

MEMBER'S REPORT

The quarterly newsletter for active and retired OP&F members and their survivors

Ohio
Police
&
Fire Pension
Fund

Volume 43 / Number 1 / WINTER 2024

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR HB 296 gets fifth hearing; companion bill introduced in Senate



Mary Beth Foley, Esq.

Dear members,

The legislative path to pass a bill into law is a slow, deliberate process by design. Legislators want a variety of voices to be heard and to have their questions answered before considering a vote to move the bill to the next step.

Such was the case in 2022 when House Bill 512 did not pass, and so last year we began a new effort with Ohio House Bill 296, sponsored by Representatives Cindy Abrams and Thomas Hall. Our bill would provide funding for OP&F by increasing the amount that police employers pay into our retirement system. Currently, fire employers pay 24 percent of payroll to OP&F for their firefighters, while police employers pay 19.5 percent. We are asking that these contribution rates be equal at 24 percent.

So far the House Pension Committee has held four hearings with a fifth scheduled for Jan. 16. With each hearing, more questions are answered, and unfortunately, more disinformation is introduced by those opposing the bill.

Opponents keep asking for independent analysis of OP&F's funding. There is an independent actuarial review every year that is presented in public at the Statehouse. For many years these studies have contemplated equalizing the employer contribution rates.

More than once, opponents have questioned the investment strategies of OP&F. Our investment program has been recognized as one of the best among public pensions. In December, our consultant showed the OP&F Board that in the period of the past three years, OP&F was in the top seven percent of peer retirement plans in investment performance. For the five year period, OP&F ranked in the top 15 percent and in the 10 year period, we ranked in the top 13 percent.

There were a lot of unsubstantiated comments made during opponent testimony. A report from a third-party, not signed or certified by any actuary, nor familiar with OP&F's data and without citation to the annual reports prepared by OP&F and the Ohio Retirement Study Council actuary. No one rebutted that OP&F has had unequal rates since 1986, and no one rebutted that the ORSC actuary testified as recently as September 2023, that if the rates were 24 percent it would probably resolve the entire problem.

Despite these headwinds, progress has been made. In November, Senator Michele Reynolds introduced a companion bill, Senate Bill 194. This helps bring more attention to our request and we thank Senator Reynolds for her support. Of course the sponsors of House Bill 296 continue to work to convince their constituents in the Ohio House of this worthy cause.

We must also thank our partners in the state's public safety unions who continue to work for their members to pass this important legislation. The Northern Ohio Firefighters, the Ohio Association of Professional Fire Fighters, the Ohio Patrolmen's Benevolent Association and the Ohio Fraternal Order of Police have all been at our side in this effort.

We will continue this effort to convince the legislature that our need is real and the time for action is now. We need your help. Let mayors, councils and the General Assembly know you have had your contributions increased 7.25 percent over the years. It is now their turn.

Best regards,

Mary Beth Foley

Mary Beth Foley, Esq.
Executive Director

THREE TRUSTEE POSITIONS UP FOR ELECTION THIS SPRING

OP&F members will elect an active police representative, an active fire representative and a retired police representative to the Board of Trustees during elections this spring. Currently, Tanya Czack (Parma Heights Police), John Deal (Cincinnati Fire) and Mark Drum (Delaware Police, retired) hold these positions. Each is eligible for re-election.

A notice of election will be mailed to police and fire departments and to retired police members by Feb. 5. Election materials, including nominating petitions, certificates of eligibility and election rules will also be posted to the OP&F website on Feb. 5.

Eligible members who intend to run for a position on the Board of Trustees must submit all required forms and information to OP&F no later than 4 p.m. on April 1. Ballots will be mailed on or before May 6, and the election results announced by May 29. In the event of an uncontested election, no ballots will be mailed and the sole candidate will be declared as the winner of that election. The successful candidates will begin a four-year term on June 3.

Members are encouraged to update address information with OP&F so that they receive election information and can cast their ballot.



