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62 Lee County Bureaucrats Demand 60% Pension Bonus Increase say Five Year Bonus not enough!

Ft. Myers, FL — In a move drawing sharp criticism from taxpayer advocates, 62 Lee County government employees are pushing for a **60% increase in their pension cash bonuses**, extending the payout period from five to eight years. This comes despite Lee County facing a **\$5.4 million deficit**.

At the center of the controversy is **County Attorney Richard Wesch**, who was not satisfied with his 5-year pension bonus of \$627,083 used his public position to take a **\$1,289,095** eight-year pension bonus. Wesch who's \$1.28 Million Pension bonus helped deepen the current deficit, has proposed a **sales tax increase** on Lee County residents to bridge the current \$5.4 Million County Budget deficit¹

<https://tripleddippers.org/triple-dippers-hall-of-shame/>

Politician Jeff Kerr, Lee County EMS employee takes a Pension Cash bonus of \$540,365, salary \$79,691 providing duplication of Ambulance Services provided by local Fire Departments including the Bonita Springs Fire District where he is a commissioner. These greedy Lee County employees who are not satisfied with a 5-year pension cash bonuses are listed at TripleDippers.org's **Hall of Shame**

<https://tripleddippers.org/fl-lee-county-2025-report/>

The Triple Dipper Scandal

A total of **128 Lee County employees**, dubbed "Triple Dippers," file fake retirement paperwork and at the same time to do the same job, collect a salary, a pension bonus and don't pay the standard 3% of their salary into the Florida Retirement System. These Triple Dippers are collectively drawing an estimated:

- **\$32.8 million** in pension bonuses
- **\$12 million** in current salaries
- **\$3.2 million** in annual benefits
- **\$360,665** Not paying the standard 3% of salary into the Florida Retirement System (FRS) shifting personal responsibility to taxpayers
- **\$901,663 extra** Taxpayer must annually pay into the Florida Retirement System which keeps increasing²

¹ <https://www.news-press.com/story/news/local/2025/06/09/lee-county-florida-slow-property-value-growth-could-mean-tax-increase/84066760007/>

² Public Employer (taxpayer paid) match for DROP Triple Dippers is 12.13% compared to 13.63% for regular class employees a 7.5% surcharge * \$12,022,178 Triple Dippers salary = \$902,663 this contribution will increase within days. https://frs.fl.gov/forms/2024-25_contributions_total.pdf

<https://tripledippers.org/fl-lee-county-2025-report/>

All while continuing in the exact roles from which they “retired.”

“This is legalized looting of taxpayers,” said **Dave Jaye**, researcher at <https://tripledippers.org/> “They signed retirement contracts and came right back to work—collecting dual compensation and shifting their pension contributions onto the backs of the very taxpayers they serve.”

A Community in Crisis

Robert Valenta, President of the Lee County Republican Assembly, warned that families still recovering from **Hurricane Ian** and the **2024 Milton disaster** are already struggling with skyrocketing insurance premiums, property taxes, and inflation.

“There are ample opportunities for Lee County to cut waste, fraud, and abuse, instead of raising taxes. We deserve fiscal responsibility, not a heavier tax load. Either the County can dig in, and get it done, or the citizens will have to. Let’s demand transparency and smart budgeting to keep Lee County thriving.”

‘Triple Dipper King’: Richard Wesch

- Pension Cash Bonus: **\$1,289,095**
- Current Salary: **\$341,403**
- Not paying standard 3% of salary to FRS **\$10,242**
- Lifetime Monthly Pension: **\$13,427**

A Broken System

The **Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP)** is under fire for enabling such abuses. According to Jaye, retirees are allowed to:

- Cash out up to **1,081 hours of unused time** at their final, highest salary—artificially inflating pension payouts and taking more money from taxpayers
- Return to their positions just **six months after “retirement”**
- Skip the required **3% Florida Retirement System (FRS) contribution**, leaving taxpayers to pick up the slack

“Pension cash bonuses are crowding out money for roads, environment clean up and public safety and increased Florida’s unfunded pension liability **\$39 billion - \$1,725 per resident.**”


Pro-Taxpayer Reforms Demanded


1. Enforce retirement contracts to end triple dipping

2. Replace returning retirees with younger, healthier, more recently educated 40% less expensive entry level employees
3. Privatize appropriate departments (e.g., utilities, fleet, janitorial, IT, legal)
4. Eliminate overlapping county roles duplicating sheriff: Airport Security/fire services already provided by local Fire Departments
5. Require all re-employed retirees to contribute **3% of salary** to the County's FRS monthly payments
6. Cap unused time off payouts to **30 days**, paid at the original earning rate
7. Establish a **Citizens Department of Government Efficiency (DoGE)** to audit compensation, publish salaries and employee benefits online, and review contracts

Media Contacts:

Dave Jaye


 dave.jaye55@gmail.com

 (586) 488-5177

 www.tripledippers.org

Robert Valenta

President, Lee County Republican Assembly

 (239) 292-1613

president@leerepublican.com