

Mr. Gary Allen, President
Ohio Education Association
225 East Broad Street
Box 2550
Columbus, OH 43216

January 15, 2005

Dear Gary,

May I call you Gary? I feel like I got to know you and the other OEA officers and staff so well when I was President of the Kettering Classroom Teachers' Association during our strike in January of 1991. You and the others were by my side during that whole period, sending in OEA Labor Relations Consultants from across the state to help with different picketing sites, bringing in the OEA executive officers to address our rallies, putting your entire Beavercreek office staff on call, and especially providing us with our own LRC Bill Stone to lead us safely through that minefield to a spectacularly successful outcome for our teachers. The support was simply tremendous. We were all so grateful to OEA, a teachers' organization that we felt really cared about our long-term welfare. I can recall many conversations with you, and I know I expressed over and over how much I was inspired by OEA's leadership.

You may recall that the major issue of that strike was the Board of Education's position of severely reducing health coverage and dramatically increasing the teachers' contribution to the premium cost, wiping out any salary raises for the foreseeable future.

Imagine my surprise--no, shock--when I was recently told that this same OEA, under your leadership, has decided to terminate the supplemental health benefits provided to its OEA retired employees age 65 and over, as stipulated in a negotiated agreement.

I am now a retired teacher and, by the way, a life-member of OEA-Retired. I joined because of my great appreciation over the years of what OEA did for me and because I wanted to continue to support this organization. Suddenly I am asking myself what kind of representation I can expect from OEA on the troubling issue of STRS health care coverage when OEA, the organization that exists solely to advocate for teachers, has so easily cast aside those former OEA employees who were an integral part of making OEA what it is today, and who were absolutely indispensable to me during our KCTA strike?

Gary, I strongly believe that OEA has a responsibility to treat its own retirees in a way that is commensurate with how we teachers expect to be treated by STRS. How can OEA speak to STRS health issues when such blatant hypocrisy exists within its own treatment of OEA retirees? Believe me, current and retired teachers with whom I have spoken about OEA's actions are just as concerned and disappointed as I am. Casting aside your retirees who served you so well is a sad commentary on what your organization has become. I say "your" because these are certainly not the values of the OEA I was a part of in 1991.

Please do the right thing. Find a way to restore those benefits. Use those positive leadership skills to resolve this issue satisfactorily. OEA is sending a very troubling message to its membership, to the legislature, and to STRS if OEA refuses to reconsider its position on this matter.

Sincerely,

Carol M. Houck



Cc. Mr. Dennis Reardon, Executive Director, OEA
Mr. Mike Togliatti, President, Kettering Education Association