SUMMARY OF PROJECT – NAGDCA 2026 LEADERSHIP RECOGNITION AWARD
CATEGORY: NATIONAL RETIREMENT SECURITY MONTH

EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM OF TEXAS (ERS®) – NATIONAL RETIREMENT SECURITY CAMPAIGN IMPROVES RETIREMENT READINESS FOR ELIGIBLE AND PARTICIPATING EMPLOYEES

Plan Profile:
As of January 22, 2026, the combined asset size of both the 401(k) and 457 plans is $6.6 billion with a total participant count of 295,134.

Background:
Knowing State of Texas employees will only have about 50% of their pre-retirement income from their ERS retirement (defined benefit plan), Employees Retirement System of Texas (ERS) wanted to educate and inform eligible state employees, higher education employees, and current participants about the benefits of the Texa$aver℠ 401(k) / 457 Program during National Retirement Security Month in October. To achieve this goal, they required a format for delivering critical messages in a way that was accessible, entertaining, and easy to understand.

To meet these criteria, ERS partnered with Empower, the program's recordkeeper to create the *Saving is Beleafing* campaign which used multifaceted, targeted and plan-wide campaign tactics created to support the idea that saving for retirement doesn't have to be overwhelming. By launching a fun and unique campaign, the *Saving is Beleafing* theme demonstrated how saving in the Texa$aver program can teach eligible employees and current participants that retirement doesn't have to be intimidating; saving today can make for an unbeleafable financial future! This cohesive eligible state employee and participant outreach initiative was launched during National Retirement Security Month (October 2025) and encouraged employees to maximize the use of investment resources available for retirement savings.

In their own words

"Employees Retirement System of Texas is deserving of a 2026 NAGDCA Leadership Award in the Participant Education & Communication category because of the originality, creativity and successful outcomes of the National Retirement Security Month campaign for its 457 and 401(k) plans. With the positive results achieved for each of the initiatives, ERS was able to deliver on its goal of providing State of Texas employees an opportunity to achieve financial independence in retirement through participation in one or both plans. With a concentrated focus on enrollment, saving and investment during National Retirement Security Month, ERS has provided a best practice for other states and municipalities to leverage in helping their employees achieve better financial and retirement outcomes."

- **Nora Alvarado, Manager of Deferred Compensation Plans, Employees Retirement System of Texas**

Goals included:
- Informing eligible employees about the benefits of enrolling in the Texa$aver program.
- Reinforcing the advantages of setting up an automatic contribution increase over several years.
- Showing eligible employees and participants how the Texa$aver program could help close their retirement income gap.
- Reminding state employees about the resources available to them as a Texa$aver program participant.
- Provide resources and education virtually and in-person.

Results
The *Saving is Beleafing* campaign improved retirement readiness for eligible state employees and Texa$aver program previous contributing participants.

- The Gen X "Save More" *Don't stop beleafing in an amazing retirement* targeted email, sent on October 8, experienced a **40%** open rate. Of those who opened the Save More email, **619** of them went to **www.texasaver.com** to log in, **327**clicked the "Schedule a meeting" to meet with a Retirement Plan Advisor, and **739** clicked to register for an educational webinar.
- The Millennial "Save More" *Beleaf you can achieve a treemendous retirement* targeted email, sent on October 8, experienced a **53%** open rate. Of those who opened the Save More email, **671** of them went to **www.texasaver.com** to log in, **231** clicked the "Schedule a meeting" to meet with a Retirement Plan Advisor, and **476** clicked to register for an educational webinar.
- The Gen Z "Save More" *Beleaf in yourself and start saving for a colorful financial future* targeted email, sent on October 8, experienced a **60%** open rate. Of those who opened the Save More email, **201** of them went to **www.texasaver.com** to log in, **56** clicked the "Schedule a meeting" to meet with a Retirement Plan Advisor, and **119** clicked to register for an educational webinar.
- The Group 4 (participants who contribute less to their pension) "Save More" *Start saving for an unbeleafable financial future* targeted email, sent on October 3, experienced a **38%** open rate. Of those who opened the Save More email, **213** of them went to **www.texasaver.com** to log in, **24** clicked the "Schedule a meeting" to meet with a Retirement Plan Advisor, and **46** clicked to register for an educational webinar.
- **3 group meetings** and **463 one-on-one meetings** with eligible and/or participating employees in attendance throughout the State of Texas. **166 attendees** attended a virtual Texa$aver Overview webinars.
- **1,296 new enrollments** in the 401(k) and 457 plans, and additionally, there were **298 participants** who restarted their contributions.

