

## Fourth Quarter 2001

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### Legislative Report



The past 12 months have resulted in many legislative successes for PERI. In September of 2000, HB 628 became effective, allowing recalculation of benefits from the average final salary multiplied by 2.1% times years of service to a multiplier of 2.2% for all retirees unless they were capped by other state and federal legislation. The bill also included an ad hoc increase for those who retired prior to 1980 to build up purchasing power of their original retirement benefit. High inflation in the 70's and early 80's ate away purchasing power of those who retired prior to 1980. The ad hoc increase brought them back to 85% of the original purchasing power of their starting benefit. We worked with PERS and the state legislature for approximately 18 months to secure the passage of that piece of legislation.

Another provision in HB 628, that was removed from the bill, would have provided a 3% COLA every year regardless of the consumer price index. Some legislators felt that not all of the retirement systems could afford it, so they pulled it out of HB 628 in order to take a look at it this year.

The way the COL is currently figured is: if inflation is 2½ % you would get a 2½ % COLA. If you have points /in your bank you could apply a ½ point to bring it up to the maximum 3% allowed by state law. If the consumer price index is more than 3% you could bank the difference. We, along with PERS and others, are working on legislation that will give everybody a 3% COLA regardless of consumer price index. This is HB 157.

HB 157 passed the house right before the summer recess. After I gave proponent testimony before the ways and means committee, the bill passed the senate on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, and we are awaiting the governor's signature as we go to press.

One important thing to keep in mind is: Now that we have received these benefit increases, we must not neglect the fact that we have to stay alert to protect them. One way to do this is to make sure the fiscal and financial integrity of PERS is never put in jeopardy. We must remain vigilant.

*(continued on page 2)*



### A Message From Your President

We had another wonderful annual meeting in September. Almost 400 of our chapter officers and members from around the state were in attendance to hear reports on the status of our association, what is on the State of Ohio's legislative agenda, and the financial condition of our pension system funds.

I can report to you that all is well at the current time. The details on what was covered at the meeting can be found in other articles in this newsletter, so I want to skip that and tell you about the heart of PERI members and the important role you play in keeping our pension funds and retirement system safe.

I am always so happy to see our members and chapter officers at the annual meeting. These are the men and women that get to know Ohio's state legislators on a personal basis. They are the ones who make the phone calls and write the letters that communicate our position on issues to our elected officials.

*(continued on page 2)*

## A Message From Your President

(continued from page 1)

What I really miss is the opportunity to visit with those of you who live outside of the state of Ohio. Without your membership support and willingness to write and call on the federal legislators in your state, we would not have the quality benefits that we enjoy today.

The byline that we have adopted: "Partners in Retirement," says it all. Each of us has worked and contributed, along with our employers, to the pension fund at our retirement system. Ohio's PERS invests those funds and earns interest and dividends. These earnings are added to the fund and reinvested. As long as the investment decisions are good, the pension fund will increase in value and we can continue receiving our side benefits like healthcare and prescriptions.

If we want our pension fund to stay in good shape, it is very wise for us to remain involved during our retirement years. We are "Partners in Retirement," because retirees have joined together by becoming members of PERI, and PERI keeps its members posted on legislation that affects the use of the pension funds. PERI also works with the administrators of PERS, and they work with us for the retiree's perspective on benefit improvements and proposed legislation. We all work together as: "Partners in Retirement."

We have a very important legislative year coming up in 2002, so we all need to stay on our toes.

I look forward to visiting as many chapters as I can and giving you all a big hug.

Keep up the good work.

## Legislative Report

(continued from page 1)

Others see how wonderful our pension is and they continue to work on ways to get their hands on our money. We need to keep alert so the integrity of the system is maintained. If we don't, our retiree benefits and healthcare could be placed in jeopardy.

Last year the members of SERS were pushing to have the same healthcare coverage that we do. One of the suggestions was to merge SERS with PERS. The effect to us would be that our retirement system would be forced to subsidize the differences between their healthcare benefits and ours.

A bill has been introduced, HB173, that would require PERS and other retirement systems to provide \$60 million a year for venture capitol to attract businesses to Ohio. It is our position that PERS is not here to subsidize healthcare for other systems or to provide money for new business ventures.

