

THE PERI NEWSLETTER

Issued by PUBLIC EMPLOYEE RETIREES, INC.

Second Quarter 2004

1st Vice President, Donald F. Moyer, succeeds William J. Kuhner Jr. as President. Mr. Kuhner passed away March 6, 2004 after a short illness. See Memorial on page 3.



Donald F. Moyer

A Message From Your President

It is with a deep sadness, and yet great anticipation that I have accepted the position of President to fill the unexpired term of President Bill Kuhner.

I pledge to you, that I will do my very best to carry on in Bill's tradition of watching the business and legislative arenas, in order to protect our pension fund and to expose those who would do it harm for their own political or personal gain.

I really need your help, as I try to fill Bill's shoes. PERI membership numbers have been very special to me ever since I became a District

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Legislative Report

The Ohio General Assembly has been quite active as of late and we have been tracking a number of bills that affect OPERS. In the last Newsletter, we discussed H. B. No. 227 and S. B. No. 133 that



John Gilchrist

deal with the governance, accountability, ethics, and oversight in the operation of our five state retirement systems. As you may recall, we reported that these were different bills that covered many of the same subjects, but in differing ways. Now, because of recent Senate action, they are identical and the controversial "Buy Ohio" provisions and the State Treasurer provision that would have allowed the treasurer to appoint the executive director for each of the five systems were removed. You may also recall,

S. B. No. 133 passed the Senate and was sent to the House, and H. B. No. 227 passed the House with the two controversial provisions and was sent to the Senate. The Senate took H. B. No. 227 and removed the two

controversial provisions. The Senate went even further, all of the House-passed language in H. B. No. 227 was removed, and all of the language in S. B. No. 133 was put into H. B. No. 227. Consequently, both bills are now identical. House Bill 227 was voted out of the Senate Health Committee with one hearing and passed the Senate the next day. As of the date of this writing, the bill went back to the House for its consideration of the Senate changes.

During the Committee hearing, Chairman Lynn Watchmann stated

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Partners in Retirement



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that the Senate is adamantly opposed to the “Buy Ohio” provisions and is unwilling to accept any compromise on the provisions. After the same Committee hearing, the sponsor of H. B. No. 227, Representative Michelle Schneider, stated that the House is unlikely to agree to any bill that doesn’t include the “Buy Ohio” provisions. Consequently, the bill (H. B. No. 227) appears headed to a conference committee where these differences will be debated.

Other bills that we are tracking include the following:

House Bill 455 and Senate Bill 225 both deal with allowing a retiree who is receiving a single annuity benefit and who subsequently gets married to change to a joint and survivor benefit. Under both bills, if the retiree desires to change the single annuity benefit to a joint and survivor benefit,

he would have to make the switch within one year after the marriage. In addition, the change would be effective on the date the retirement system receives the paperwork. S. B. No. 225 also contains a provision that will benefit one individual. It will allow the surviving spouse of a deceased retirant to apply for a joint and survivor annuity that the couple had intended to apply for but failed to accomplish because the retirant died before the change could take place. They had submitted the paperwork to OPERS and under current law the switch would have become effective the first of the month after the paperwork was received. Unfortunately, the retirant died after the paperwork reached OPERS but before the change could take effect at the end of the month.

House Bill No. 449 would allow a retirant, who is re-employed in a position covered by OPERS, to receive

a refund when he retires the second time. This would be in lieu of the annuity the retirant would be paid when the retirant reaches age 65. That is, the retirant would have the option of receiving a refund of his contributions, plus interest, instead of receiving the annuity.

House Bill No. 468 would permit a member of OPERS to purchase military service credit for inactive duty in the Ohio National Guard or reserves and H. B. No. 469 would permit a member of OPERS who serves without compensation as an elected member of a board, commission, or other public body while employed in a position covered by OPERS to purchase additional service credit.

We will be watching these various proposals very closely and will keep you informed.

Healthcare Up-Date

By

William I Winegarner, Administrator



Over the past several years, the PERI Healthcare Committee has been working with OPERS, along with other advisors and constituency groups, to develop a Healthcare Program that has a realistic probability for long-term stability. In other words: a program that will basically remain the same year after year.

We began working with the OPERS healthcare workgroups in late 2001 and have continued ever since. During this time we have gone over hundreds of pages of information and spent countless hours in research and discussion meetings, gaining insight into the complexities of funding and providing healthcare for retirees.