Tanya Czack
Parma Heights Police

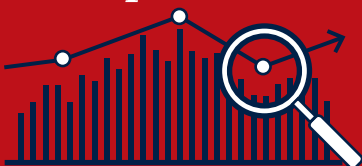


John Deal
Cincinnati Fire



Mark Drum
Delaware Police (retired)

PORTFOLIO *-update-*



OP&F's
Investment
Portfolio
Value

As of December 15:
\$17.5 billion

End of November value:
\$17.3 billion

End of October value:
\$16.7 billion

** values may be internally estimated*

DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED IF YOU ARE USING COBRA AT RETIREMENT

Most new retirees have the option of continuing on an employer's health plan for at least 18 months, thanks to a federal law called the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA).

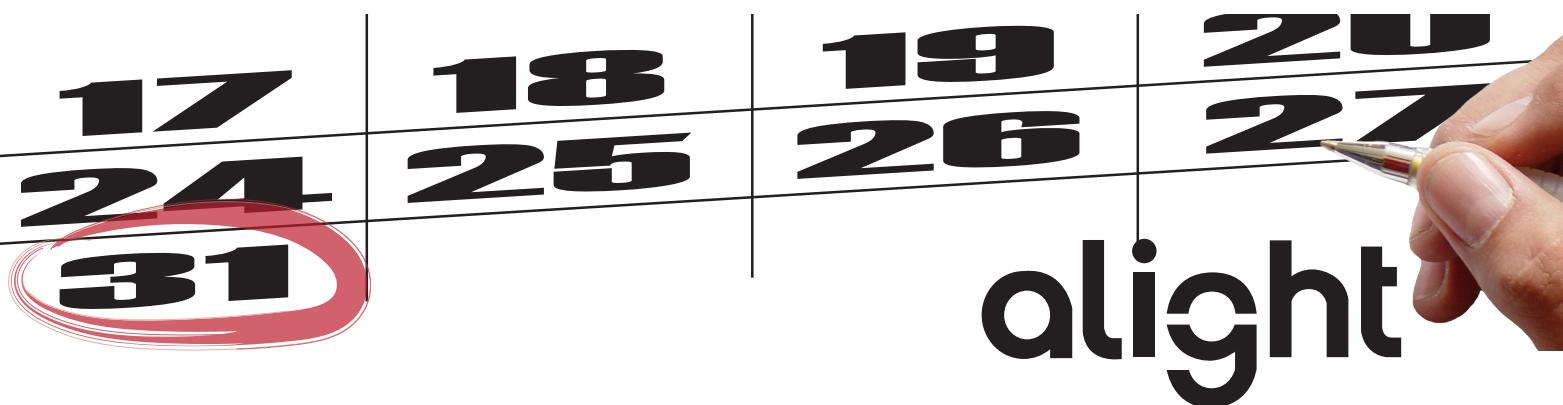
OP&F will prefund an Alight Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) while you complete enrollment in COBRA, however, to remain stipend eligible, you must submit OP&F's Health Care Stipend Eligibility form along with copies of the following documents:

- Your COBRA acknowledgement letter which includes the name of the plan;
- Names of the participants enrolled; and
- Effective dates of coverage.

This information must be submitted to OP&F within 60-days of the deadline. If it is not received, OP&F has no choice but to remove the HRA funding and you will be required to repay any reimbursements that have already been made. In addition, you will be ineligible to participate in OP&F's health care program until you experience another qualifying life event and gain eligibility to the stipend in the future. If you don't complete the full 18 months, please contact OP&F and provide new proof of coverage information.

2023 deadline to submit HRA claims

For retirees who have a Health Reimbursement Arrangement through Alight, the deadline to submit 2023 health care claims is March 31, 2024, and the date is not expected to be extended. During the past few years, the deadline to submit health care claims for the prior year has been extended due to the pandemic emergency. It is imperative that members submit claims timely. Once a claims year is closed, it cannot be reopened.



