



COALITION OF RETIRED EMPLOYEES OF THE OHIO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

34 Claire Ct., Circleville, OH 43113 – 740-474-3004

December 8, 2005

Ohio Education Association
Executive Committee Members and District Presidents

OEA Staff retirees continue to believe that it is important to communicate directly with the leadership of OEA. The last year has been one where the topic of OEA management's illegal termination of staff retiree post 65 health care benefits has been in the forefront. It will continue to be until the issue is resolved.

OEA President Gary Allen continues to refuse to meet with staff retiree representatives. OEA management continues to incorrectly say that the contracts do not require them to provide the benefits. Management continues to spew rhetoric against the contract language while OEA lawyers argue that a sentence in the Summary Plan Descriptions for health insurance gives them the right to terminate coverage regardless of the contracts. Did you know that? Do you realize the potential negative impact to you and your members?

OEA high-priced attorneys claim retirees shouldn't be allowed to proceed because they don't have enough money - thus supporting the claim that OEA management is trying to win by outspending retirees. OEA attorneys claim every retiree should have to file an individual lawsuit in federal court to get justice. Based on what OEA management is spending now, anyone can do the numbers and figure out how much 134 lawsuits would cost OEA members. OEA attorneys also claim it is a "conflict of interest" for the staff unions to help retirees, but helping retired OEA members is exactly what OEA is doing with the Health Care Advocates for STRS. OEA members should be grateful that OEA management isn't following its attorneys' advice when it comes to protecting members' interests! You see, OEA attorneys are taking a position that could prevent OEA from working with STRS on benefits for retirees. Does that make sense to you?

Attached are copies of the retirees' response to OEA motions for Summary Judgment including sworn declarations by former OEA Executive Director Bob Barkley, former OEA Director of Human Resources Rich Bourgault, OASU Negotiator Sharon Sutherland, and PSU Negotiator Bob Mullins. It is important that you take the time to read these. It confirms what we have been telling you for over a year and is just the beginning of what will be presented at trial. The people who really know what the language means are going to testify against the current management and leadership (who were not even working for OEA when the language was negotiated). OEA management is now so desperate to find some excuse for its actions that we believe they have even violated ERISA law and you and the grassroots members you represent could pay an even heavier penalty for OEA management's actions.

All of this has happened while OEA management manipulated you to rubber stamp its outrageous actions and allow an anti-labor/anti union law firm to get its hands on hundreds of thousands of OEA members' dues dollars. When OEA goes to the legislature to try to work on STRS or SERS issues their credibility will be severely impacted. What you as leaders of the OEA should be asking is: What is illegally terminating staff retiree health insurance doing for the members of OEA? What is the cost in loss of credibility with members, legislators, and boards of education?

It is not too late for you to stand up for what is right – not just for those who gave OEA members so many years of loyal service, but for OEA members who are counting on you to protect their retirement interests. We certainly can't make you do the right thing, but when this is all finished and the truth comes out - and it will, OEA members will know what was done for (or against) them on your watch.

In Struggle,

John Wardell, President
Coalition of Retired Employees of the Ohio Education Association.

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