



OEA Legislative Watch

February 11, 2011

Pension Bill Begins Hearings in Subcommittee

Hearings began this week in the House Retirement and Pensions Subcommittee on House Bill 69, sponsored by Representative Lynn Wachtmann (R-Napoleon). HB 69 is currently a “placeholder” bill in that it does not incorporate recent proposed changes to retirement benefits of STRS that were directed by the legislature and approved by the STRS Board in January. OEA opposes those changes because the benefit reductions go too far, place too great a burden on active teachers and do not provide for the necessary phase-in for teachers nearing the end of their teaching career.

To take action on proposed pension reform click here:

<https://secure3.convio.net/ohea/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=252>

On Wednesday, February 9, 2011, the Subcommittee heard a presentation from OPERS Executive Director, Chris DeRose, outlining changes proposed by the OPERS Board. These changes include adding two years to retirement eligibility for those more than ten years from retirement, basing cost-of-living increases on inflation (rather than 3%) for future retirees, reducing the benefit formula and calculating final average salary based on five years rather than three. The purpose of the changes is to improve the long-term solvency of the pension plan and to continue contributions toward the OPERS health care program for current and future retirees.

The Subcommittee also announced its schedule for the coming weeks. On Wednesday, February 16, 2011, there will be invited testimony from STRS and SERS staff. There will be opportunities for public testimony on the proposed changes to STRS, SERS and OPERS on the following dates:

Tuesdays at 7:00 pm - February 22, March 22, March 29 and April 5

Wednesdays at 2:30 pm (or after session) - March 9, March 16, March 23, March 30, and April 6

Any OEA member who is interested in offering public testimony is encouraged to contact Robert Davis at 614-227-3069 or davisr@ohea.org for additional information and assistance.

Do you know that the political process affects virtually everything in your school day?

Take action —
Become an OEA Member Lobbyist

Questions?

Contact your Governmental Services Team

Ron Rapp
Director
rapp@ohea.org

Melissa Clark
Lobbyist
clarkm@ohea.org

Robert Davis
Lobbyist
davisr@ohea.org

Matthew Dotson
Lobbyist
dotsonm@ohea.org

Pete Hackeman
UniServ Political Advocacy Consultant
hackemanp@ohea.org

Russ Harris
Education Research Development Consultant
harrisr@ohea.org

House Bill 21 (Value-Added, Teach for America (TFA), Charter E-School Moratorium) Receives Hearings in House Education Committee

House Bill 21 (R-Combs), requires the use of value-added in licensure eligibility and model evaluations; facilitates licensure for Teach for America (TFA) program participants; and lifts the charter e-school moratorium.

The OEA opposes House Bill 21 and will provide opponent testimony on House Bill 21 next week. First, value-added data is not designed to be a valid and reliable measure for use in high-stakes decisions such as licensure eligibility or performance evaluations. Second, the OEA is concerned that the TFA program has not demonstrated that it equips beginning teachers for effective practice. Third, the General Assembly should fulfill the process already in law to lift the charter e-school moratorium, which first requires the adoption of standards that ensure the accountability and transparency of these schools.

The TFA language in the bill has been amended to grant individuals in the TFA program a resident educator license, instead of a professional license, if they 1) hold a bachelor's degree; 2) maintain at least a 2.5 G.P.A.; 3) have passed a subject area examination prescribed by the State Board of Education; and 4) have successfully completed the TFA summer training institute. The OEA supports this amendment as a significant improvement. Under the amendment, TFA participants will not be able to advance to a five-year professional license until they have successfully completed the resident educator program (mentoring, formative assessment, etc.), which provide them support and establish higher quality standards.

To contact your State Representative on House Bill 21, go to <http://aces.ohea.org>.

House Bill 30 (Ends Universal All-Day Kindergarten; Repeals Important Education Reforms) Passes out of House Education Committee; House Floor Vote Next Week

The OEA opposes House Bill 30 (R-Gardner), which would eliminate the requirement that all Ohio school districts implement all-day Kindergarten, repeal a number of recent education reforms, such as the School Funding Advisory Council, the Closing the Achievement Gap Initiative, Family and Civic Engagement Teams and class-size requirement of 15 students per teacher in Kindergarten through third grade.

Two amendments were approved by the committee before being passed 14-8 on a party-line vote with all Republicans voting “Yes” and all Democrats voting “No.” The first amendment provides for a five-year financial forecasting instead of three years and the second provides a delay from one to two years on spending rules for gifted students.

The following three amendments, supported by the OEA, were offered by Democrats and tabled by Republicans: 1) continuing the School Funding Advisory Council; 2) maintaining the Closing the Achievement Gap Initiative, Family and Civic Engagement Teams and class-size requirement of 15 students per teacher in Kindergarten through third grade; and 3) providing a two-year delay for those districts providing all-day Kindergarten with tuition to continue the practice.

The OEA provided opponent testimony on House Bill 30. In addition, Kindergarten teacher and OEA member, Bobbi Jo Johnson, testified in opposition to the bill. She stated that students come to school today “lacking the skills that used to be taught at home. All-day Kindergarten should be available to all students.”

To contact your State Representative on House Bill 21, go to <http://aces.ohea.org>.

Governor Kasich Appoints Former Butler Tech CEO to State Education Post

Governor Kasich has announced that Bob Summers, the CEO for Cornerstone Charter Schools in Detroit, will serve as director of the Governor’s Office of 21st Century Education. Mr. Sommers is the former head of Butler Technology and Career Development Schools. The position is expected to have an expanded role in relation to previous education policy advisors in previous administrations.