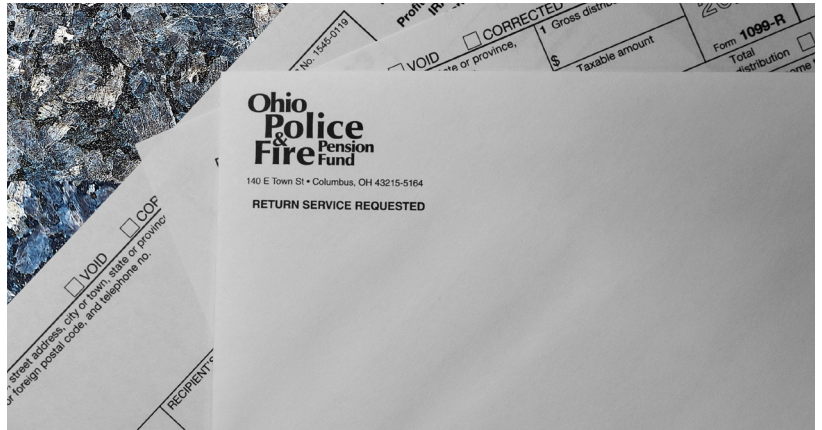
IF YOUR 1099-R IS RETURNED TO OP&F, IT MAY TRIGGER SUSPENSION OF BENEFITS

It is important for you to keep your address current with OP&F so that the benefits can be timely paid to you. If an IRS Form 1099-R is returned to OP&F as undeliverable we will reach out to the benefit recipient using the contact information on file.

If OP&F is unable to contact the benefit recipient to update this information, steps will be taken to suspend the benefit until the correct information is received. OP&F suspended 29 benefit payments in 2023 due to returned 1099-R forms for recipients who were unable to be contacted. Returned 1099-R forms also cause OP&F to manually process them which is burdensome and costly to administer.

Reminder...

If a member dies, the family must contact OP&F, their health care carrier and Alight Retiree Health Exchange to stop any auto premium reimbursements. This also helps to avoid any overpayments that need to be re-paid.



2024 Board of Trustee meetings:



Eight Board of Trustees meetings are scheduled for 2024 at OP&F headquarters, 140 E. Town Street in downtown Columbus.

Jan. 23-24	Aug. 27-28
March 5-6	Sept. 24-25
April 23-24	Oct. 29-30
June 18-19	Dec. 3-4

TAX INFORMATION FOR MEMBER'S RECEIVING ON-DUTY DISABILITY BENEFITS

OP&F is required by the Internal Revenue Service to file a Form 1099-R for each person to whom a distribution of \$10 or more has been made for the tax year. OP&F reports all distributions to the IRS as reportable income, regardless of the taxable or non-taxable nature of the benefits. Please contact the IRS directly for information on filing requirements.

If the distribution is non-taxable, then Box 2a is completed with \$0.00. If a benefit recipient does not file an annual tax filing to reflect this non-taxable distribution they will probably receive a

notice from the IRS because they were unable to match the income reported by OP&F to the benefit recipient's filing of reportable income. Members should contact OP&F if they receive such a notice. OP&F can then mail a letter to the benefit recipient that outlines the applicability of the private letter ruling to the benefit recipient's specific benefits so that they can forward this to the IRS.

OP&F is not a third-party designated power of attorney with the IRS and therefore cannot provide information directly to the IRS on a member's behalf.

Beneficiaries have choice to opt-out of Form 1099-R mailing, retrieve it online

OP&F's website allows beneficiaries to download the Form 1099-R for tax reporting purposes and avoid receiving the form in the mail. This feature not only saves the cost of mailing the tax form but is also friendlier to the environment, is more secure than mailing and is convenient for beneficiaries.

To opt-out of the mailing, beneficiaries must log into their account in the Member Self-Serve (MSS) area of the OP&F website and choose Document Preferences. From this page beneficiaries can choose to opt-out of the mailing. Beneficiaries must have an email address to use the opt-out feature.

