



## OEA Endorses Rita Walters for Retired Seat on STRS Board

OEA Board of Directors – December 2, 2021

During the August meeting of the STRS Board, Rita Walters was elected by a majority of the Board to fill a vacancy as a retired member. Walters recently completed a four-year term on the Board and had finished third in the election for two retiree seats. Robert Stein, who had finished second in the election, resigned his seat before beginning his new term. An election will be held among STRS benefit recipients to elect a representative for the remaining three years of the term. OEA has endorsed Rita Walters for this election. [https://youtu.be/KE\\_Gxic2gnw](https://youtu.be/KE_Gxic2gnw)

Rita Walters retired with 35 years of experience as a language arts teacher from the Switzerland of Ohio School District and a member of OEA-R. She was elected by the STRS Board to a one-year term, September 1, 2021, through August 31, 2022. As an active teacher she also served as president of her local association and on the OEA Board of Directors for 12 years. Walters was originally elected to the STRS Board in 2017.

When it comes to the oversight of retirement funds for Ohio's teachers' experience matters. The OEA Board of Directors has endorsed the candidacy of Rita Walters for the vacant seat. She is committed to acting in the best interest of all STRS members and ensuring that STRS is strong and stable for the long haul.

During her time on the STRS Board, the solvency of the STRS retiree health care program has vastly improved. Once projected to run out of money in a few years, the health care plan is now over 100% funded. Additionally, STRS continues to be recognized as a premier public retirement system, and over 90% of retirees have favorable views of STRS.

Some members may have heard misinformation about mismanagement or fraud at STRS Ohio. When the current audits that are underway have been completed, Rita is certain that STRS Ohio will be vindicated as routine independent annual audits have been "clean" and met generally accepted accounting principles. Accusations of fraud do not make it so - as proof of wrongdoing is nonexistent.

The OEA Board of Directors has again endorsed her candidacy and she continues to be committed to acting in the best interest of all STRS members and ensuring that STRS is strong and stable for the long haul. Remember Rita Walters' name and vote **Rita Walters** when you receive your ballot in early April.

## OEA Retirement Systems Update <https://www.ohea.org/resources/affiliate-resources/>

### Questionable Investment "Partnership" Pitched to STRS Board

During the STRS Board's November meeting, two current Board members presented a "new business opportunity" for STRS. Wade Steen (Governor DeWine's appointee to the STRS Board) and Rudy Fichtenbaum (a retiree representative) advocated for the creation of a public/private partnership with a firm called QED. Under the proposal the company would facilitate access to STRS assets by a counter party who would execute asset swaps resulting in profits from arbitrage for the counter party. During a lengthy discussion, it was revealed that QED currently has no assets under management and no track record of performance. Further, STRS would provide 100% of the assets in the "partnership" and receive 25% of the profits. Mr. Steen had previously indicated that he had an investment plan that would return \$4 billion in revenue while reducing risk to the portfolio. Based on the discussion, in order to achieve that level of return it would be necessary to devote \$65 billion in assets (two-thirds of all STRS assets) to this new enterprise. A proposed motion to hire outside council to negotiate an agreement with QED was never offered.

Full December 2021 OEA Retirement Systems Update at: <https://www.ohea.org/resources/affiliate-resources/dec-2021-oea-retirement-systems-update/>

### Help Get Rita Walters on the STRS Ballot!

OEA endorsed candidate Rita J. Walters is asking retirees to help her gather signatures for her Nominating Petition for the retired seat on the STRS Ohio Board of Directors. These Nominating Petitions must be filed with the Executive Director on or before Friday, February 25, 2022.

Please download and sign a petition, then contact colleagues who are STRS members. Please return petitions, even if they have a few signatures, directly to Rita so she can keep track (her address is on the petition). For more information, please contact Phil Long at [palciv@gmail.com](mailto:palciv@gmail.com). Download a petition here: <http://neoea-r.ohea.us/files/2021/12/2022RitaWaltersSTRS-R.pdf>.

This is a critical race to ensure the solvency of the STRS fund for years to come.

