

Insight From the Administrator.

By William I Winegarner



Welcome to the first issue of Protect Ohio Pension's quarterly newsletter. Congratulations to all of our founding members whose support and donations have made this possible.

In this first issue, I want to explain for historical purposes why we organized, who did the organizing, when we incorporated, who supplied the initial fund-

ing, when we received our IRS non-profit determination, when we sent out our first mailing, when we retained our lobbyist, and when we met with the legislative teams of OPERS, STRS, and SERS and finally some of our plans for the coming year.

1. Why we organized: The following excerpt is from an article that was written for inclusion in my prior association's 2016 1st quarter Newsletter. Even though it was not published, it is still a good explanation of why we organized:

William I Winegarner, Administrator for the past 22 years informed the board at their August meeting, that he would not be renewing his contract for 2016. Mr. Winegarner will be working with representatives from all five of Ohio's major pension systems, to establish a super advocacy association consisting of members from each.

Continued on page 2

The Legislative Report

By Steve Buehrer, Esq.



Last fall, the law firm of Carpenter, Lipps & Leland (CLL) was pleased to be selected as the legislative counsel for the newly formed Protect Ohio's Pensions organization. As the lead partner for public policy at CLL and a person who values

public service and what the defined benefit pension systems mean to those who serve our fellow citizens, I could not have been more thrilled personally to be given this opportunity.

Let me give you a little background on our firm. Since 2007 when David Leland (now state representative for the 22nd District) founded the public policy practice at our firm, CLL has had a reputation for bipartisan policy representation and advice at all levels of government. We have represented clients across all types of issues in nearly every policy area and maintain excellent contacts in Ohio's capital and across the state.

As lead partner, I am responsible for all of the relationships between our firm and the clients, but I will be personally leading the relationship with POP because of my deep interest in the topic of public pensions.

Continued on page 2

RETIRES & CURRENT EMPLOYEES SUPPORTING EACH OTHER

(INSIGHT continued from page 1)

Their purpose will be to work with the individual associations and the pension systems, to help educate the public and legislators on the major political and financial attacks upon the institution of state organized defined benefit pension systems.

2. The original incorporators were: Leslie (Les) D Foor, William I Winegarner and Mary E Winegarner . They registered the Protect Ohio Pensions, Inc. articles of incorporation with the state of Ohio on January 28, 2016 and received its certification as a domestic non-profit association.
3. Bill & Mary Winegarner loaned the association all the funds required for the initial organizational, office, material, legal, printing, and mailing cost.
4. Beverly Sycks, Fredlyn Sanderson, and Candace Shicks joined the board and became Chairman, School Employee and State Teacher Representative respectively. The board then applied for the association's IRS 501 (C) (4) Non-profit determination which it received on April 12, 2016 .

On April 23, 2016 we applied to the US Postal service for a permit to send bulk mail at the non-profit rate and received our approval on May 26, 2016.

By the end of July 2016, we had prepared our databases, mailing materials, brochures and applications. At the beginning of August 2016 we sent out our first mailing .

Throughout this process we had several official board meetings, and established our bank accounts.

5. On September 9, 2016 Protect Ohio Pensions was pleased to announce that the law firm of Carpenter Lipps & Leland, and more specifically, Steve Buehrer, partner and head of the public policy

practice at the firm, was hired to represent the members of Protect Ohio Pensions and its mission to protect the defined benefit pension plans of the five Ohio public pension systems before the Ohio General Assembly and others.

6. In October Mr. Buehrer and his team, met with Gorden Gatien, Government relations Officer for OPERS, and his staff, to discuss items of legislative concern.
7. Also in October, Mr. Buehrer and I met with the State Teachers Retirement system Executive Director, Michael Nehf; Director of Government Relations, Marla Bump; and their lobbyist Leah Porner to clarify our efforts and learn of their current legislative concerns.
8. In November, Mr. Buehrer and I met with the School Employees Retirement System Interim Executive Director, Helen Ninos; Government Relations Officer, Laurel Johnson; External Communications Supervisor, Tim Barbour; and their lobbyist, Tom Niehaus.

Each of these meetings was very productive in preparing Protect Ohio Pensions legislative team to be the best representative it can be for our members.

