



OHIO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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OEA Legislative Watch

An OEA Newsletter

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

Take action — Become an OEA Member Lobbyist!

Questions?

Contact your Government Relations Team

David Williams
Interim Director
williamsd@ohea.org

Melissa Clark
Lobbyist
clarkm@ohea.org

Robert Davis
Lobbyist
davisr@ohea.org

Matthew Dotson
Lobbyist
dotsonm@ohea.org

Dan Ramos
UniServ Political Advocacy Consultant
ramosd@ohea.org


Russ Harris
Education Research Development Consultant
harrisr@ohea.org

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Bipartisan Redistricting Proposal Clears Ohio Senate

A long-awaited agreement on redistricting is close to completion. In the early morning hours of what is likely to be the last Senate session of the year, the Ohio Senate voted to approve House Joint Resolution 12 (HJR 12). The resolution was amended from the version passed 80-4 by the House last Thursday. However, it maintains strong bipartisan support evidenced by the 28-1 vote in the Senate.

If enacted, HJR 12 would change the way General Assembly districts are drawn. Congressional districts are not a part of the agreement and would continue to be established by the legislature. The resolution would establish a seven-member redistricting commission which includes three statewide officers (the Governor, Auditor and Secretary of State) and four legislative appointments—two from each party. The adoption of a legislative map for a full ten years requires a vote with at least two members of each party in favor. If this cannot be achieved, a simple majority is needed, but the map would only be in effect for four years. One change in the amended version is that the subsequent map adopted by the redistricting commission would remain in effect for six years. The resolution lays out more clear geographic criteria about how districts can be drawn. Further, the resolution states that the redistricting commission shall attempt to construct a plan that would not favor or disfavor a political party and those



districts should correspond closely to the statewide preferences of Ohio's voters.

OEA supports HJR 12 as a vast improvement to Ohio's current highly politicized winner-take-all system of redistricting. The House is expected to agree to the amended version of HJR 12 next week. Then the resolution would be put before the voters in November of 2015 to adopt changes to the Ohio Constitution. If passed, the new redistricting process would begin in 2021 after the next U.S. census.

Agreement on Joint Retirement Passes in SB 42

Senate Bill 42, initially introduced as a bill that would allow school districts to propose levies for school safety and security improvements, was amended with a number of changes sought by the state retirement systems. One amendment addressed a key agreement between STRS, SERS and OPERS on joint retirement. The agreement specifies that OPERS will not reduce the service credit earned by members in STRS or SERS unless that time overlaps with OPERS credit or would result in more than one year of service credit in a twelve month period. The joint retirement amendment also alters the formula of monetary transfers between systems and allows members the option of joint retirement or refund from an inactive system without penalty. OEA worked with the retirement systems and other stakeholders for over a year on this issue and supports the amendment.

SB 42 also included an amendment that will allow OPERS to reimburse retirees for Medicare A coverage for those who are not eligible for free Medicare A because of uninterrupted public employment where they did not pay into Medicare. Current law specifies that OPERS provide these individuals equivalent coverage. This change will allow approximately 10,000 current and future OPERS retirees to have Medicare A coverage and also select health care plans through the OPERS Medicare connector beginning in 2016.

