



NEOEAE -- Retired

A publication of the North Eastern Ohio Education Association -- www.neoea.org -- retired@neoea.org
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Hank Haynes, Editor

Keeping Up with the STRS, SERS, and PERS Ohio Rumor Mills

As a service to NEOEA-R members, we are reprinting the August Retirement Systems report to the OEA Board of Directors.

For up to date information go to these sources:

OEA website: www.ohea.org; STRS website: www.strsoh.org; SERS website: www.ohsers.org; PERS website: www.opers.org. Be sure to check the newsletters from these organizations as well.

Report to the OEA Board of Directors: August 2009

STRS Continues to Review Changes to Pension Benefits:

As a result of dramatic investment losses that have harmed retirement system funding, the Ohio Retirement Study Council (ORSC) has tasked each of the state's five retirement systems to present a board-approved plan for improving the funding status. ORSC set a deadline of September 9, 2009. Over the past few months the STRS Board has been considering potential changes to pension benefits. Changes under consideration include:

- A 2.5% increase in employee and employer contributions (bringing the employee contribution to 12.5% and the employer to 16.5% of payroll). The increases would be phased in over a five-year period.
- Eligibility for retirement at age 60 with 30 years (with an actuarial reduction in the pension benefit for retirement earlier than age 60) or with 34 or 35 years of service, regardless of age.
- Changes to the retirement formula calculation. One proposal would provide 2.2% for the first 33 years and some additional percentage for subsequent years that would provide 88.5% of final average salary at 38 years of service.
- Final average salary based on five years.
- A 3% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for three years, then 1.5% annually for those who are age 65 or older.

The STRS Board is expected to take action on recommendations in August. It is important to note that any of the changes listed above would require a change in state law through legislation. OEA continues to closely monitor this issue and participate in the Board's discussion through involvement in the Healthcare & Pension Advocates for STRS.

Additionally, OEA has engaged an independent actuarial firm to review STRS funding status and assumptions, and provide data for possible alternatives.

SERS Board to Meet with Stakeholders on Potential Pension Changes:

The School Employees Retirement System (SERS) Board is slated to meet with representatives of OEA and other stakeholder groups to

discuss potential pension plan changes. This meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 13, 2009. To date, the SERS Board has not had any formal discussions on what kind of changes they will give any strong consideration. However, on Thursday, July 23, 2009, the Board heard a presentation from its actuary about the potential impact of a range of changes.

At the July Board meeting, representatives of Cavanaugh Macdonald (the Board's actuarial firm) presented a report on the relative impact of a range of changes to pension benefits. The changes included an increase in employee and/or employer contributions, raising the age and years of service for retirement eligibility, increasing the calculation of final average salary to five years, elimination of the lump sum death benefit, and changes to the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA). The list of options examined was based on a list of potential changes that ORSC asked for each system to review.

OEA Joins Labor Groups to Defeat OPERS Contribution Decrease:

During the debate on House Bill 1, the state budget bill, OEA joined with other public sector unions to voice strong opposition to a proposed decrease in contributions to the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System. This strong and united advocacy from organized labor was critical in helping to avoid adoption of the proposal.

As part of Governor Strickland's framework for closing an estimated \$3.2 billion shortfall in the biennial budget, he recommended temporarily decreasing the employer contribution to OPERS on behalf of state employees from 14% to 8%. This proposal would have reduced state spending by just over \$250 million to be paid back over a ten-year period. However, this would have had a negative impact on funding for OPERS pension and health care benefits and set a bad precedent.

2009 OEA Retired Fall Conference

This year's OEA-R Fall Conference will be held Thursday, September 24, 2009 at the STRS Building in Columbus. All OEA-R members are invited to attend.

The focus of this year's conference will be on STRS/SERS, Politics, and Benefits. A roundtable will be held to discuss changes in STRS health care benefits and a question/answer period to discuss changes in benefits. Legislative progress on our issues will also be addressed. Presenters include: STRS staff; OEA staff; OEA officers Pat Frost-Brooks, Bill Leibensperger, Jim Timlin; OEA Executive Director Larry Wicks; NEA Member Benefits Guy Kendall-Freas, and STRS Executive Director Michael Neff.

Registration begins at 9:30 AM, with speakers and the program to begin at 10:00. Lunch will be provided. The Conference will conclude by 3:00. Send name, address, e-mail, district, and enclose a check for \$15 for lunch and materials payable to the Ohio Education Association

and mail to: Fall Statewide Conference, c/o Don Holub, Ohio Education Association, 225 E. Broad St., Box 2550, Columbus, Ohio 43216. You will be notified by email or letter when your registration is received.