One point was clear from the very beginning, if OPERS wanted to continue providing meaningful healthcare coverage in the distant future, they could not continue to provide the “Cadillac” in

healthcare coverage as they had in the past.

During our meetings we learned about OPERS’ legal obligation to provide healthcare (basically there is none.). We reviewed the history and growth of healthcare benefits. We went over the year-by-year cost to the Retirement System. We saw what the price of new wonder drugs and modern medical procedures and equipment were doing to escalate the cost of healthcare.

PERI and other constituency groups were provided the opportunity to present the concerns of their members, to question any of the presenters, and to

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make suggestions for final resolutions.

We studied what OPERS had done in the past to reduce cost, we looked at the healthcare fund income sources, we heard expert testimony on future cost and income estimates, we looked at contribution rates, we looked at investment strategies, we looked at foreign prescription services, and we looked at many national issues that will have an effect on healthcare cost and services in the future.

Adjustments to co-pays, deductibles, and prescription coverage were made on January 1, 2004. However, these steps were taken in order to stabilize escalating costs, until such time as a long-range plan could be put in place.

OPERS is currently putting the final touches on a plan that they tentatively plan to implement in January 2007. The following is an explanation that only covers those who are currently retired or who will retire prior to 1/1/2007. This plan will allocate a certain monthly dollar amount to each retiree. The dollar amount will be tied to (increase with) inflation. Spouses will receive 75-90 percent of the employee's allocation, depending on years of service. Each retiree will have a choice of selecting from various programs that will best meet his or her needs.

In the mean time and in order to refine their plans to best meet the needs of current and future retirees, OPERS will be conducting educational and member input sessions throughout the state of Ohio and on their website. These sessions will provide you with first hand explanations and give you an opportunity for personal input.

As soon as the times and locations are set for these sessions OPERS will be making the announcement.

MEMORIAL

President William J. Kuhner, Jr.

William J. Kuhner, Jr., 84, President of PERI, died March 6 in a Columbus hospital. A longtime resident of Chillicothe, he made a major contribution to PERI since he retired some 16 years ago. At that time, Bill joined the organization and became active in his local chapter in Ross County. He served his chapter in various positions including its Presidency.



first elected PERI President in September 2002 and again in 2003 where he served until his passing.

Bill Kuhner graduated from Jackson High School in 1938 and went on to Ohio University where he excelled

in football and track and earned a degree in education in 1947. Upon graduation, Bill worked with the Ohio Department of Transportation before moving on to the Ohio Bureau of Employment Services. He retired in 1988 with 42 years of service credit.

Bill is survived by his wife of 55 years, Martha, three children and four grandchildren.

“Bill was a dedicated volunteer who helped PERI grow and improve the benefits this organization’s membership has enjoyed in recent years,” explained Bill Winegarner, PERI’s Administrator. “He was the ultimate team leader who gave selflessly of his time and talents to bring people together.”

In 1992 the members of District 7 elected him to represent them on the State PERI Board of Directors. In 1999 he was elected as PERI’s 3rd Vice President, and in 2001 and 2002 as the organization’s 1st Vice President. In those positions Bill gained a real insight to the association through his service on the Audit, Finance, Program, Legislative, Chapter Education, and Nominating committees. Because of his extensive experience he also served a valuable role as Chairman of the Constitutional Review Committee in 2002. He was

Chapter Participation

All members of PERI have the opportunity to join a local chapter. Many members do so because they want the most current information, and they enjoy the guest speakers from OPERS, Aetna, Medical Mutual, Ohio Retirement Study Council, and PERI. In addition, Chapter members have the opportunity to ask questions and receive answers on important issues pertaining to our pensions and healthcare benefits.

Each Chapter charges a membership fee that is in addition to the state membership dues. This fee allows them to run the Chapter activities and events.

If you would like to join a local chapter, please call the PERI Office between 9 and 3 (1-800-247-7374), and we will be able to put you in touch with one in your area.

A Message From Your President

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Representative back in 1996. Because I talked it up everywhere I went, my District 8 area led the state in several areas of membership growth and member participation.

