

Editorial Comment

Sickened and Saddened

My reaction to some of the comments made in the June 20th article entitled “Pension lobby has power at Statehouse” by State Senator Jon Husted, pertaining to the efforts of Ohio’s retired public employees to keep the, then Speaker of The House, Husted from using their pension money, to further his own political agenda, were as follows:

Sickened: When I had to recall that some of our elected representatives had actually fronted their political cause by exploiting our courageous men and women in the military, and that one of them, Senator Husted, was now using the same ploy to discredit all those who worked for our state, counties, and cities because, they dared to protect their pension funds by calling, emailing, and writing their elected representatives to combat his scheme.

Saddened: Because some elected officials, and newspaper writers, cannot grasp the concept that once an employer pays money to, or on behalf of an employee, the money belongs to the individual not the employer. (Was taxpayer money; no longer taxpayer money.) I wonder if their logic holds true for them. Do those same editors really think that their employers still own the money in their 401Ks?

When it comes to the funding status of Ohio’s pension systems, wouldn’t it be nice if our politicians and newspapers would quit whipping the scapegoat pension systems, and take the time to identify the real problems?

The legislature is the governing body that made the rules that employees could retire after 30 years, the major cause of double-dipping, not the retirement system. The legislature is the governing body that allowed the school teachers retirement system to pay 13 checks a year to their retirees, the major cause of the STRS unfunded liabilities, not the retirement system. The legislature is the governing body that allowed Police and Firemen to retire at 48, the major cause of their underfunding, not the retirement system. The legislature is the governing body that will not address “spiking,” a major cause of unfunded liabilities, not the retirement system.

OPERS sent the legislature a list of recommendations last fall. These changes, when enacted will enable OPERS to continue funding pensions and benefits for their members at no additional cost, or liability, to taxpayers.

Shouldn’t newspaper articles be focused on why the legislators are not dealing with those recommendations, and shouldn’t newspaper articles address the question of what are, or would be, fair and equitable pay and benefits for current state, county, and municipal employees?

Retirees worked hard and paid into their retirement fund under the rules and conditions in place at the time of their employment. No snide remarks, or poorly researched and directed articles, will discourage us. We worked and paid for our pension and benefits, and we plan to continue protecting them to the best of our ability.

William I Winegarner, Administrator

Public Employee Retirees, Inc.