid spreading germs to others, and wash your hands often.

If you get the flu, your doctor may prescribe antiviral drugs that can make your symptoms milder and shorten the duration. These drugs may also prevent serious flu complications.

Where can I get a flu shot this season?

- At a flu shot clinic hosted by StayWell. The Department of Employee Trust Funds is working with StayWell to set up clinics for group health insurance participants this fall at various Wisconsin Retirement System employer locations statewide. All clinics will use social distancing techniques to ensure a safe experience. To find the flu shot schedule, log in to your account at <https://wellwisconsin.staywell.com>, or call StayWell toll free at 1-800-821-6591;
- Through your health care provider; or
- At your local in-network retail pharmacy. Note: Not all pharmacies are able to admin-

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health plans also offer a 24-hour Nurseline. A Nurseline may be useful to determine what type of care is most appropriate for your symptoms. Contact your health plan for more information.

COVID-19 Impact

ETF and the Board’s consulting actuary are analyzing the possible long-term effects of COVID-19 on the program. Findings, as well as health insurance premium rates for 2021, will be presented at the August Board meeting.

Attend a Virtual Benefits Forum!

Due to COVID-19 concerns, the usual in-person health benefits fairs may either look very different or not be offered at all in your community this fall. This may be a perfect opportunity to make use of ETF’s online benefit forums! We plan to host two types of forums throughout the It’s Your choice open enrollment period:

Vendor Virtual Forum: Learn more about—and ask questions of—participating health plans and benefit vendors such as Connect Your Care, DeltaVision, and StayWell.

Benefits Virtual Forum: Learn more about—and ask questions of—ETF staff about your health benefits. We’ll offer five different session topics on a rotating basis:

1. Health insurance and pharmacy benefits for active members
2. Health insurance and pharmacy benefits for retirees
3. Dental and vision coverage
4. Supplemental benefits
5. Wellness

Watch for event details and registration information in the Events section of our website. Visit <https://etf.wi.gov/events> or call ETF toll free at 1-877-533-5020.

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ister flu shots. Contact the pharmacy in advance to make sure it has the vaccine/immunization in stock and whether appointments are required.

About in-network pharmacies: While most pharmacies participate in the Navitus network and can administer vaccines/immunizations,

not all of them do so. Your claim for a vaccine/immunization will be rejected if you use an out-of-network pharmacy and you will have to pay the full cost. If the pharmacy you want to use is out-of-network (e.g., CVS), contact your health plan to see if it will cover your claim through the pharmacy under the medical benefit.

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* Delivery is free for standard shipping and packages can be delivered to your home or address of your choosing. Serve You DirectRx Pharmacy, located in Milwaukee, WI, administers the home delivery prescription benefit for the State of Wisconsin Group Health Insurance Program.





We're Here to Help

Chris, Judi, Brian and all of our benefits specialists are here to answer your retirement and health benefit questions, update your beneficiary, and much more.

Website

etf.wi.gov

Find forms, videos, webinars,
send a secure email

Call

1-877-533-5020

7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (CST)
Monday-Friday

To avoid peak call volume,
call Tuesday-Friday



Chris



Judi



Brian

SWIB Part of Global Peer Financing Association

Collaboration is essential in business. For that reason, the State of Wisconsin investment Board joined three leading pension plans to create a peer-to-peer network that benefits each system. SWIB, along with the California Public Employees' Retirement System, Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan, and Ohio Public Employees Retirement System, created the Global Peer Financing Association.

Members of the GPFA are actively engaged in the securities financing industry and share a goal to promote a more efficient and actionable way to increase and support peer-to-peer securities financing trading activity. Peer-to-peer lending is a process of lending and borrowing that takes place without the use of traditional bank counterparts.

"GPFA encourages the development of a more effective and transparent marketplace for securities financing activities, liquidity management, and collateral management," SWIB Managing Analyst, and GPFA board member, Chris

Benish said. "It is also an opportunity for asset owners to come together to share best practices and unite as a voice in the investment industry."

Other benefits of peer-to-peer lending include the opportunity to work with like-minded investment managers, lower costs, increased

transparency, greater control, access to additional sources of liquidity, and predictability of demand. For the time being, the focus is centered in peer-to-peer securities lending within pension funds. However, for the future GPFA is interested in expanding membership beyond pension funds to include other global pensions, large asset managers, insurance companies, and other beneficial owners.



Chris Benish

Highlights from *The SWIB Podcast*

A Conversation With David Villa About SWIB's Investment Strategy During the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the financial markets across the globe. Despite the volatility the pandemic has caused in the markets, SWIB has stayed the course with its strategy for investing the funds of the Wisconsin Retirement System.

"Volatility is extreme, and the pandemic increases the range of possible outcomes that we face over the next three years," SWIB Executive Director/Chief Investment Officer David Villa said. "I would expect the volatility to be very high for some time. However, surprisingly, that does not have a very large effect on the way we invest the funds."