9. We are sad to inform you that we have lost some of our board members. On April 10, Fredlyn Sanderson resigned for personal reasons; in May, Les Foor passed away; and in December Beverly Sycks resigned for health and transportation reasons.
10. We began mailing to the STRS retirees in January, and will be mailing to the SERS retirees in April.
11. Our Legislative team will be meeting with the Police and Fire, and Highway Patrol retirement systems in the early spring.



(LEGISLATIVE REPORT continued from page 1)

Before coming to the firm, I spent more than 25 years in public service at the local, state and federal levels. Early in my career, I served as Ohio's Human Resources Director including time as a member of the Public Employees Retirement System Board. Later, I spent 12 years as a state representative and state senate from the northwest part of the state. During the last 5 ½ years, I served as a member of the governor's cabinet as the Administrator/CEO of the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation.

Since joining the firm in April, I have been reacquainting myself with legislative contacts and working to strongly position our firm for the benefits of our clients.

Working with me to support POP's agenda will be Nicole Reiss and Kelly Carey. Ms. Reiss is a Capital Law School graduate who is a former legislative staff person and has spend nine years at CLL advocating before the legislature and administration on a variety of diverse issues. She is a native of Sidney, Ohio.

Ms. Carey, a graduate of the Ohio State University, spent seven years working for members of the Ohio House and Senate before serving as the Chief of Legislation and Communication for the Bureau of Workers' Compensation.

Continued on page 3

Board Member Search

We are searching for two board members, one each to represent the following groups: OPERS and SERS.

Qualifications: A basic knowledge about the operation of your respective pension system, and a passion to preserve the defined benefit pension plan for current workers and retirees alike. You also need to be a retiree or current worker of the pension system you represent.

Our board members are only required to travel to the bi-monthly board meetings held in Columbus, Ohio. Board positions are volunteer and members receive no compensation, other than reimbursement for gas and Lunch on board day.

If you have an interest in, or questions about, the position, please contact our Executive Director, Bill Winegarner, at 614-475-8250 or Popoffice@POP5.org.

(LEGISLATIVE REPORT continued from page 2)

A native of Springfield, she joined the CLL team in April, 2016.

In our initial time with POP, one of our primary responsibilities has been to build and strengthen relationships with other organizations that are active on issues related to defined benefits.

The pension systems themselves are one of our major contact points. Although I have known the leadership and key staff at the systems for many years, it has been good to reconnect with them in the last few months to hear about the legislation and issues they are tracking.

Another important part of these meetings is to share with them how POP's mission is both similar and distinct from their own goals, but at the same time expressing our desire to partner with them on a number of significant issues.