Even though we want new business in Ohio, we don't feel that our retirement money should be invested in such risky ventures. If a new business is a good investment, then the business community will get involved. If the PERS investment team feels that a company is a good risk, they are free to make that decision. What we object to is making it a law that PERS must invest a specific amount every year into risky operations.

Let's talk about Social Security: For the past 4-5 years there has been an issue that all newly hired employees would be required to join in Social Security instead of PERS in order to bolster the Social Security system. We have been consistently and adamantly opposed to any effort to mandate Social Security for Ohio's public employees. So far we have been successful in stopping this movement. In Ohio, all of our congressmen and our U.S. senators are working with us to stop the movement. We need to continue educating legislators from other states to be of the same opinion. As members of PERI we have to be continuously on the alert so that others do not dip into the PERS pension funds for their pet projects.

I have been told that there are still some retirees who question why they should belong to PERI. Currently our membership is a few hundred shy of 50,000 members. Annual membership dues of \$7.50 are a great bargain! We have accomplished a lot on that small amount of dues. For example: A movement to cap the Medicare Part B reimbursements came to a head in the 1996-97 legislative session. Some senators wanted to restrict the amount PERS reimburses to \$29.90 per month. I believe the current Part B premium is \$50 a month. PERI fought that legislation daily for months at a time, and we won. When we caused the defeat of that piece of legislation, we saved each member \$20.10 per month for a total of \$241.20 this year alone. That is quite a bargain for your \$7.50 annual investment in PERI dues.

When you go to bed tonight, you can rest easy knowing PERI is on the job for you.



Tallying over 13,000 votes at the PERI office



## Election Results

**Thank you** for the exceptional response to our recent election for officers. Prior to 1998, officers were elected by those who were able to attend the annual meeting. During the 1997 annual meeting, a revised constitution was approved that made the opportunity to vote available to all of our members. In 1998 we received approximately 1,500 ballots and that count slowly increased to 3,500 in 2000. This year we received almost 14,000 ballots.

Our board of directors has worked diligently for the past 7 years to improve our communication so that every PERI member would have the opportunity to participate and have a say in their organization.

For the year 2002 our officers will be:

**Lucille Critchfield, President;**  
**William J. (Bill) Kuhner Jr., 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President;**  
**Donald F. Moyer, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President;**  
**Bill Cook, 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President; and**  
**Mary McDowell, Treasurer.**

This year's Teller Committee consisted of Joe and Peggy Speakman, Jim Dunphy, Ray Lawton, Doug Bailey, Ed Cousins, Hermine Willey, and Ed Harrison, assisted by the PERI office staff.

In addition, the proposed revisions to the constitution were approved by a 95% margin.





## 400 PERI MEMBERS, SPOUSES ENJOY ANNUAL MEETING

A crowd of 400 PERI members and their spouses renewed old friendships and met other retirees from around the state at the annual meeting on September 25 at the Villa Milano in Columbus. Before the business session they enjoyed coffee and cake and met with representatives of various healthcare, insurance and pension providers.

*Photos by Jim Fette*



ABOVE: Pres. Lucille Critchfield, 1st Vice Pres. Bill Kuhner, Dist. 7 Rep. Frank Vaughan, Dist. 9 Rep. Beverly Sycks, Dist. 3 Rep. Stan Wyllie, 2nd Vice Pres. Bill Moyer, Dist. 1 Rep. Jack Wymer, Dist. 11 Rep. Becky Somerville, and Dist. 4 Rep. and Treasurer Mary McDowell



LEFT AND BELOW: Members being helped by reps from Aetna and Medical Mutual (also note Dist. 8 Rep., Bob Polland, below left)



# Why Everyone Receiving A Check From PERS Should Be A Member of PERI

PERI is not a union, nor does it endorse or support any political parties or candidates.

## Special points of interest:

- Every single retiree can make a difference.
- Every retiree is welcome to be a part of a group with the same interests in mind.
- Each person has the right to voice their opinion in a forum that gets involved with results.
- All of us, together, can help keep our retirement and benefits safe for us and for future generations.

## Inside this section:

What is PERI?