### OEA-Retired Delegate Assembly

Thank you to the following OEA-Retired Delegates from NEOEA who attended the Fall 2021 OEA Representative Assembly via Zoom on December 4: **Barbara Catalano, William Dorsey, Marti Franks, Peg Ham, Hank Haynes, Cheryl Hill, Bill Lavezzi, Steven Mitchell, Donna Smoot Walters, Jené Wilson, and Nancy Wonson.**

For Spring, the NEOEA RA will be April 9, 2022, and the OEA RA will be May 7, 2022.

Please check for meeting summaries and minutes of the OEA-R Advisory Council, OEA-R Delegate Assembly, and the OEA Board of Directors on the Documents/Reports page of the OEA-R website at <http://oea-r.oea.us/>.

### OEA Legislative Watch

OEA Legislative Watch is the association's newsletter covering the legislation and policies that affect public education employees. <https://www.oea.org/get-involved/legislative-watch/>. Open an article and click on the "OEA Action Alert" link to send a message to your legislator.

### Megaconference 2022 - Virtual

Saturday, March 5, 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. NEOEA invites you to our Megaconference, presented by NEOEA's Environmental Concerns, ESP Organizing, Leadership Development, Legislative, Minority Organizing, NEOEA-R Organizing, Personal Welfare and Financial Planning, Public Relations, Professional Development, and Social and Human Concerns Committees.

The 2022 Megaconference is free for our members and features twelve simultaneous breakouts in three one-hour time slots. This year it will be presented virtually and is open to NEOEA members only. For the latest information about Megaconference, go to <https://neoea.org/Education-Union/Conferences> and <https://neoea.org/files/Megaconference.pdf>.

### NEOEA ESP Virtual Conference

Join us at our Education Support Professionals Virtual Conference on Saturday, February 5, from 9:30-12:00. Whether you are a secretary, custodian, food service worker, aide, bus driver, president of your local, building representative, or member—this session is for you.

Our topic is "An Introduction to Trauma-Informed Care," and we'll hear why this is such an important issue for ESP from Mary Hargreaves, Vice Chairperson of the Ohio Association of Education Support Professionals.

Participants will look at the Adverse Childhood Experience Study and the long-lasting effects trauma has on the brain. The session will explore what educators can do to heal the brain, such as creating trauma-sensitive learning environments and forming meaningful relationships with students.

Registration/log-in and welcome from NEOEA President Rob McFee at 9:30 AM. After the session, our stay-to-the-end drawing and NEOEA ESP Organizing Chairperson Matt Hickman will give closing remarks.

Please pre-register by January 28: <https://neoea.org/files/ESPconference.pdf>.

### NEA ESP National Conference

Mark your calendars. The annual NEA ESP National Conference is scheduled for March 25-27, 2022, at the New Orleans Marriott in Louisiana! Conference registration opens January 17 and closes on February 18, or once capacity is reached. For more information go to: <https://www.nea.org/espconference>.

### Retired Spring Conference Save the Date

Save the date for our Retired Spring Conference—Tuesday, March 29. Join us for our VIRTUAL and INTERACTIVE format — your opportunity to participate in a variety of topics. Download <https://neoea.org/files/Spring-2022-Save-Date.pdf>

### OEA-Retired Advisory Council Report

By Donna Smoot-Walters, NEOEA-R Representative to the OEA-R Advisory Council

#### OEA-R Fall Conference

The OEA-R Fall conference, "Racial Justice in Education 101", was presented to the membership in 4 one-hour sessions. The presenters, Hilario Benzon and David Coleman, who work at NEA's Center for Social Justice, gave a very informative eye-opening education. The NEA has a vision for every student. They know that institutional and structural racism are barriers to achieving the vision. The next 5 points must be our collective efforts:

- Promote systemic fair and equitable treatment of people of all races;
- Affirm NEA as a racial justice organization with racial justice at its core;
- Cultivate leaders who will lead with a race equity lens;
- Inspire our members to be anti-racist leaders and advance racially just and safe schools; and
- Catalyze action toward acknowledging, confronting, and dismantling White Supremacy Culture in our Association, schools, and communities.

We were given points of information such as:

- Race is not scientifically real;
- Race was constructed for economic, political, and social purposes;
- However, the consequences of racial categorization are real:
  - Embedded in our identities, institutions, and culture; and
  - Used as a basis for discrimination and racial profiling (Source: Race Forward 2018).

Racial Justice was defined as the systematic fair treatment of people of all races that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone. (Source: Race Forward 2018). I encourage everyone to attend this conference session if offered in our area in the future.