WRITTEN JUSTIFICATION - NAGDCA 2026 LEADERSHIP RECOGNITION AWARD
EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM OF TEXAS (ERS®) – NATIONAL RETIREMENT SECURITY MONTH CAMPAIGN IMPROVES RETIREMENT READINESS AMONG ELIGIBLE AND PARTICIPATING EMPLOYEES

The *Saving is Beleafing* National Retirement Security Month campaign reached eligible state employees and Texa$aver℠ 401(k) / 457 Program participants with information, calculations, and education through the deployment of creative, compelling, and multifaceted campaign tactics.

Project Description
Campaign: Saving is Beleafing
Knowing State of Texas employees will only have about 50% of their pre-retirement income from their ERS retirement (defined benefit plan), Employees Retirement System of Texas (ERS) partnered with Empower to bring awareness to National Retirement Security Month (October 2025) by launching a custom, educational, informative and unique campaign to encourage enrollments among eligible higher education employees into the 457 plan, early- and mid-career legacy state employees who were not automatically enrolled in the 401(k) plan.

The *Saving is Beleafing* campaign taught eligible employees and current participants that saving for retirement doesn't have to be intimidating; the Texa$aver program is there to help pile up the savings. With ample resources and help from local Texa$aver Retirement Plan Advisors participants can begin their retirement journey without leaving home. After enrolling in the Texa$aver program and setting up automatic contribution increases, participants could beleaf in achieving a tremendous retirement!

The *Saving is Beleafing* campaign was created to:

- Educate eligible employees and participants that their ERS retirement (defined benefit plan) may only provide them with about 50% of their current income in retirement and that additional savings, such as the Texa$aver 401(k) and 457 plans, may be necessary to bridge the retirement savings gap.
- Encourage those not enrolled in the Texa$aver program to enroll in order to help close the income gap they may face in retirement.
- Remind participants in the program about the benefits of compound growth
- Inform and show participants in the program how setting up an automatic increase of their contribution is easy and could positively impact their retirement savings due to compound growth.
- Remind eligible employees and participants about the resources available as a participant, such as the ability to meet with their Texa$aver Retirement Plan Advisor.

The *Saving is Beleafing* campaign, launched the beginning of October 2025, garnered substantial praise and was extremely well received with the rollout of the *Saving is Beleafing National Retirement Security Month* pre-login web banner on **www.texasaver.com** encouraging participants to meet with a regional Retirement Plan Adivsor, the Facebook posts, the post-login web message and the sends of the targeted emails linking to the Texa$aver program website and webinar registration.

To further encourage education and outreach of the benefits of the Texa$aver program during October, Texa$aver Retirement Plan Advisors held **3** group meetings and **463** one-on-one meetings with current participants and/or eligible employees in attendance from throughout the State of Texas. **166 attendees** attended a virtual Texa$aver Overview webinars.

The *Saving is Beleafing* emails were sent on October 3 and October 8 to four targeted populations consisting of eligible employees who have a $0 balance or were not contributing. The groups were Gen Xers born between 1965 and1980, Millennials born between 1981 and 1996, Gen Zers born between 1997 and 2012, and Group 4 made up of participants hired after 09/01/2022 who contribute at a lower rate to their pension.

The Gen X "Save More" *Don't stop beleafing in an amazing retirement* targeted email, sent on October 8, experienced a **40%** open rate. Of those who opened the Save More email, **619** of them went to **www.texasaver.com** to log in, **327**clicked the "Schedule a meeting" to meet with a Retirement Plan Advisor, and **739** clicked to register for an educational webinar.

The Millennial "Save More" *Beleaf you can achieve a treemendous retirement* targeted email, sent on October 8, experienced a **53%** open rate. Of those who opened the Save More email, **671** of them went to **www.texasaver.com** to log in, **231** clicked the "Schedule a meeting" to meet with a Retirement Plan Advisor, and **476** clicked to register for an educational webinar.

