



NEOEAA -- Retired

A publication of the North Eastern Ohio Education Association -- www.neoea.org -- retired@neoea.org
5422 E. 96th Street, Suite 200, Garfield Heights, Ohio 44125-5330 -- Phone: 216/518-0200, 800/354-6794 Fax: 216/518-0202

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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 December Retirement Systems report to the OEA Board of Directors. For past and future reports go to the OEA-R section on the OEA website.

For up-to-date information go to these sources:

OEA: www.ohea.org; STRS: www.strsoh.org; SERS: www.ohsers.org;
PERS: www.opers.org; ORSC (Ohio Retirement Study Council):
www.orsc.org. Be sure to check the newsletters from these organizations as well.

OEA Retirement Systems Update

Report to the OEA Board of Directors: December 2009

SERS Health Care Program in Critical Condition

On Friday, November 20, 2009, the SERS Board received the 2009 actuarial valuation of the pension plan. Severe investment losses have resulted in the need to dedicate almost the entire employer contribution toward pension benefits. In order to fund pension and other statutory benefits with a 30-year amortization period, 13.54% of payroll (out of an employer contribution of 14%) will be directed toward those benefits. This leaves only .46% of payroll (plus the 1.5% health care surcharge) going toward the SERS health care program – a sharp reduction from the previous year. This results in a projection that the health care fund will run out of money in the year 2013.

At the meeting, SERS's Director of Health Care Services indicated that he would present the Board with a range of options for extending the life of the health care program at their December Board meeting. Additionally, the SERS Health Care Preservation Task Force, which represents stakeholders of the system, will reconvene in January to discuss these strategies.

OPERS Board Finalizes Proposal

On Wednesday, November 18, 2009, the OPERS Board voted to finalize a plan to submit to the legislature with changes to pension benefits recommended in order to improve the long-term funding status of the pension plan. In prior months, the OPERS Board had expressed a list of potential changes but had not taken formal action or indicated when such changes should be implemented. The Board decided that those who are eligible to retire within five years of the enactment of legislation would not be subject to the changes. Further, members with 20 or more years of service or who are eligible to retire within 10 years of the effective date of the legislation would only be subject to actuarial reductions for early retirement. The changes recommended by the Board are listed below:

- Minimum retirement age of 55 with 32 years of service or age 67

with five years of service.

- Early retirement at age 62 with five years of service or age 57 with 25 years of service (subject to actuarial reduction).
- Benefit formula of 2.2% of final average salary for each of the first 35 years and 2.5% for each year thereafter.
- Calculation of final average salary based on the five highest years of pay.
- COLA based on the annual consumer price index (CPI) not to exceed 3% per year.

As with any proposed changes to pension benefits, the OPERS Board's recommendation would require a change in state law. No such legislation has been introduced. It is anticipated that pension legislation dealing with all of the state's public retirement systems will be introduced in the early stages of 2010.

Ohio Newspapers to Take Aim at Public Pensions

In early December, a number of newspapers from around the state are expected to run articles dealing with Ohio's five public employee pension plans. The editor of *The Columbus Dispatch* was quoted in a recent trade publication about the article, noting that the papers are "Looking at if they (the pensions) are sustainable given the increasing expense and the increased inability of school districts and towns to pay for them."

At this time, we expect that the same major story plus local stories related to the issue will appear in the daily newspapers in Canton, Cleveland, Akron, Toledo, Dayton, Youngstown, and Columbus. We believe the story will promote the idea of shifting public employees away from a defined benefit pension and towards defined contribution plans [similar to a 401(k)].

As these stories begin to run, we encourage members to respond with letters to the editor or comments on the papers' website that set the record straight about defined benefit pensions.

Further, this is an opportunity to inform our members about the value of these benefits. Listed below are some key talking points:

- Defined benefit plans offer greater retirement security. In Ohio, public employees do not receive Social Security benefits. The state pension plans provide reasonable benefits that a member will not outlive.
- Defined benefit plans are efficient. The cost to deliver the same retirement income to a group of employees is significantly lower in a pension plan as opposed to defined contribution plans.
- For every dollar paid to Ohio retirees, approximately a quarter was contributed by taxpayers. Investment returns and employee contributions account for the rest.
- The vast majority of public retirees still reside in Ohio. Their pension income helps keep them off of public assistance and provides vital fuel to Ohio's economy.