Benefits of membership in PERI

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PERI Website

## P.E.R.S. & P.E.R.I.

### What is the difference?

**P.E.R.S.** is the abbreviation for Ohio's Public Employees Retirement System.

PERS is the state agency that administers our pension funds and healthcare benefits.

PERS sends us our checks.

**P.E.R.I.** is the abbreviation for the Public Employee Retirees, Incorporated.

PERI is the Retiree Political Action Association for all those who receive PERS checks.

PERI keeps on top of all political activity that affects our pension and healthcare benefits.

### How Does P.E.R.I. Protect Your Pension and Benefits?

1. The Officers of PERI work with the Administrators of PERS as one of their sounding boards for the opinions of retirees. Many times, our members call upon us to help them with problems they are having with PERS services or healthcare providers.

2. The rules and regulations for the operation of PERS are set by the Ohio General Assembly.

3. Our Legislative Counsel constantly monitors every proposed or actual piece of Ohio legislation.

4. Our counsel keeps our Board of Directors informed on all legislation that pertains to the rules or regulations that would affect our pension system, pension fund investments, or healthcare benefits.

(Continued: next column)



*Partners in Retirement*

5. Through feedback from our quarterly Newsletter, comments from our local Chapters, or individuals by phone, our Board of Directors is able to determine how our members feel about these changes.

(Continued on Page 8: Protect your Benefits)

All of PERI's Officers and District Representatives are retired Ohio workers who volunteer their time for the good of all PERS retirees.

PERI is not a union nor does it support any candidates or political parties.

PERI does not sell or endorse any products or services.

## Benefits of Membership

- **Information from our Legislative Counsel**, who monitors legislative activities.
- **Insight to pending legislation** without political or news media interpretation.
- **Representation on PERS retiree issues** before the Ohio Legislature and its committees.
- **Quarterly Newsletters** to keep you informed about legal and political issues.
- **Insight on PERS** and the motivating factors behind their actions.
- **800 Service** to answer your questions about legislative issues.

(Continued on page 8: Benefits of Membership)

# Why Your Involvement Is So Vital

## The Importance Of All Retirees

### Being Members of PERI

As in all political endeavors, the more people you represent, the greater your influence with the members of The Ohio General Assembly.

When we stand together, and properly present our position, we have the best opportunity to prevail.

## Retirees Living Outside Of The State Of Ohio

There have been times in the past when only those who live outside of Ohio could help.

Case in point: Several years ago, the U.S. Congress was discussing imposing Social Security on all workers. This action would dry up new money coming into Ohio's PERS. All of Ohio's U.S. Senators and Representatives were against this policy.

We needed Senators and Representatives from other states to understand our opposition. So our PERI members who live outside of Ohio were asked to write and call their Senators and Representatives.

To make a long story short, our out of state PERI members were successful in convincing several key U.S. Senators to change their vote, and mandatory Social Security was put on the shelf.

## Retirees Living Within The State Of Ohio

Because there is such a high concentration of retirees who live within the state of Ohio, there are 93 local Chapters that PERI members may join.

Many PERI members like to belong to a local Chapter, because the Chapters provide a forum for a more complete discussion of the legislative and benefit issues at hand. In addition, Chapter members have a great time learning and fellowshiping with one another.

PERI has divided Ohio into 11 Districts. Each District elects its own Representative to sit on the PERI Board of Directors. The Representatives carry the views of their members to the Board, and take the most current information back to the Chapters.

## AN INTRODUCTION TO OUR DISTRICTS

### District 1:

Jack Wymer 419-893-6142  
Defiance, Fulton, Henry, Lucas,  
Ottawa, Sandusky, Williams, Wood.

The Chapters in District 1 are very active. In addition to our discussions on pending legislation, we invite our local Ohio Representatives to meet with us when they can. We have guest speakers from PERS, Aetna, Medical Mutual, and other benefit suppliers. Even though each of our Chapters is geared toward the particular interests of its members, we have a variety of activities and a great time of fellowship.

### District 2:

Evelyn George 937-693-8111  
Allen, Auglaize, Hardin, Mercer, Paulding,  
Putnam, Shelby, Van Wert.