2010 OEA-Retired Spring Conference

NEOEA is proud to be hosting this year's OEA-R Spring Conference. It will be held Thursday, May 20, 2010 at the NEOEA Conference Center at I-480 and Transportation Blvd. in Garfield Heights. All OEA-R members are invited to attend. Mark your calendars.

The tentative schedule begins with registration at 9:30 am, and two break-out sessions covering: STRS Investments, Using Today's Technology, STRS Prescriptions/Healthcare, and a Legislative Update. After lunch the attendees will take "Lolly the Trolley" to the lakefront to visit at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, the Submarine USS Cod, the Cleveland Browns Stadium (and the Browns team store), and the Walter G Mather Ship Museum.

NEOEA Summer Leadership Conference: "A Shot in the Arm"

Usually that would mean "ouch!" This time it was part of a quote by Thora Green from Waterloo EA. She wanted us to know that "Keynote speaker Connie Schultz was the 'shot in the arm' needed at this time when teachers and unions have taken such negative hits. She validated our profession; once again giving us hope and encouragement for the profession we chose." Thora was one of 295 attendees at the 2009 Summer Leadership Conference at Lakeland Community College.

Jeff Kho from Olmsted Falls EA, one of 118 first-time attendees, said, "I really enjoyed my first Summer Leadership Conference. As a first-year president, I feel more at ease and well-prepared going into my first term!"

Check out our NEOEA website [Scrapbook](#) page for pictures and listen to Connie Schultz's speech at <http://www.neoea.org/podcasts/Schultz20090722.mp3>.

Love a Labor Day Parade? Let Us Know!

Labor Day activities are generally coordinated by the Central Labor Councils of the AFL-CIO, although they welcome involvement from non-AFL-CIO unions such as NEOEA.

We are attempting to get information on all of the Labor Day parades and other events in NEOEA. Send an email to LaborDay@neoea.org and we'll make sure you know what we know as soon as we know.

NEOEA began officially participating in 2007 when OEA President Patricia Frost-Brooks and OFT President Sue Taylor served as co-marshals of the North Shore Federation of Labor parade in North Olmsted. Last year we made up banners and magnetic signs, and we had groups attending Labor Day 2008 events in Cleveland and Lorain.

NEOEA's territory includes six of the AFL-CIO CLCs: Ashtabula County CLC; Lorain County CLC; Mahoning-Trumbull CLC; North Central CLC (Erie); North Shore CLC (Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake); and Tri-County CLC (Medina, Summit, Portage).

Fall Color Hike

Join the NEOEA Environmental Concerns Committee for the first hike in our annual series on Saturday, October 10, 2009, as we enjoy the fall colors of Geauga County on the trails of Big Creek Park, 9160 Robinson Road, Chardon Township.

The hike will cover several miles and will take about two hours starting at 10:00 a.m. NEOEA will confirm registrations and send driving directions to those who pre-register by Monday, September 28. Download the sign up form at the NEOEA website in the "Private Access" area. If you miss that deadline, just show up, you can find directions to the park online at www.geaugaparkdistrict.org.

Fall colors should be at peak and the mature hardwood and hemlock forests will be spectacular, regardless of the weather. There will be some hills to cross, and we will have the hike rain or shine.

Cleveland History Behind the Scenes

Date: NEOEA Day, October, 16, 2009
Place: Cleveland Area Touring, Cleveland
Time: 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
Chairperson: A. Chip Cipolletti
AGENDA:

Learn about Cleveland's rich history by visiting behind-the-scenes locations. Cleveland has been preserving its rich heritage for years, and now you have an opportunity to visit some of our proudest places. Join our local historian in a memorable look at Cleveland. We plan to visit the NASA Research Center, Playhouse Square, the *Plain Dealer* production facility, Cleveland City Hall, Case Western Reserve University, Humphrey Company, Malley's Chocolates, and Custom Mailboxes. Tour features: Guided tour with local historian. Lunch included.

RESERVATIONS:

Cost: \$68 (includes lunch). Make check payable to: Discovery Tours, Inc. Send check and reservation form to: Discovery Tours, Inc., 24719 Dundee Dr., Cleveland, OH 44143. For further information call Chip Cipolletti at 216-531-8884 or e-mail acipolletti@discoverycleveland.com.
Deadline: Oct. 12, 2009.
(Limited to 40 participants.)