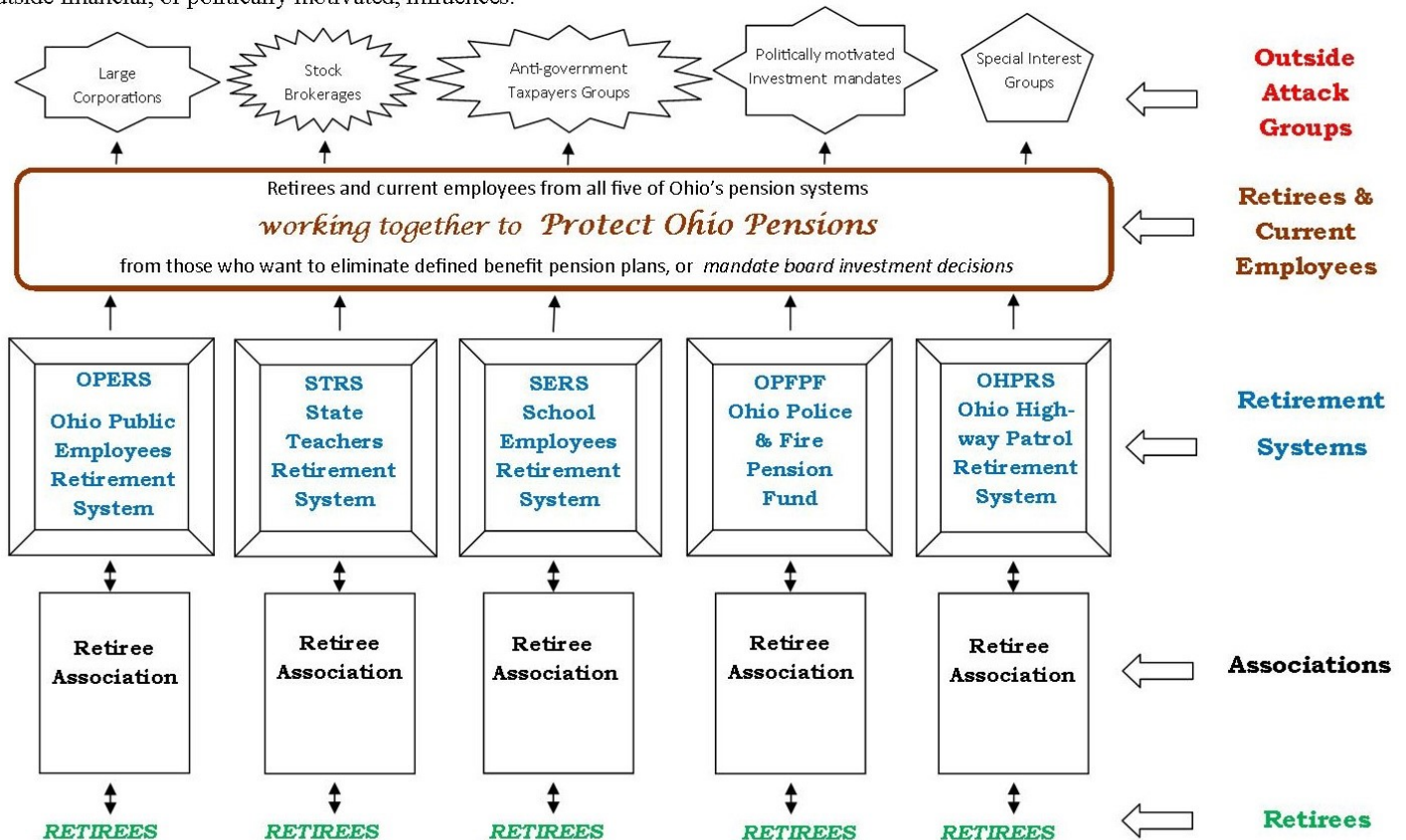
I am pleased to report, that I believe we are entering 2017 with strong relationships with the pension systems

Continued on page 4

The differences between a retiree association and Protect Ohio Pensions, Inc.

A retiree association's focus is on socializing, securing benefits for its members, and the proper and ethical operation of its pension system.

Protect Ohio Pensions' focus is on preserving Ohio's defined benefit pension plans and protecting the pension systems' investment decisions from outside financial, or politically motivated, influences.



There are multiple retiree associations for some of the pension systems.

POP Office Location

The members of Protect Ohio Pension want to thank Mr. Winegarner for allowing us to utilize his Home Real Estate Office for our foundational headquarters, at no cost to the association.

At this point in Protect Ohio Pension's growth, free office space and equipment is a real financial advantage for us.

This gift has allowed us quicker access to the services of one of the largest and best legislative representation firms in Ohio, to the resources of Gongwer, a specialty reporting service of Ohio's policy and politics, and to the National Institute on Retirement Security, whose goal is the preservation of retirement security for public sector employees.

(LEGISLATIVE REPORT continued from page 3)

and the basis for a good working relationship in the days ahead.

On the legislative front, the CLL team tracked a handful of bills which could have had an impact on pension issues during the legislative "lame duck" session that concluded in mid-December.

As the General Assembly reconvenes in January, we will not only be tracking bills, but making key legislators aware that POP stands ready to be a resource and, if necessary, advocate in the promotion and protection of defined benefit systems.

I certainly believe that when a legislator understands the true facts behind these well run state systems as well as the significant impact these systems have on our state's economy, they will join our cause in protecting and promoting POP's central mission.

In the days ahead, we will look forward to working beside you on behalf of current retirees as well as those public workers just beginning their careers who deserve the same type of safe and reliable pension system that past generations of Ohioans have enjoyed. The team at CLL wishes you much prosperity in the New Year. We look forward to the work ahead!



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