Our District is mostly rural in nature, but we have a real interest in the legislative activities that affect our pension and benefits. We have a good time in our meetings, being serious on legislative matters, community minded on local concerns, and fun loving with social activities. I believe we have accomplished a good mix of legislative, PERS related, community, and entertaining speakers for our meetings.

### District 3:

Stanley Wyllie: 937-252-8496  
Champaign, Clark, Darke, Greene, Logan,  
Miami, Montgomery, Preble.

District 3 has been one of the backbone areas for PERI. In addition to our District Representatives, several state Officers have come from our ranks. Our membership has been faithful and supportive of their local Chapters, and have provided a great deal of input to the PERI Board of Directors on legislative and pension fund investment policies. We have a good time while keeping informed on the issues.

## OHIO CHAPTERS

Our members, who can participate in Local Chapters, are very important to PERI's ability to effectively communicate our concerns to members of the Ohio General Assembly. Chapter members have the opportunity to discuss issues and personally meet with their local Ohio Representatives. Healthcare providers also visit our Chapters where our members can get their questions answered without having to spend hours on the phone.

### District 4

Mary McDowell: 513-424-7591

Adams, Brown, Butler, Clermont,  
Clinton, Hamilton, Highland, Warren.

A little bit country and a little bit big city best describes our district. We tend to concentrate on the legislative issues and securing speakers from PERS and our Healthcare Benefit Providers. We get to know our Ohio Representatives and Senators personally and take the time to have meaningful discussions with them. Our Chapter members enjoy being together and we have a great time while learning.

### District 5

Floyd Smith: 419-562-1453

Crawford, Hancock, Knox, Marion,  
Morrow, Richland, Seneca, Wyandot.

Many of our Chapter members were involved in grass roots politics during their working years. Their experience has been very beneficial in helping PERI organize its state wide legislative committee network. We enjoy being with each other while we learn the hows and whys behind pending legislation. When called on, we have a great time writing Ohio's Senators and Representatives to express our views.

### District 6

Joe Speakman: 614-868-1234

Delaware, Fairfield, Fayette, Franklin,  
Licking, Madison, Pickaway, Union.

In the District where PERI established its roots, our Chapters have built a strong membership base of knowledgeable people who enjoy being together. Over the years, learning the details of pending legislation and supplying input to the state office has been our strong point. A large number of PERS retirees reside in our counties and we always get excited as the more recent retirees get involved.

### District 7

Frank Vaughan: 740-992-7334

Gallia, Jackson, Lawrence,  
Meigs, Pike, Ross, Scioto, Vinton.

There aren't a lot of PERS retirees in our counties, but those who are, are active and involved. Our members have a real concern when anyone wants to play with our pension funds. We know that the best way to stay on top of any legislation that affects the way the pensions funds are handled is to go to our Chapter meetings. We have a great time being together, meeting our local legislators, and learning what is important.



### District 8

Bob Polland: 740-452-5318

Athens, Hocking,  
Monroe, Morgan, Muskingum,  
Noble, Perry, Washington.

Many of the original Ohio Settlers began in our counties. We have strong feelings about Ohio and how our pension funds are handled. Over the past 4 years our District and Chapters have had the greatest growth in membership in the state. We are very active in meeting our Ohio Legislators and expressing our viewpoint on issues that are before the Ohio General Assembly.

### District 9

Beverly Sycks: 740-622-2076

Belmont, Carroll,  
Coshocton, Guernsey, Harrison, Holmes,  
Jefferson, Tuscarawas.

All of our Chapters, whether large or small, are greatly interested in the workings of our retirement system. We meet with our Ohio Senators and Representatives, and share our views on important pieces of legislation. We also have representatives of our healthcare providers visit our Chapters so our members have a chance to get their questions answered without spending hours on the phone.

### District 10

Leland Coddling: 330-725-4615

Ashland, Cuyahoga, Erie, Huron,  
Lorain, Medina, Summit, Wayne.

Our Chapters are very active with strong leadership and a good mixture of legislative and PERS healthcare-provider speakers. A few of our Chapters go above and beyond in outside activities for their members such as trips and tours. We are also very active in communicating with our state Legislators and learning about legislation and our pension benefits.