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. There you can read various OEA Retirement Systems Updates, STRS Board Meeting Reports, OEA-R *Newsline* newsletters, and the OEA-R Guidelines.

Megaconference 2010

Come join us at this year's Megaconference on Saturday, February 27. It will be presented at **Corporate College East**, located in Warrensville Heights at 4400 Richmond Road. Registration and refreshments begin at 8:30 a.m., and workshops begin at 9:00. The \$15 registration fee (\$25 for nonmembers) covers a continental breakfast, lunch, and parking. **This Megaconference is open to all members.**

The **Megaconference** features twelve simultaneous breakouts in three one-hour time slots. Topics offered fall into the following three themes: Leadership Development, Personal Development, and Professional Development. For a registration form and complete workshop information, download at: <http://www.neoea.org/Megaconference2010.pdf>.

2010 OEA-Retired Spring Conference

Join OEA-R members from across the state for a day of information and fun on NEOEA's North Coast. NEOEA is proud to be hosting this year's OEA-R Spring Conference. It will be held Wednesday, May 19, 2010, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. 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 includes 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), the Great Lakes Science Center, and the Walter G. Mather Ship Museum.

2010 NEA-Retired Regional Conferences

The NEA-R Regional Conferences are a great opportunity to travel and stay connected to your profession. Activities include: 10 different workshops, speakers, national leaders, political information, networking, and good fun for all.

West Regional Conference - Minneapolis, Minnesota, April 12-14, 2010, at the Hyatt Regency Minneapolis. In Minneapolis, visit the historic Guthrie Theatre and Mall of America, within minutes of the hotel, or watch the Minnesota Twins play the Boston Red Sox.

East Regional Conference - Asheville, North Carolina, April 20-22, 2010, at the Grove Park Inn. In Asheville, visit historic Biltmore, buy a handmade dulcimer, shop the Grove Arcade, or enjoy the hotel spa.

Deadline for registering is February 26, 2010. Go to the NEA site for registration information: <http://www.nea.org/home/36905.htm>

OEA-R Delegates Elected

In October 2009, OEA-R members elected 41 delegates and 3 alternates to the 2009-2010 OEA RAs. There were 1,729 total ballots cast and of those, 1,565 were valid and 164 were void (more than 23 candidates voted for).

Congratulations to the following NEOEA-R members who were elected as OEA-R Delegates:

Homer Adams	Past OEA-R President
Elaine Spondike	ESP Advisory Rep
Nancy Wonson	NEOEA Advisory Rep
Bill Dorsey	delegate, 981 votes
Hazel Haffner	delegate, 742 votes
Denise Bartholomew	delegate, 721 votes
Hank Haynes	delegate, 706 votes
Dennis Cook	delegate, 691 votes
Gary Hollow	delegate, 690 votes
Pat Sharkey	delegate, 686 votes
Sam Collette	delegate, 683 votes
Norm Hillstrom	delegate, 582 votes
Bob Dengler	delegate, 575 votes
Beryl Burkle	alternate, 543 votes
George Bates	alternate, 497 votes

OEA-R Officers and Advisory Council Representatives are delegates by virtue of office.

2009 OEA Retired Delegate Caucus

The OEA-R Delegate Caucus was held December 4, 2009, at the STRS Building in Columbus. The Caucus meets prior to each OEA Representative Assembly to hear reports and take positions on matters that affect retirees.

Thanks to the following delegates from NEOEA-R who attended the OEA-R caucus: Homer Adams, Denise Bartholomew, George Bates, Beryl Berkle, Dennis Cook, Bill Dorsey, Hazel Haffner, Hank Haynes, Norm Hillstrom, Gary Hollow, Pat Sharkey, and Nancy Wonson.

Election Filing Deadline - February 15

Contact Becky Slaughter at OEA, 800-282-1500, for a Declaration of Candidacy Form for the following positions:

- **NEA-Retired Delegate**
- **OEA-Retired Advisory Council Representatives** for: NEOEA, ESP, and Higher Ed.
- **OEA Board of Directors** - OEA-R Representative

Dinner and a Movie, Anyone?