The Gen Z "Save More" *Beleaf in yourself and start saving for a colorful financial future* targeted email, sent on October 8, experienced a **60%** open rate. Of those who opened the Save More email, **201** of them went to **www.texasaver.com** to log in, **56** clicked the "Schedule a meeting" to meet with a Retirement Plan Advisor, and **119** clicked to register for an educational webinar.

The Group 4 (participants who contribute less to their pension) "Save More" *Start saving for an unbeleafable financial future* targeted email, sent on October 3, experienced a **38%** open rate. Of those who opened the Save More email, **213** of them went to **www.texasaver.com** to log in, **24** clicked the "Schedule a meeting" to meet with a Retirement Plan Advisor, and **46** clicked to register for an educational webinar.

Saving is Beleafing campaign-specific data from October, 2025, showed **1,296 new enrollments** in the 401(k) and 457 plans, and additionally, there were **298 participants** who restarted their contributions.

In addition to the targeted emails and educational meetings with the Texa$aver Retirement Plan Advisors, the general population tactics of a pre-login web tile, a post-login web message and several Facebook posts contributed to the successful 2025 *Saving is Beleafing* National Retirement Security Month campaign.

Relative Significance of Improvement/Perspective for the Change
The information presented in the campaign is significant as it addresses the larger issue of the retirement income gap. Participants have become more informed consumers of financial information, higher savings rates and a greater likelihood of meeting their retirement goals.

Benefits Realized by Service Recipients
Texa$aver program participants benefit from educational resources that will raise overall financial knowledge and literacy. State of Texas employees are empowered with information to make them more informed and effective consumers of financial services.

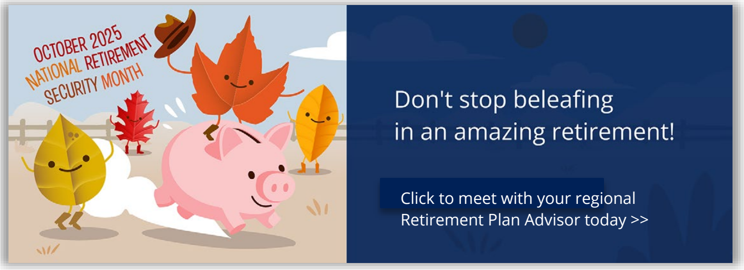
There are several benefits to the state and its employees, including:
- The state meets its objective of providing a first-rate deferred compensation plan for its employees.
- The state empowers its employees to make more informed savings and investment decisions.
- The state sustains a commitment to address the larger issues of financial literacy and the retirement income gap – issues that impact not only its employees, but also future retirees nationwide.

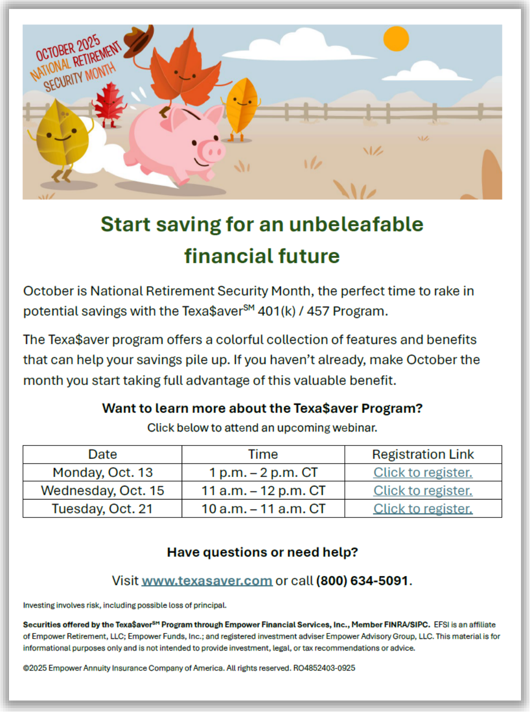
Return on Investment
Long-term benefits for participants (and the state) include:
- Improved awareness and increased participant involvement in the voluntary program, due to a customized and creative education strategy.
- Increased utilization of the plan benefits and features (e.g., ongoing increases in contribution rates, use of catch-up provisions, informed retirement planning) due to the unbiased financial and educational support provided by plan communications.