### District 11

Becky Sommerville: 330-876-8634

Ashtabula, Columbiana, Geauga, Lake,  
Mahoning, Portage, Stark, Trumbull.

We have strong, long-standing Chapters in all but two of our counties: Ashtabula and Geauga. We are looking for retirees who are willing to coordinate Chapters in those counties. In our other Chapters, we maintain our knowledge of pending legislation and healthcare issues from our Legislators and healthcare providers. Our Chapter members enjoy the fellowship as we learn together.

## Check Us Out

Since 1948, Ohio's retired public employees have been organized to protect the funds in our pension system from legislative robbery. Starting in the same year, we have worked with the Administrators of PERS and the Ohio General Assembly to receive, and then improve, all of our side benefits such as: Cost of Living adjustments, Healthcare, Prescription Drugs, Ad Hoc pension base adjustments, and Medicare Part B reimbursements. A complete history of our activities and accomplishments can be found on our website.

[www.OPERI.ORG](http://www.OPERI.ORG)

## Keeping Ohio's Retired Public Employees Informed



We're on the Web!  
[www.OPERI.ORG](http://www.OPERI.ORG)

(Protect Your Benefits: Continued from Page 5)

6. When we know what our membership wants, PERI gives testimony to legislative committees and works with individual legislators to accomplish the results we desire.

7. In addition, we have a highly developed Legislative Committee that keeps in constant communication with our District and Chapter legislative Chairpersons so our Chapter members will have the proper information to write or call their local Ohio Representatives and Senators.

With all of these resources in place, PERI is able to react quickly to ensure that the viewpoints of PERS Retirees are effectively communicated to the proper people at the proper time.

## Who May Belong To And Who Governs The P.E.R.I. Association?

Only Ohio age and service, disability, and survivor beneficiaries receiving checks from PERS may join PERI. Only PERI members can become PERI Directors.

PERI membership and directorships are limited to PERS Retirees, because we know that no matter what other groups may claim, no one or no organization is more concerned about, or more committed to, protecting and improving PERS pensions and benefits than those who receive them.

(Benefits Of Membership: Continued from Page 5)

- **800 Service:** To help guide you through any problems with PERS Departments or Healthcare Service Providers.
- **Membership Card:** With major Retiree and Healthcare phone numbers on the back.
- **Peace of Mind:** Your fellow retirees are on the job monitoring legislative and political activity that may affect your retirement and benefit package.
- **Peace of Mind:** Your fellow retirees will alert you when there is a need for your personal involvement.
- **Peace of Mind:** Your fellow retirees will let you know who to contact, when to contact them, and the best way to present your viewpoint.

As a member, you can completely enjoy your retirement years knowing that PERI is on the job watching over your pension fund.



## TOM SHERMAN SAYS PERS RETIREMENT SYSTEM IS ONE OF THE BEST IN THE WORLD

Tom Sherman, a PERS government relations representative and attorney, was among the keynote speakers at the PERI annual meeting and called PERS one of the best public pension systems in the world.

“The PERS pension fund is well-funded with a competitive benefits package and has one of the best healthcare plans in the country,” explained Sherman. “It has 600,000 members of which 400,000 are active contributing members with 200,000 who have worked and left their account on deposit, 134,000 of which are currently receiving benefits as retirees or disability recipients.”

Sherman’s remarks also touched on legislation that was in the Ohio General Assembly during the past year that had potential impact on PERS and PERI members. House bill 628 was enacted on September 21, 2000, causing an increase in most member benefits seen in October 2000, also a special one-time ad hoc increase for people who retired prior to 1980. He also spoke of changes in healthcare programs last year that improved reimbursement for certain physicals, diagnostic tests, and also removed limits on hospice care.

Sherman also gave updates on the status of two pieces of legislation currently active in the Statehouse. One is HB 157 – legislation that PERI supports – that would change the COLA (Cost of Living Allowance) from something that is tied to CPI (Consumer Price Index) and capped at 3% to an annual 3% regardless of the change in the CPI. This bill is pending in the Senate Ways & Means Committee. A vote on this legislation is expected this fall or sometime in 2002. “This could make it a simple interest COLA and perhaps in the future you could look at feature enhancements to the COLA mechanism,” Sherman explained.