#### OEA-Retired Roundtable

I will be hosting an OEA-Retired Roundtable which will be an opportunity for OEA-Retired to engage NE members on matters or topics that mean the most to them. In recent surveys, members have shared that having



their voices heard would strengthen their connection to OEA-Retired. These Roundtable conversations will provide an opportunity for that need to be met while also providing valuable information to OEA-Retired leadership and assist in achieving OEA-Retiree's Committee Charges and Grant goals. I will be looking for 6-10 members, a mix of recently retired and more longtime retired members and members who may not have had much prior connection to OEA-Retired. I will try to gather a diverse group of members in terms of age, race, gender, job classification while active and location. The meetings will be scheduled for one hour via Zoom. The date of the Roundtable will be included in the letter/email sent to invited members between January 1 and February 21, 2022.

### OEA-Retired OEA Board of Directors Report

by Carol Kinsey, OEA-R Representative to the OEA Board of Directors

As always, do not hesitate to contact me at [Cskinsey@aol.com](mailto:Cskinsey@aol.com) or 330-495-2318 with your suggestions, concerns, or questions. I try to respond to each person along with often referring your communication to a person more qualified than me to provide you with accurate information. The December 2 meeting again was held virtually after members had completed a long day of assigned employment responsibilities. I consider representing you on this Board as a privilege and honor—this is a great group of dedicated, knowledgeable advocates to work with! The Representative Assembly was also held virtually on Saturday, December 4.

Here are the recommended "Takeaways and Asks" from the December 2, 2021, Board meeting and RA.

#### Takeaways:

1. OEA-member endorsed candidates for School Board won 85% of the time in the recent November election. When OEA members get involved in elections, we are very successful. Communities TRUST us.
2. Campaign 2022 is upon us, and the stakes are high for members and students in Ohio. We were thrilled to welcome Congressman Tim Ryan, a true champion of public education, who is our recommended candidate for U.S. Senate at the RA.

3. Out of respect for our members, the Board voted to hold the Spring Representative Assembly on May 7 only. Based on feedback from delegates and local presidents, the Board recognized that it would be too heavy a burden placed on fellow educators (including ESPs) and students to conduct a Friday RA due to the severe substitute crisis.

#### Asks:

1. We will need everyone's help in circulating petitions to get OEA-recommended candidates for the STRS Board – active members Jeff Rhodes and Rob McFee, and retired member Rita Walters – on the ballot so they can protect the integrity of our pensions and put a stop to risky investment schemes that would prevent the return of a COLA and other benefits for members of the system. (Look for more information about petitions in the coming weeks.)
2. Join us in taking action to stop the passage of HB 322 and HB 327, "divisive concept" bills which would limit the freedom of educators to do their jobs and deprive students of an honest education. Be on the alert for specific opportunities to contact your legislators and/or provide testimony on these important bills.
3. Help us continue to build power for 2022 and beyond by contributing to the OEA Fund. OEA-R members can easily contribute by going to [www.ohea.org/donate](http://www.ohea.org/donate). You may make a one-time contribution if you like. You are encouraged to consider signing up for an ongoing monthly electronic transfer of any amount which fits into your budget. Every dollar collected helps make a difference—no amount is too small

On Friday, December 10, I was honored to participate in the filming of a video by History Associates to commemorate the upcoming 175th Anniversary of OEA in 2022. At least 14 of the 22 video participants are OEA-R members. The celebratory event is scheduled for the evening of June 4 in Columbus. Save the Date—more information to follow.

From the Board meeting I send you greetings for an enjoyable Holiday season from the officers—Scott DiMauro, Jeff Wensing, and Mark Hill—along with Executive Director Patricia Collins Murdock. From me—whatever it is that you celebrate at this time of year, make time to share and strengthen traditions and make some "forever memories" with those who mean the most to you.

### Playhouse Square Discounts

Playhouse Square's CEO Season Pre-sale is the biggest on-sale day of the year for NEOEA members! NEOEA members receive highly-anticipated shows in the upcoming 2021-2022 KeyBank Broadway Series.

Use promo code NEOEA (<https://tickets.playhousesquare.org/g04/Online/default.asp>) and save up to 65% off select performances and seating locations with reduced handling fees!