Feasibility of Use by Other Governments
The approach taken by ERS is a model for state governments seeking to educate and inform participants regarding the benefits of deferred compensation savings.

CAMPAIGN TACTICS – NAGDCA 2026 LEADERSHIP RECOGNITION AWARD
CATEGORY: PARTICIPANT EDUCATION & COMMUNICATION

Click here for PDF documents





Start saving for an unbeleafable financial future

October is National Retirement Security Month, the perfect time to rake in potential savings with the Texa$aver℠ 401(k) / 457 Program.

The Texa$aver program offers a colorful collection of features and benefits that can help your savings pile up. If you haven't already, make October the month you start taking full advantage of this valuable benefit.

Want to learn more about the Texa$aver Program?

Click below to attend an upcoming webinar.

Date	Time	Registration Link
Monday, Oct. 13	1 p.m. – 2 p.m. CT	Click to register.
Wednesday, Oct. 15	11 a.m. – 12 p.m. CT	Click to register.
Tuesday, Oct. 21	10 a.m. – 11 a.m. CT	Click to register.

Have questions or need help?

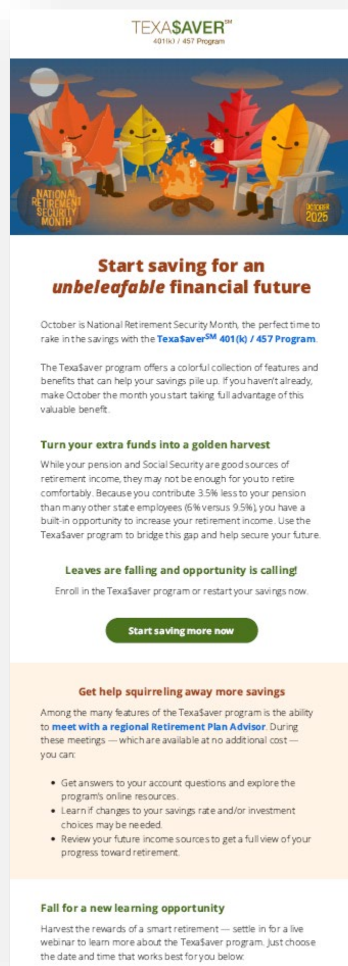
Visit www.texasaver.com or call **(800) 634-5091**.

Investing involves risk, including possible loss of principal.

Securities offered by the Texa$aver℠ Program through Empower Financial Services, Inc., Member FINRA/SIPC. EFSI is an affiliate of Empower Retirement, LLC; Empower Funds, Inc.; and registered investment adviser Empower Advisory Group, LLC. This material is for informational purposes only and is not intended to provide investment, legal, or tax recommendations or advice.

Attend a Webinar

Don't stop beleafing in an amazing retirement! Attend an upcoming webinar to learn more about the Texa$aver Program and how it can help you fall into more savings during National Retirement Security Month.



TEXA$AVER℠
401(k) / 457 Program

Start saving for an *unbeleafable* financial future

October is National Retirement Security Month, the perfect time to rake in the savings with the **Texa$aver℠ 401(k) / 457 Program**.

The Texa$aver program offers a colorful collection of features and benefits that can help your savings pile up. If you haven't already, make October the month you start taking full advantage of this valuable benefit.

Turn your extra funds into a golden harvest

While your pension and Social Security are good sources of retirement income, they may not be enough for you to retire comfortably. Because you contribute 3.5% less to your pension than many other state employees (6% versus 9.5%), you have a built-in opportunity to increase your retirement income. Use the Texa$aver program to bridge this gap and help secure your future.

Leaves are falling and opportunity is calling!

Enroll in the Texa$aver program or restart your savings now.

Start saving more now

Get help squirreling away more savings

Among the many features of the Texa$aver program is the ability to **meet with a regional Retirement Plan Advisor**. During these meetings — which are available at no additional cost — you can:

- Get answers to your account questions and explore the program's online resources.
- Learn if changes to your savings rate and/or investment choices may be needed.
- Review your future income sources to get a full view of your progress toward retirement.