Another bill, HB 173 – The Venture Capital Bill – is something that PERI is not in favor of. Today it is bottled up in the House Finance Committee. The bill would set up a venture capital fund consisting of \$60 million a year to be invested in new high tech companies in Ohio. These annual monies would come from forced investments from PERS, SERS and the Bureau of Workers Compensation. “We think this is the wrong approach,” explained Sherman. “We believe that PERS funds should continue to be invested by professionals on PERS’ investment staff whose goal is to make sufficient rate return to both secure and increase benefits in the future.” Sherman said that it is not necessary to call on the legislature about HB 173 at this time, but they may need the help of the PERI membership in the future.



Neil Toth, PERS Investment Director (left), and Tom Sherman, Government Relations with PERS, with William Covert, Immediate Past President (seated), at the Annual Meeting. An article about Mr. Toth’s speech is on the following page.



Sherman told the PERI crowd that the Retirement Study Council also plays an interesting part in HB 173. It is basically a legislative committee set up to oversee the operations of qualifying retirement systems, to review any legislation that has an impact on any retirement system. In the past, it has been a strong proponent of allowing the pension systems to invest where they see fit, providing just an oversight role and reporting back to the general assembly.

“It has not formally reviewed HB 173, but I think you will see the Retirement Study Council come out with recommendations that support programs and pension systems and recommends against the provisions of HB 173”, explained Sherman.

Sherman also announced that the PERS open enrollment healthcare packets had been mailed to members and that there would be statewide meetings around Ohio October 11-19. For more information call 1-888-884-9669.



ABOVE: Sharon Downs, PERS retiree representative, with PERI President, Lucille Critchfield.

## SHARON DOWNS TALKS OF PERS' LONG RANGE PLAN

Sharon M. Downs, retiree representative and PERS board chairman, also briefly addressed the annual meeting attendees. She gave an overview of the 94 long-range planning objectives made by the board to improve the programs and activities of the organization. She stated that the consultants for the board were impressed by their aggressiveness in working toward making a positive impact on issues affecting the membership.

Ms. Downs also took a moment to praise the work, dedication and professionalism of the PERS staff.



## NEIL TOTH: PERS' FINANCIAL GOAL IS TO MAXIMIZE SYSTEM'S EARNINGS POTENTIAL

PERI members received an in-depth review of the expansive PERS investment program from Neil V. Toth, PERS Investment Director.

Toth explained that the primary objective of the PERS investment program was to maximize earning potential of the system while making sure investments were secure but also to keep costs reasonable.

“Our board now expects that PERS would be competitive with other investment funds, that is, to desire a current rate of return that is comparable to or exceeds other investment funds,” explained Toth.

As for the investment portfolio, it has been a tough 18 months or so in the investment arena. High water mark came in conjunction with a peak in the financial markets in March of 2000 at which time the size of the PERS investment portfolio reached about \$60 billion. “Since that time, we have been trending down, and the investment portfolio declined to about \$53.5 billion in August. Today it is about \$50 billion.”

Ohio PERS is the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> largest public pension plan in the nation (Ohio and North Carolina keep trading off for 10<sup>th</sup> place). With the economic downturn and PERS' more conservative investment orientation and relative ranging, Ohio should move up a little. However, with these larger systems having greater exposure to equities both in the U.S. and internationally, we may see these assets decline a little faster than what Ohio is experiencing.

With the adoption of broader investment goals, PERS expects to fulfill its objectives long-term. Expected long-term rate of return on new asset mix is 9.5% per year. On the former mix it was 9%. “What we are attempting to achieve is incremental 1/2 of 1% on average per year by adopting a new, less conservative and more aggressive asset allocation,” explained Toth. “In terms of money, 1/2 % of \$50 billion is \$250 million. That goes a long way to meeting our objective.”

To further reach their financial objectives, PERS has also established a strong real estate program over the years using a three-pronged approach to investment: (1) directly-held properties (hotels, office space, retail space and apartments); (2) REIT's – real estate traded on the stock exchange; and (3) commercial mortgage on properties.