The holiday season is a great time to get together with family and friends and enjoy dinner and a movie. NEOEA's group buying power makes discounts possible for our members through **Best Benefits Club (BBC)**. Enjoy discounts as low as \$6 per ticket for **AMC Theatres, Cinemark Theatres, and Regal Cinema**. Also, just by showing your proof of BBC membership card, you'll receive 10% off of your food purchase, excluding alcohol, at any of the following **TGI Fridays**: Brooklyn, Erie (PA), Green, Mentor, Stow, Strongsville, and Westlake.

As an NEOEA member, you already belong to the **Best Benefits Club**; you do not need to take any additional steps or pay any dues to take advantage of BBC membership benefits. Call Best Benefits Club at 330/273-5756 and identify yourself as an NEOEA member or see the Best Benefits Club website at <http://www.bbcmember.com> with password NEOEA0613.

Chicago Comes to Cleveland, and Other PlayhouseSquare Discounts

The PlayhouseSquare Corporate Exclusive Online Ticketing Discount System was designed to give you and your family 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: *Chicago*, *In the Heights*, *Xanadu*, *Late Nite Catechism 3*, *Bat Boy: The Musical*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Grease*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and *Phantom*. Advantages of the program are:

- Discount tickets for selected shows
- Access 24 hours/7 days a week to purchase tickets
- Opportunity to purchase tickets before the general public
- Confirmation of seating
- 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. You will be sent a confirmation via email with notification on where to pick up your tickets (based on the ticket pick-up method you selected). There is a small ticketing fee (only \$3 per order, not per ticket).

Be sure to check back on a regular basis as new shows are added often! For questions, please contact Moira Beal at 216/664-6044.

Cross-Country Ski Outing: A Winter Outing of the Environmental Concerns Hiking Series

Enjoy a mid-winter's night at NEOEA's annual cross-country ski outing at **Lake Metroparks' Chapin Forest Reservation**. Explore several miles of lighted and groomed trails on Saturday, January 30. We'll start the evening with a cross-country skiing lesson and guided ski tour from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. You may continue to ski on your own until 7:30 p.m. Meet at the heated Chapin Forest Pine Lodge at 5:30 p.m. to check-in and prepare to ski.

Fees:

- Ski Lesson and Tour (6:00 to 7:00) - \$4.00 (includes skis, if you need them)

- Ski Tour and Lesson only (6:00 to 7:00) - \$4.00
- Ski rental for additional ski time (7:00 to 7:30) - \$2.00

If you have any questions, please contact Ray Patacca at 440/256-3800 or rpatacca@lakemetroparks.com. Advanced reservation is required; please complete the form online www.neoea.org/Ski_Outing_2010.pdf and mail it to: NEOEA Ski Outing, 5422 E. 96th Street, Suite 200, Garfield Heights, OH 44125-5330.

Directions to the Chapin Forest Hobart Road Entrance:

Take I-90 to Route 306. Travel south on Route 306 for 3-1/2 miles to Chardon Road (Route 6). Turn right (west) onto Route 6 (Chardon Road) and travel one mile to Hobart Road. Turn right (north) onto Hobart Road for almost 1/2 mile to the park entrance located on the right (east) side of the road. Please note: You will pass a Chapin Forest entrance and sign on Route 306. Do not enter at this site, as it does not access Pine Lodge.

NEOEA President to Coach Game of Hope Team

For several years now, NEOEA has been a sponsor of **The Game of Hope**, a celebrity basketball game sponsored by the **Hope Foundation of Mahoning Valley**. In a few short years, the Youngstown-area Game of Hope has raised over \$40,000 for the Paul Newman Hole-in-the Wall Gang Camp and several local nonprofits. This year's Game of Hope will be played on Saturday, January 23, at 4:00 p.m. in Beeghly Center at Youngstown State University.

NEOEA President **Jeff Pegg** will be one of the celebrity player-coaches. Tickets will be available for purchase at the door. If that weren't enough excitement, rumor has it that another President, well-known for his enjoyment of basketball, is considering putting The Game of Hope on his schedule for January. (No word on whether he'll be on Jeff's team!)