Fall for a new learning opportunity

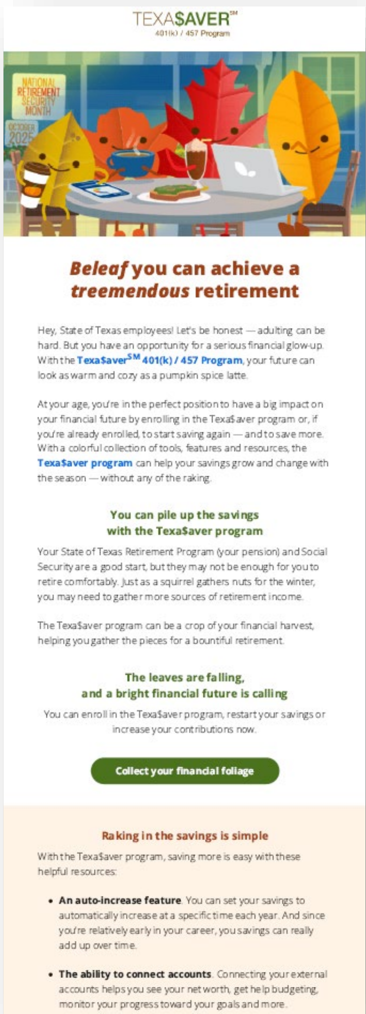
Harvest the rewards of a smart retirement — settle in for a live webinar to learn more about the Texa$aver program. Just choose the date and time that works best for you below.

Attend a Webinar

Financial independence matters.

In fact 84% of Americans say not having to rely on anyone else for money is important, according to research from Empower, administrator of the Texa$aver 401(k) / 457 Program. But knowing where to start can be the hardest part.

Join next week's free virtual webinar to learn how the Texa$aver 401(k) / 457 Program can help you build toward your financial goals.



TEXA$AVER℠
401(k) / 457 Program

Beleaf **you can achieve a *treemendous* retirement**

Hey, State of Texas employees! Let's be honest — adulting can be hard. But you have an opportunity for a serious financial glow-up. With the **Texa$aver℠ 401(k) / 457 Program**, your future can look as warm and cozy as a pumpkin spice latte.

At your age, you're in the perfect position to have a big impact on your financial future by enrolling in the Texa$aver program or, if you're already enrolled, to start saving again — and to save more. With a colorful collection of tools, features and resources, the **Texa$aver program** can help your savings grow and change with the season — without any of the raking.

You can pile up the savings with the Texa$aver program

Your State of Texas Retirement Program (your pension) and Social Security are a good start, but they may not be enough for you to retire comfortably. Just as a squirrel gathers nuts for the winter, you may need to gather more sources of retirement income.

The Texa$aver program can be a crop of your financial harvest, helping you gather the pieces for a bountiful retirement.

The leaves are falling, and a bright financial future is calling

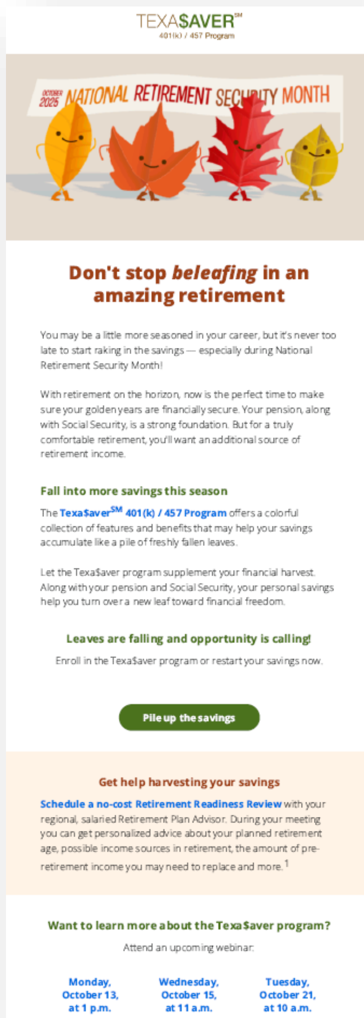
You can enroll in the Texa$aver program, restart your savings or increase your contributions now.

Collect your financial foliage

Raking in the savings is simple

With the Texa$aver program, saving more is easy with these helpful resources:

- **An auto-increase feature**. You can set your savings to automatically increase at a specific time each year. And since you're relatively early in your career, you savings can really add up over time.
- **The ability to connect accounts**. Connecting your external accounts helps you see your net worth, get help budgeting, monitor your progress toward your goals and more.



