

HB 151 and Subsequent Revisions  
Opponent Testimony  
William I. Winegarner, Administrator  
Public Employee Retirees, Inc.

Sponsors Mandel and Jones, Chairman Widener, and members of the committee.

I thank you for this opportunity to speak in opposition to HB 151 and its current revisions.

My name is William I Winegarner, the Administrator for the Public Employee Retirees, Inc. commonly referred to by its acronym PERI. PERI has over 50,000 members representing over 150,000 family members who are currently receiving pensions and health care benefits from Ohio PERS.

On behalf of our membership, I would like to make two points for your consideration.

We are definitely against terrorism and any country which sponsors or supports terrorist activities. A large percentage of our membership, consist of veterans of our military, and active duty combat in the various wars and police actions in which our country has been a part. We feel that an enactment of HB 151 in any form, even though noble in its intent, would result in a breech of state law.

This bill, as well as similar types of legislation, is a slap in the face to all current and former employees of the State of Ohio.

When our members accepted employment with the State of Ohio, it made them an offer. If they would pay into the pension system, so would their employers, and those funds, along with the investment earnings, would be held in exclusive trust for them. This contract and trust is clearly stated the revised code.

Since the early 1930s, Ohio's pension programs have been one of drawing cards, if not the major drawing card to secure the services of quality public servants. These men and women trustingly accepted employment under these terms.

We trust that when the emotional patriotic draw of this legislation is considered in light of the state's duty and responsibilities to its public servants, that each member of this committee will see that is his or her duty to honor the state's contract with its employees, and to honor the law under which it was established.