Now available: *Jesus Christ Superstar*; *Pretty Woman—The Musical*; *An Officer and a Gentleman*; *To Kill a Mockingbird*; *My Fair Lady*; *Ain't Too Proud—The Life and Times Of The Temptations*; *Ain't Misbehavin'*; *The Marvelous Wonderettes*; *Much Ado About Nothing*; also, *Disney's Frozen*—CEO Pre-sale.

### Retirement System Updates

- STRS <https://www.strsoh.org/>
- SERS <https://www.ohsers.org/>
- PERS <https://www.opers.org/>

OEA Retirement Systems Updates can be found at: <https://www.ohea.org/resources/>.

### NEA & OEA Discounts

- **NEA Member Benefits:** For questions call 1.800.637.4636 (toll free); <https://www.neamb.com/>.
- **NEA Student Debt Navigator:** <https://www.neamb.com/products/nea-student-debt-navigator>.
- **NEA Travel Dollars**—Enroll in NEA Travel and receive \$500 Travel Dollars to use like cash when you book a vacation. <https://www.neamb.com/products/nea-travel-dollars>.
- **NEA Discount Marketplace:** <https://www.neamb.com/products/nea-discount-marketplace>.
- **OEA ACCESS:** <https://ohea.org/member-center/member-benefits/>.
- **OEA/NEA Attorney Referral and Discount Information:** <https://neoea.org/files/ARP.pdf>.
- **NEOEA Member Benefits:** <https://neoea.org/Education-Union/Member-Benefits>.



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Liaison & OEA-R NEOEA Representative  
Barbara Catalano, Mayfield EA-R; OEA-R ESP  
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Steven Mitchell, East Cleveland EA-R  
Pat Waggar, Mayfield EA-R  
Jené Wilson, ACCESS-R  
Beverly Woolridge, Akron ACP-R

**NEOEA Calendar**

**February 5** NEOEA ESP Virtual  
Conference  
**March 5** NEOEA Megaconference  
**March 21** NEOEA Legislative  
Receptions  
**March 25-27** NEA ESP National  
Conference, New Orleans  
**March 29** NEOEA-Retired Spring  
Conference  
**April 9** NEOEA Representative  
Assembly, Mayfield HS  
**May 7** OEA Representative  
Assembly, Columbus  
Convention Center

**Show Your District Pride!  
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Show your district pride! NEOEA's ESP  
Organizing Committee has red long-sleeved t-  
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shirts are available for \$25 and can be picked  
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please include an additional \$5). Information  
and order form at [https://neoea.org/  
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- **Liberty Mutual:** [https://  
www.libertymutual.com/neoea?  
src=aff\\_4wpb\\_m\\_0006967\\_neoea](https://www.libertymutual.com/neoea?src=aff_4wpb_m_0006967_neoea).
- **Ohio Educational Credit Union:** [https://  
neoea.org/MemberData/oheduc-loan.pdf](https://neoea.org/MemberData/oheduc-loan.pdf).
- **Park Place:** Discount airport parking: [https://neoea.org/MemberData/  
ParkPlace.pdf](https://neoea.org/MemberData/ParkPlace.pdf).
- **PlayhouseSquare:** [https://  
tickets.playhousesquare.org/g04/Online/  
default.asp](https://tickets.playhousesquare.org/g04/Online/default.asp) (promo code NEOEA).
- **Great Lakes Science Center:** [http://  
greatscience.com/educators](http://greatscience.com/educators).

**Need to Update Your Contact  
Information?**

Update your OEA & NEOEA contact  
information at: 1-844-OEA-info (1 844 632  
4636) or [membership@ohea.org](mailto:membership@ohea.org).  
Also online: [https://www.ohea.org/member-  
center/member-update-form/](https://www.ohea.org/member-center/member-update-form/).

**OEA Action Alerts**

Take Action! Every day OEA works to  
improve public education for our students and  
our members. Our strength lies in collective  
action. With over 122,000 members, we can  
affect policy to improve public education for  
students and the educators who serve them.

Letters, emails, petitions, and phone calls  
from you often make the crucial difference.  
Go to the OEA website to view sample letters  
you can edit as you wish before sending to  
your legislator. <https://www.ohea.org/action/>

**Fall 2021 OEA COVID FAQ**  
<https://www.ohea.org/oea-coronavirus-faq/>