SWIB has implemented a robust and diverse investment strategy that is designed to weather a variety of market environments over the long term. "The way we invest the funds is driven primarily by a policy portfolio, which is a portfolio that we build based on our expectations for the next 10 years and the next 30 years," Villa said. So, it's a very long timeframe and what happens in any one year or even in the next five years is overwhelmed by what happens over the next 30 or 40 years. What we try to do is build a portfolio that will do well over a very long timeframe and it will do well through periods of market euphoria and market despair."

To do this, SWIB has diversified its Core Trust Fund investment and uses leverage, which allows for the same amount of equity in the policy portfolio as a classic pension fund portfolio,

but with more fixed income exposure.

"The fixed income exposure provides a form of insurance so that during periods of fear and despair, the fixed income assets perform well and during periods of euphoria and greed, the risky assets (stocks) perform well," Villa said.

Maintaining this portfolio strategy is important because of the shared risk design of the WRS.

"We are very careful to consider the interests of the retirees, the active employees, and the employers," Villa said. "The interest of the retirees is to receive positive annuity adjustments. The interest of the active employees and their employers, the local governments and school districts, is to have stable contribution rates. We do think very deeply about building a portfolio that has the highest return per unit of risk without taking on so much risk that we have a high probability of increasing contribution rates for active employees and their employers or decreasing annuity adjustments for the retirees."

You can find out more about SWIB's investment strategy by listening to the premier episode of *The SWIB Podcast*. The first episode is available now. Listen to Villa talk about how SWIB is meeting the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and relying on more complex investment strategies to carry out its mission to the more than 652,000 WRS participants. Visit www.swib.state.wi.us/podcasts for more information.

SWIB Launches Podcast Series

The State of Wisconsin Investment Board is excited to announce an all new podcast series, *The SWIB Podcast*, where members of the Wisconsin Retirement System can turn to for timely information about the investments that help fund the state's pension system.

Navigating today's financial markets takes innovative thinking to design and implement investment strategies that generate reasonable returns to maintain a strong pension system that can meet its promised benefits today and into the future. SWIB has helped fuel one of the few fully funded pension systems in the country.



Podcast Series, continued on page 11

David Villa Named to Institutional Investor Allocator Voices

State of Wisconsin Investment Board Executive Director/Chief Investment Officer David Villa has been named to Institutional Investor 2020 Allocator Voices, an elite group of innovators who lead some of the most cutting-edge investment institutions.

Villa was among industry leaders nominated by peers for their leadership in driving inspiration through innovation. He is one of 30 influential innovators from the North America class.

The Allocator Voices are investment industry awards presented by *Institutional Investor* magazine—a leading international financial publication—to recognize influential individuals who have the passion to leverage their voices to push the industry forward.

To review *Institutional Investor* magazine's 2020 Allocator Voices article, visit <https://bit.ly/31Itsk1>.



David Villa

SWIB Retirement Funds Annual Report Available Online

The *2019 Retirement Funds Annual Report* and the *2019 Schedule of Investments*, a listing of State of Wisconsin Investment Board holdings as of Dec. 31, 2019, are now available on the Publications page of SWIB's website, <http://www.swib.state.wi.us>. To request a printed copy, contact SWIB at info@swib.state.wi.us or call toll free 1-800-424-7942.

SWIB Response, continued from page 1

closed. We will continue to monitor reports and guidance shared by federal, state, and local officials regarding COVID-19. In the meantime, visit our website at www.swib.state.wi.us for information on how to contact us with any questions.

We realize this is a time when our work

is perhaps the most critical. The way we work may have changed, but we have not changed our focus, because we know that over 652,000 WRS participants are counting on us. We hope you all continue to remain safe and healthy.

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The *SWIB Podcast* will feature discussions with SWIB's staff regarding the global market environment and SWIB's investment strategies that keep the WRS positioned for long-term success.

Subscribe now to *The SWIB Podcast*. The podcasts are free, easy to access, and are available via many different apps. You can find the

podcast on iTunes, Google Play, and many other popular podcast platforms so you can listen from your car, on your evening walk, or wherever else is convenient. You can also listen to *The SWIB Podcast* in a web browser. Visit www.swib.state.wi.us/podcasts for more information.

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ET-7402

WRS NEWS



SWIB STATE OF WISCONSIN
INVESTMENT BOARD

Published in January, May, and September by the Department of Employee Trust Funds and the State of Wisconsin Investment Board to inform Wisconsin Retirement System retirees about WRS benefit programs and trust fund investment news.

ETF

Contact ETF for information about WRS benefits.

Toll free: 1-877-533-5020
Hours: 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (CT),
Monday-Friday.

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Employee Trust Funds**

SWIB

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