OPERS has a little over 130,000 people receiving some sort of pension, survivor, or disability check. The best we can estimate is that somewhere around 80,000 of these have at least 10 years of service credit and are receiving healthcare benefits also. For the past three years our PERI membership has reached 55,000. That means there is a minimum of 25,000 of our fellow retirees, who have yet to stand up for themselves in the protection

of our pension system and benefits.

I would like to ask each of you to contact a friend or fellow retiree from your prior place of employment, and find out if they are a current member of PERI. If they are, thank them for standing with us, if they are not, get ten dollars from them and sign them up.

If each of us signs up just one person, we will have accomplished our goal.

For the past two years I have been working with our lobbyist, John Gilchrist, as the chairman of the Legislative Committee, and closely with our Administrator, Bill Winegarner who has

been leading our Healthcare work group with OPERS. Therefore I come to the office well prepared and up to speed on all the important issues.

We will be holding a special legislative meeting on June 23 for our District Legislative Chairs and our District Representatives. Our legislative network is vital to our ability to communicate with our legislators, and this educational seminar will help District Legislative Chairs do an even better job in the future.

I thank you for your support and understanding as we head full steam into the summer and fall.

There are many who are not aware that there is a death benefit from OPERS. Below is an excerpt from OPERS's Member Handbook.

Death Benefit

Upon the death of an age and service or disability benefit recipient, a lump sum death benefit, based on years of service, is paid to the qualified beneficiary who you may specifically designate, the person responsible for burial, or the estate of the recipient. The benefit schedule for those whose service credit is less than 10 years would be \$500; for service credit of 10 but less than 15 years, \$1,000; \$1,500 for service credit of 15 but less than 20 years; \$2,000 for 20 but less than 25 years of service; and the maximum would be \$2,500 for 25 or more years of service credit.

New Officers installed at PERI Board Meeting



New Officers are installed at PERI Board Meeting. (Left to right): Administrator, Bill Winegarner swears in President Don Moyer; 1st VP Bill Cook; 2nd VP Jack Wymer.

Senator Joy Padgett visits PERI Board Meeting



(Left to right): John Gilchrist, Senator Joy Padgett, PERI President Don Moyer.

PERI District Roundup

District 1

District 1 Representative **Gerry Thurber** has announced the District's Annual Meeting will be held June 22 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Guest speakers include **Tom Sherman**, OPERS Director of Governmental Affairs, along with representatives of Aetna and Medical Mutual. Cost is \$8 per person, which includes the buffet lunch. Reservations are due by June 1 by calling Gerry Thurber at (419) 382-8809.

Paul Moor, President of Williams County Chapter 32 in District 1 has been doing his best to see that two offensive provisions of HB 227 do not end up in the final legislation. He has taken it upon himself to visit as many Mayor's offices, town councils and state and county facilities within District 1 to voice his opposition to this legislation.

District 1 Lucas County Chapter 4 President **Shirley Thurber** has extended an open invitation to all area PERI members to attend the chapter's meeting

each month at the Kent Branch Library at Central and Collingwood. The meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month at 1 p.m. The meetings feature different speakers bringing a varied list of subject matter to both inform and entertain members and guests. The meetings are also a way for PERI members to become informed on legislation that impact their retirement checks and medical benefits. Any questions on Chapter 4 should be directed to Shirley Thurber at (419) 382-8809.

District 3

District 3 Representative **Ellsworth Szkudlarek** is seeking a PERI member from Greene County who has an interest in starting a local chapter. To learn more about this opportunity contact Ellsworth at (937) 833-4675 or ellsworthseugene@hotmail.com

District 4

Butler County Chapter 7 Officers in District 4 are sworn in for the coming year.



At right is **Bob Dawson**, outgoing Chapter President, who is administering the oath of office to (left to right), **Ray McDaniel**, President-elect; **Franklin Thomas**, Treasurer-elect; and **Mary McDowell**, Secretary-elect. Vice President-elect **Jim Shull** was not present for the photograph.



Ray Mick (right), PERI District 4 Representative, presents **Bob Dawson** with an award of appreciation for his eight years of service to the chapter as President.

District 4 has scheduled its Annual Meeting for June 18 at 10 a.m. at the Wilmington Senior Center.

District 5

District 5 held its District Annual Meeting on April 26 at the Carousel Convention Center in Marion, according to **Wirt Robinson**,



District 5 Representative. The guest speaker was **Aristotle Hutras**, president of the Ohio Retirement Study Council. **Robert Bear** gave the Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance was presented by **James Osborn**. Those in attendance enjoyed a wonderful meal, and renewal of old friendships. Many took pictures as they rode the famous carousel.