TEXA$AVER℠
401(k) / 457 Program

OCTOBER 2025 NATIONAL RETIREMENT SECURITY MONTH

Don't stop *beleafing* in an amazing retirement

You may be a little more seasoned in your career, but it's never too late to start raking in the savings — especially during National Retirement Security Month!

With retirement on the horizon, now is the perfect time to make sure your golden years are financially secure. Your pension, along with Social Security, is a strong foundation. But for a truly comfortable retirement, you'll want an additional source of retirement income.

Fall into more savings this season

The **Texa$aver℠ 401(k) / 457 Program** offers a colorful collection of features and benefits that may help your savings accumulate like a pile of freshly fallen leaves.

Let the Texa$aver program supplement your financial harvest. Along with your pension and Social Security, your personal savings help you turn over a new leaf toward financial freedom.

Leaves are falling and opportunity is calling!

Enroll in the Texa$aver program or restart your savings now.

Pile up the savings

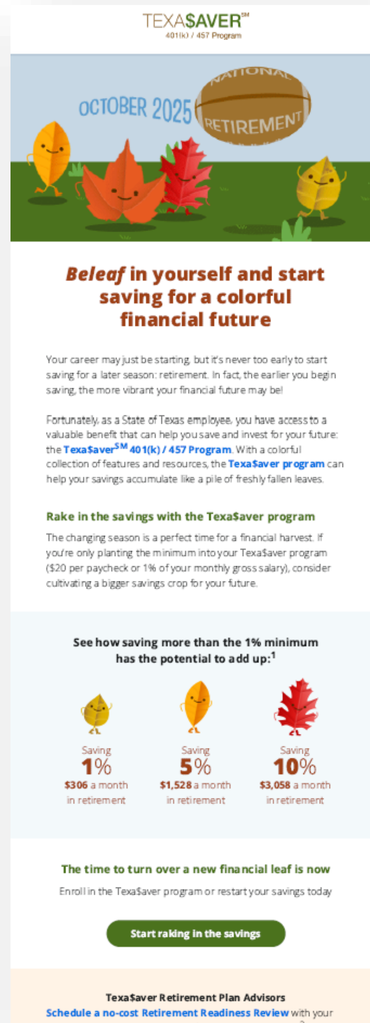
Get help harvesting your savings

Schedule a no-cost Retirement Readiness Review with your regional, salaried Retirement Plan Advisor. During your meeting you can get personalized advice about your planned retirement age, possible income sources in retirement, the amount of pre-retirement income you may need to replace and more.[1]

Want to learn more about the Texa$aver program?

Attend an upcoming webinar:

Monday, October 13, at 1 p.m.	Wednesday, October 15, at 11 a.m.	Tuesday, October 21, at 10 a.m.



TEXA$AVER℠
401(k) / 457 Program

OCTOBER 2025 NATIONAL RETIREMENT

Beleaf **in yourself and start saving for a colorful financial future**

Your career may just be starting, but it's never too early to start saving for a later season: retirement. In fact, the earlier you begin saving, the more vibrant your financial future may be!

Fortunately, as a State of Texas employee, you have access to a valuable benefit that can help you save and invest for your future: the **Texa$aver℠ 401(k) / 457 Program**. With a colorful collection of features and resources, the **Texa$aver program** can help your savings accumulate like a pile of freshly fallen leaves.

Rake in the savings with the Texa$aver program

The changing season is a perfect time for a financial harvest. If you're only planting the minimum into your Texa$aver program ($20 per paycheck or 1% of your monthly gross salary), consider cultivating a bigger savings crop for your future.

See how saving more than the 1% minimum has the potential to add up:[1]

Saving **1%**	Saving **5%**	Saving **10%**
$306 a month in retirement	**$1,528** a month in retirement	**$3,058** a month in retirement

The time to turn over a new financial leaf is now

Enroll in the Texa$aver program or restart your savings today

Start raking in the savings

Texa$aver Retirement Plan Advisors

Schedule a no-cost Retirement Readiness Review with your regional Retirement Plan Advisor for personalized advice.[2]