NEOEA Day New York Tour

The **New York City tour**, October 15-18, 2009, includes: one night's lodging in Pennsylvania, two night's lodging in New York City, a ticket for one Broadway Show ("West Side Story," "9 to 5," "In the Heights," or "Jersey Boys"), a guided city tour, admissions for the Empire State Building, and dinner on the way home in Pennsylvania. Dinner in New York is optional at the cost of the meal and will be at Carmine's on Broadway and 90th Street or Da Rosina Ristorante on 46th Street in Midtown. Also available is a side trip to the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island.

The cost of the tour is \$599 per person based on double occupancy and will depart late Thursday afternoon, October 15, 2009 (single occupancy: \$855; triple occupancy: \$545; quad occupancy: \$520). Deadline is September 4, 2009. See the NEOEA website for details.

Last NEOEA Day at Progressive Field!

Come join us for one more Indians game special at Progressive Field on Saturday, September 12, at 7:05 vs. the Kansas City Royals (Indians Log History Fleece Blanket.) Optional deals on the all-You-Can-Eat Buffet. Go to the NEOEA website for details and ordering information.

Yankee Peddler Tickets

The traditional Yankee Peddler Festival includes the Yankee Peddler Today Festival. One ticket provides admission to both festivals, running September 12-13, 19-20, and 26-27, 2009, 10:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m., at Clay's Park Resort in Canal Fulton, Ohio. For more information, see their website at www.yankeepeddlerfestival.com. Adult ticket: NEOEA price is \$6.50, a savings of \$2.50. Ticket for children 6-11: NEOEA price is \$2.00, a savings of 50¢. Children under 6 are free. No pets allowed. Orders accepted until Friday, September 4.

Be the CEO of Your Own Entertainment at Playhouse Square!

The PlayhouseSquare Corporate Exclusive Online Ticketing Discount System gives you the exclusive convenience of purchasing show tickets online and at a special discount. Get access to all the big shows that are coming to PlayhouseSquare.

Special online discounts offered to certain shows. Simply enter the promotion code (FAMTIX) using the web link (<http://playhousesquare.org/groups>) and follow the prompts through the purchase procedure. For questions, please contact Moira Beal at 216/664-6044.

Are You a Member of Your Local's Retired Group?

The NEOEA-R Organizing Committee would like to connect with local retired groups. We have speakers available for your meeting. Please send contact information to retired@neoea.org.

NEA Delegates Volunteer for San Diego School Cleanup

Over 400 NEA student, active, and retired delegates gave one San Diego school a well-needed face-lift that included cleaning, painting, planting, assembling new equipment, and decorating bulletin boards. The report is:

- 60: Pieces of furniture replaced
- 30: Bulletin boards decorated
- 1,000: New books labeled
- 50: Flowers and shrubs planted
- 25: Doors painted
- 10: Murals painted
- 50: Sets of window blinds cleaned

NEA Student Organization choose Balboa Elementary School in Shelltown, one of San Diego's most distressed schools, for the annual NEA RA service project.

Watch videos from the 2009 NEA Representative Assembly in San Diego; go to the NEA Annual Meeting and Representative Assembly webpage, www.nea.org/grants/1357.htm, for links to all the speeches and events.

NEA Member Benefits Website Sweepstakes

NEA members can register for each Give-Away in the "ENTER TO WIN" area of the NEA Member Benefits website (www.neamb.com) for a chance to win.

- September 1 -15, 2009: **Four New School Year Wardrobes from Macy's.** Each prize consists of a \$500 gift certificate from Macy's.
- September 16 -30, 2009: **Four New Dell Laptop Computers.**

Enhancing Your Buying Power with Best Benefits Club

NEOEA's group buying power makes possible discounts for our members through Best Benefits Club (BBC). As an NEOEA member, you already belong to Best Benefits Club; you do not take any additional steps or pay any dues to take advantage of BBC membership benefits.

The best way to learn about BBC offers is through the Best Benefits Club website, www.bbcmember.com. The BBC website is where you will learn if you need to print off a

coupon, present your proof of membership directly from the vendors at the point of sale, or purchase through the shopping cart. On the website, use the password **NEOEA0613**. For answers to BBC questions, you can call BBC at 330/273-5756.