PERI District Roundup

District 6

The District 6 Annual Meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 8 at 11:15 a.m. at the MCL Cafeteria on Schrock Road in Westerville, Ohio. An election will be held for

District 6 Officers and also to select a new District 6 Representative to the PERI Board of Directors. All PERI members residing in District 6 (Franklin, Delaware, Licking, Fairfield, Fayette, Pickaway, Union and Madison Counties) are invited to attend. Lunch

will be “on your own” following the meeting and speaker. Anyone interested in participating in a leadership role in District 6 or in the District 6 Representative position should call current District 6 Representative **Joan Grube** at (740) 924-1025.

District 8

Leroy Meadows, Perry County Chapter 46 President had brain surgery in October. He was extremely critical, needing a lot of care and rehab therapy. He completed his therapy in December and is now feeling better and is again active in the Perry County Chapter. He would like to thank everyone for their cards and prayers.

District 8 Representative **Bev Calvert** has announced a new Monroe County chapter will be chartered on June 7. **Don Moyer**, PERI President and Calvert will conduct installation of the new officers. District 8 welcomes this new chapter with enthusiasm.

At the December meeting of Perry County Chapter 46, the County Officers were installed by **Don Moyer**.



(Right to Left): **Don Moyer**; **Leroy Meadows**, President; **Geraldine Henery**, Treasurer; **Gwendolyn Willison**, Secretary; (Back row): **Dennis Swingley**, Vice President.

District 9

Beverly Sycks, District 9 Representative, has announced the district will hold its Annual Meeting at noon on May 3 at April’s Restaurant, 640 Heller Drive, Newcomerstown. Guest speaker is **Tom Sherman**, OPERS Director of Governmental Affairs. For details contact Beverly Sycks at (740) 622-2076.

Coshocton Chapter 77 met on April 13 at Jerry’s Restaurant. The speaker was **Sheriff Tim Rodgers** who spoke on Ohio’s new concealed handgun law. The chapter’s meetings are held every other month.



Not many PERI members statewide can claim to be more faithful to the organization than **Ralph Kasner**. Kasner recently celebrated his 100th birthday with his PERI friends from Chapter 76 in District 9. Friends gathered in February at the Villa Restaurant in Holmes County and presented the former County Commissioner (1970-78) with a gift, a cake and a proclamation in his honor. Presenting the cake to Kasner is **Ruby Martin**, left, President of Chapter 76.

PERI District Roundup

District 10

President Richard Paddison called to order the Summit County Chapter 21 meeting on February 3 at Tangiers Restaurant. The featured speaker was **Doug Foust**, Assistant Director of Healthcare for OPERS. He spoke on changes in healthcare and prescriptions.

Training classes for chapter officers were held for Medina Chapter 38 on February 6 and for Cuyahoga County Chapter 89 on February 9.

On February 10 **Leland Coddling**, District 10 Representative, installed officers for Cuyahoga County Chapter 91 at the West Lake Porter Public Library. The topic of discussion at that meeting was HB 227 and SB 133 and its impact on OPERS if passed by the Ohio General Assembly.

The Huron County Chapter 87 held their meeting on March 9 at the Elks Lodge. A total of 33 members were in attendance. The featured speaker was **Martin Haffey** who spoke about the history of Norwalk Public Library

District 11

Becky Somerville, District 11 Representative, reports that the district's seven active chapters have started the year with busy agendas. Ashtabula Chapter 35 has been making plans for the District Annual Meeting to be held May 21 at the Geneva Community Center. The scheduled speakers are **Tom Sherman**, OPERS Director of Governmental Affairs, and **Don Moyer**, President of PERI.

and the changes in all public libraries in the past 30 years.

Medina Chapter 38 met on March 19 at the Medina Presbyterian Church for a luncheon meeting. Speakers addressing health issues and medications were: **Christy Miller**, Aetna Insurance; **Kris Moore**, Medical Mutual; **Susan Truitt**, R.N, and **Penny Wickard**, OPERS Healthcare.

Cuyahoga County Chapter 14 met on March 24 at the Metro Health Medical Center. District 10 Representative **Leland Coddling** discussed legislation pending in the Ohio General Assembly that would impact OPERS retirees.