“PERS has a substantial real estate portfolio,” Toth said. “Some 20,000 apartment units, 7-million square feet of office space, 4.4-million square feet of retail space, 10-million square feet of industrial property, nine separate hotels accounting for almost 3,000 beds. This is a very good performing portion of our portfolio and it will continue to be a strategic part of what we do in the future.”



## OHIO RETIREMENT STUDY COUNCIL SERVES AS BEACON FOR NATIONAL PENSION GROUPS

In remarks at the PERI annual meeting Aristotle Hutras, president of the Ohio Retirement Study Council, said that he is a member of a national conference of state legislatures task force to help reform social security. One of the observations he brings to the table is that Ohio is a great example of how retirement systems should be run, and how retirement benefits should be considered and voted on by the legislature.

Over the past 11 years since the council was established, it has put several key laws on the books to protect the benefits that are enjoyed today by Ohio's retired public employees. "It is also our goal to assure that future benefits will be affordable, too," said Hutras. "It is the job of the council to make recommendations with respect to every piece of legislation that will affect your retirement systems, to work with the actuaries of the fund so benefits will be secure for future generations."

Today, any bill that is introduced on the floor of the Ohio General Assembly must be evaluated by an actuary analysis within 60 days. Then the proposed bill is passed on to the Retirement Study Council for review.

"The benefits that Ohio's retirees enjoy today were essentially guaranteed to be affordable from the beginning," Hutras explained. "It is the only way to do things properly in legislation."

This is the reason why social security is in such a stormy period, according to Hutras. "The reason it (social security) is in a jam is because they are not actuary funds," he said. "When political ideas start running downhill because of the results of an election or because it is popular they're hard to stop. Eventually someone has to pay the freight."

Ohio, in its wisdom in 1968, established the Retirement Study Council so retirees today and in the future will never have to encounter those concerns and the viability of their retirement funds.



Aristotle Hutras

### WINEGARNER PLEASED WITH GROWTH OF PERI MEMBERSHIP, VOTING



PERI Administrator Bill Winegarner shared with the annual meeting attendees the phenomenal growth that PERI has experienced over the past decade. Membership at present is just under 50,000, having grown from 16,000 members in 1993.

This was evident in the amount of time and manpower that was required to count the 14,000 ballots that were mailed to the PERI offices in Columbus. A decade ago only 300 members had cast ballots to determine their leadership.

Joe Speakman, District 6 Representative and chairman of the Teller Committee, assembled his group of seven committee members and PERI staffers on September 19 to count the ballots and determine officers for the future.

Winegarner has among his 2002 goals a way to be more effective in tabulating ballots since the number of PERI voters has skyrocketed in recent years. "We are thrilled with our voter response," he said. "It is now in excess of 20% of our membership."

Winegarner also talked about the improvements made to the PERI website ([www.operi.org](http://www.operi.org)) to assist the membership in its daily dealings with the Columbus office and various issues of importance.

He also gave praise to the PERI staff of Laurie Frithiof, Mary Ford, Michelle Reyes and Nancy Heath for their professionalism and desire to assist the membership in the resolution of any questions or problems that come to their attention.



ABOVE: George Bihn and Albert Boos, PERI chapter pioneers  
 ABOVE RIGHT: Members had a very enjoyable and educational day  
 fellowshiping and dining together at the PERI Annual Meeting



## Thank You

A big thanks of appreciation to Evelyn George, Chair of our Program Committee. Evelyn and her committee worked hard to plan our meals, decorations and prizes. She did a great job as emcee for our prize giveaways as well!



Evelyn George

### PUBLIC EMPLOYEE RETIREES, INC.

659-F Park Meadow Rd.  
 Westerville, Ohio 43081-2879  
 (614)891-6868 or 1-800-247-7374  
[www.operi.org](http://www.operi.org)

Lucille Critchfield.....President  
 William J. Kuhner, Jr. ....1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
 Donald Moyer.....2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President  
 Bill Cook.....3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President  
 Marjorie Belville.....Treasurer  
 William E. Covert.....Past President  
 William I Winegarner.....Administrator  
 Jim Fette.....Editor  
 John Gilchrist.....Legislative Agent

#### DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVES

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Floyd Smith	Frank Vaughan
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