Best Benefits Club advantages:

- Best Benefits Club covers a wider area within NEOEA, and many discounts are available while you're vacationing away from northeastern Ohio.
- Best Benefits Club has an on-line shopping cart that you can use to purchase amusement park tickets, HoneyBaked Ham gift certificates, etc.
- Best Benefits Club offers pickup service at their offices just off I-71 in Hinckley, Monday through Friday between 9:00 and 4:00.
- Best Benefits Club offers downloadable coupons, vouchers, and discount fliers on their website.
- Best Benefits Club offers activities throughout the year such as special days at Playhouse Square, Costco, Goodtime III, Zoo and more, where the discount or added value is even greater than their usual benefit.
- NEOEA members can sign up to receive BBC's weekly E-news which comes every Thursday into your inbox to keep you informed of new discounts and activities.

National Parks Tour of the Golden West: Salt Lake City – Lake Tahoe – Las Vegas – Yosemite – Sequoia – Zion – Bryce – Arches – Canyonlands

Mark your calendars for an exciting 15-day tour of the western National Parks. Travel with other NEOEA members. The Motor Coach Tour departs Saturday, July 17, 2010. Price is \$1048 per person-double occupancy price includes \$149 usd tax, service, and government fees plus add-on airfare from your departure city (\$570 from Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, or Cincinnati).

A professionally trained and accredited tour driver is licensed, bonded, and insured. They are knowledgeable on the local areas and provide you with a wealth of information. Their friendly service will make this trip a memorable experience.



North Eastern Ohio Education Association
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NEOEA-R Organizing Committee

- Gary Hollow, Chairperson
- Hazel Haffner, Vice-Chair
- Elaine Spondike, Secretary
- Nancy Wonson, Board Liaison
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- Denise Bartholomew
- Dennis Cook
- Lyn Curry-Huston
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- Hank Haynes
- Norm Hillstrom
- Nancy Javorek
- Richard Javorek
- Dennis Lewis
- Tim Matheson
- U. R. Neal
- Patricia Sharkey

Editorial Board:

- Hank Haynes
- Gary Hollow
- Bill Lavezzi
- Nancy Wonson

Reservations and \$100 deposits are being taken now. Check the NEOEA website for a reservation form. Second \$100 deposit due February 17, final payment by April 18. For more information contact: Roger Frei (440) 974-5345, rfrei2004@yahoo.com or YMT Vacations, Cindy Flores, 100 N. Sepulveda Blvd., Suite #1700, El Segundo, CA 90245, (310) 649-3820 x7147, 1-800-922-9000.

Reports on the OEA-R Web Page

Keep informed. Go to the OEA site www.ohea.org, then click on "OEA-R" along the left side.

- Retired and Involved Article
- OEA-R *Newsline*, Summer 2009
- OEA Board of Directors Report, August 7, 2009
- OEA Retirement Systems Update, August 2009
- OEA-R Statewide Fall Conference, September 24, 2009
- STRS Meetings Report, June 2009
- NEA Retired Annual Meeting & NEA Representative Assembly Report, 2009, San Diego.

- NEA Board of Directors Report, June 2009
- OEA Retirement Systems Update, June 2009
- NEA 2009 Social Security & Medicare Factsheet
- OEA-R *Newsline*, Spring 2009
- OEA-R Spring Regional Conference Report, May 20, 2009 - Robert Rothschild Farm, Urbana
- OEA-R Caucus, May 7, 2009
- NEA-Retired Regional Conferences, March/April 2009
- OEA-R *Newsline*, Winter 2009
- OEA-R *Newsline*, Fall 2008
- Retirement Links

NEOEA Calendar

- September 7** Labor Day Parades
- September 20** OEA-R Delegate, Declaration of Candidacy Deadline
- October 10** NEOEA Environmental Concerns - Fall Colors Nature Hike
- October 15-18** NEOEA Day Trip to New York City
- October 16** NEOEA Day Workshops

- October 24** NEOEA Negotiations Conference West
- November 7** NEOEA Representative Assembly, Austintown HS
- November 14** NEOEA Negotiations Conference East
- December 5** OEA Representative Assembly, Columbus
- January 30** NEOEA Environmental Concerns Cross Country Ski
- February 27** NEOEA Megaconference
- March 8** NEOEA Legislative Dinner
- April 17** NEOEA Environmental Concerns Great Lakes Brewery and West Side Market Tour
- April 24** NEOEA Representative Assembly, TBA
- April 27** NEOEA Health Care Summit
- May 7-8** OEA Representative Assembly, Columbus
- May 20** OEA-R Spring Conference, NEOEA Conference Center
- May 22** NEOEA All Committee Conference

**Get Your
 NEOEA News & Views at
www.neoea.org**