The District 10 Nominating Committee met on April 5 to vote on candidates for the District. Initially, four candidates applied for the position. However, two candidates later dropped out of the race when it was determined they do not have enough time to devote to the position. The remaining candidates were **Joseph F. RaPotec** and **Robert F. Taylor**. RaPotec resides in Seven Hills and is retired from the Ohio Dept. of Agriculture, DJM. Taylor is a retired electrician who

Trumbull Chapter 56 and Stark Chapter 20 both started the year by telephoning retirees in their counties to invite them to join their area chapter. As a result of their effort, they have tripled membership and attendance at their meetings.

Mahoning Chapter 18 has the largest membership with Portage a close second. Their membership continues to grow throughout the year as does Lake chapter 28 and Columbiana chapter 59.

worked for the Cleveland Regional Sewer District. He resides in Cleveland.

On April 13 District 10 held its Annual Meeting at the Elks Lodge on State Route 250. A group of 40 attendees enjoyed an excellent buffet. After the opening prayer and Pledge of Allegiance a silent prayer was said on behalf of PERI President **William Kuhner** who died March 6. **Fred Nelson**, Nominating Chairman for District 10 Representative, chaired the election for the position of District 10 Representative. The officer of Huron County Chapter 87 counted the ballots and **Joseph F. RaPotec** had the most votes and was congratulated by the members. The featured Annual Meeting speaker was Don Moyer, PERI's Acting President. Moyer spoke on the many reasons why membership in PERI is worth the investment.

CORRECTION: In the first quarter PERI newsletter, **Phyllis Leohr** was mistakenly listed as Wayne County's Secretary. She is the Secretary for Medina County Chapter 38.

At this time there is no active chapter in Geauga County. As a result, PERI is seeking a retiree in the county who has an interest in establishing a group to serve the retirees in Geauga County. For more details contact Becky Somerville at (330) 876-8634. Each member attending a chapter meeting has the opportunity to stay abreast of issues concerning their retirement and healthcare benefits. They also have the opportunity to stay in touch with former co-workers and make new friends.

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PERI Officers

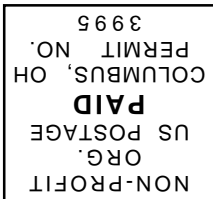
Donald F. Moyer.....President
Bill Cook.....1st Vice President
Jack Wymer.....2nd Vice President
Evelyn George.....Secretary/Treasurer

PERI Staff/Advisors

William I. Winegarner.....Administrator
Mary Ford.....Data Entry
Laurie Frithiof.....Administrative Secretary
Nancy Heath.....Bookkeeper
John Gilchrist.....Legislative Agent
Jim Fette.....Editor

District Representatives

Gerry Thurber	(419) 382-8809	Defiance, Fulton, Henry, Lucas, Ottawa, Sandusky, Williams, Wood
Estella Nusbaum	(419) 586-3093	Allen, Auglaize, Hardin, Mercer, Paulding, Putnam, Shelby, Van Wert
Ellsworth Szkudlarek	(937) 833-4675	Champaign, Clark, Darke, Greene, Logan, Miami, Montgomery, Preble
Ramon Mick	(513) 867-1199	Adams, Brown, Butler, Clermont, Clinton, Hamilton, Highland, Warren
Wirt Robinson	(740) 499-2313	Crawford, Hancock, Knox, Marion, Morrow, Richland, Seneca, Wyandot
Joan Grube	(740) 924-1025	Delaware, Fairfield, Fayette, Franklin, Licking, Madison, Pickaway, Union
Frank Vaughan	(740) 992-7334	Gallia, Jackson, Lawrence, Meigs, Pike, Ross, Scioto, Vinton
Bev Calvert	(740) 373-4917	Athens, Hocking, Monroe, Morgan, Muskingum, Noble, Perry, Washington
Beverly Sycks	(740) 622-2076	Belmont, Carroll, Coshocton, Guemsey, Harrison, Holmes, Jefferson, Tuscarawas
Leland Coddling	(330) 725-4615	Ashland, Cuyahoga, Erie, Huron, Lorain, Medina, Summit, Wayne
Becky Somerville	(330) 876-8634	Ashtabula, Columbiana, Geauga, Lake, Mahoning, Portage, Stark, Trumbull



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