Take Our Survey and Win a Mug!

This issue we continue our "question of the month" series. We'll hold a drawing from those who participate, with three participants

receiving an **NEOEA 140th Anniversary mug**. This month's survey is about NEOEA Day. To give us your thoughts on NEOEA Day, go to www.neoea.org/survey.

New Travel Opportunities

For summer 2010, members have a choice of two trips:

- a **Southern Caribbean cruise** with Royal Caribbean Lines leaving San Juan on June 13; information online at www.neoea.org/MemberEd/SouthernCaribbeanNEOEA.html.
- a **National Parks tour** with YMT Tours departing July 17; information online at <http://www.neoea.org/Travel-NationalParkTour.pdf>.

If you have travel opinions to share, go to the survey at <http://tinyurl.com/ltck49>.

Special Benefits for NEOEA Members Dollar Bank & Liberty Mutual

Dollar Bank is now an Authorized Member Provider of banking services for NEOEA members. Dollar Bank has branches in several NEOEA counties, including Cuyahoga, Lake, Lorain, and Summit; and our Pennsylvania border counties. For more information about Dollar Bank's services to NEOEA members go to this site: www.dollarbank.com/neoea.

As a member of NEOEA, you have access to **Liberty Mutual's** insurance at competitive rates.

Auto benefits include:

- Emergency Roadside Assistance
 - Valuable Discounts
 - Unlimited rental
 - Accident Forgiveness
- For your home, you can realize savings when you insure both your auto and home with benefits such as:
- 24-hour emergency home repair
 - Personal property replacement service
 - Safe homeowner program

For an online quote go to: www.libertymutual.com/lm/neoea or call 1-800-835-0894 to be directed to a Liberty Mutual office nearest you.



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North Eastern Ohio Education Association
5422 E. 96th Street, Suite 200,
Garfield Heights, Ohio 44125-5330

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Cuyahoga County Charter Transition Advisory Group Seeks Volunteers

In the November election, Cuyahoga County voters overwhelmingly approved a new County Charter. The new Charter includes a provision for a Transition Advisory Group. Cuyahoga County residents can volunteer to serve on the committee by registering at <http://charter.cuyahogacounty.us/>.

The Charter-mandated Transition Advisory Group promises that the transition process that will be open and accountable, designed to secure public confidence in and support for their county government. They have publicly committed to actively and openly engage residents, businesses, community groups, and other stakeholders in this historic opportunity for Cuyahoga County.

The 2010 year promises to be one of great challenge and change, as Cuyahoga County transitions from a county commissioner to an elected county executive and county council form of government. Other county offices will be eliminated and/or consolidated under the Charter, which becomes fully effective in January 2011.

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.

- December 17 – January 21, 2010: Ten \$100 Gift Cards from The Container Store!!: a chance to win one of ten \$100 gift cards to the Container Store.
- January 22, 2010 – February 14, 2010: "Sweet on You Valentine" Packages: a chance to win one of two "Sweet on You" Valentines packages consisting of a box of chocolates, free H&R Block tax preparation, a \$100 Barnes & Noble Gift Card, a \$100 iTunes Gift Card, and a Heart Healthy Cookbook
- February 15, 2010 – February 28, 2010: Ten \$100 Target Gift Cards: a chance to win one of ten \$100 Target Gift Cards

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

NEOEA Calendar

January 23	Mahoning Valley Game of Hope, Beeghly Center, YSU
January 30	NEOEA Environmental Concerns Cross Country Ski Outing, Lake Metroparks, Chapin Forest Reservation
February 27	NEOEA Megaconference, Corporate College East, Warrensville Heights
March 8	NEOEA Legislative Dinner, Hilton Garden Inn, Twinsburg
April 17	NEOEA Environmental Concerns Great Lakes Brewery and West Side Market Tour
April 24	NEOEA Representative Assembly, Parma Senior High School
April 27 May 7-8	NEOEA Health Care Summit OEA Representative Assembly, Columbus
May 19	OEA-R Spring Conference, NEOEA Conference Center
May 22	NEOEA All Committee Conference
July 1-6	NEA Representative Assembly, New Orleans, LA
July 21-22	NEOEA Summer Leadership Conference, Lakeland CC