Only OP&F beneficiaries who are registered for the MSS Web can retrieve and print tax forms online. To register, go to op-f.org and click the link for MSS Web. Next, look for the register link and follow the instructions on the screen.

Beneficiaries can access the Form 1099-R by going to op-f.org and logging on to the OP&F MSS Web. The Form 1099-R can be viewed and printed from the Documents link.

Contact OP&F Customer Service with any questions at 1-888-864-8363.

OP&F effort to transition employers to electronic reporting a success



In Jul 2023, OP&F initiated the Push to Paperless campaign to transition all remaining employers to paperless reporting and payments. Although most OP&F employers had been submitting their reports and contributions electronically, as of Jan. 1, it is now required.

As of today, thanks to the collective efforts of our employers and OP&F staff, 133 of the 139 targeted employers have successfully

transitioned to paperless reporting and payments. The efficiencies of this campaign is already being felt across many OP&F departments.

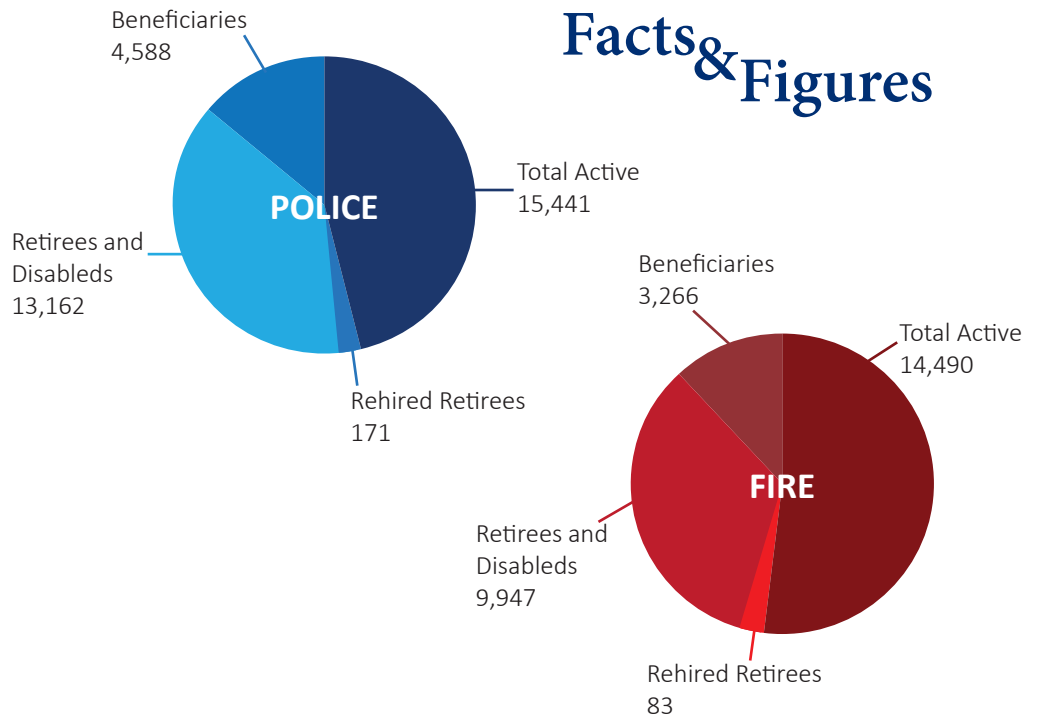
In addition to the transition, forms and training materials have been updated to assist payroll personnel at OP&F's nearly 450 employers with the process of submitting contributions and reports.

HRA REIMBURSEMENT DATES FOR 2024

The dates below are when Alight Retiree Health Solutions will send recurring health care premium reimbursements to a member's financial institution for direct deposit. Remember that it then may take the financial institution two or three days to post the reimbursement to a member's personal account.

Jan. 8	July 8
Feb. 7	Aug. 7
March 7	Sept. 9
April 8	Oct. 7
May 7	Nov. 7
June 7	Dec. 6

OP&F MEMBER BREAKDOWN AS OF JANUARY 1, 2023

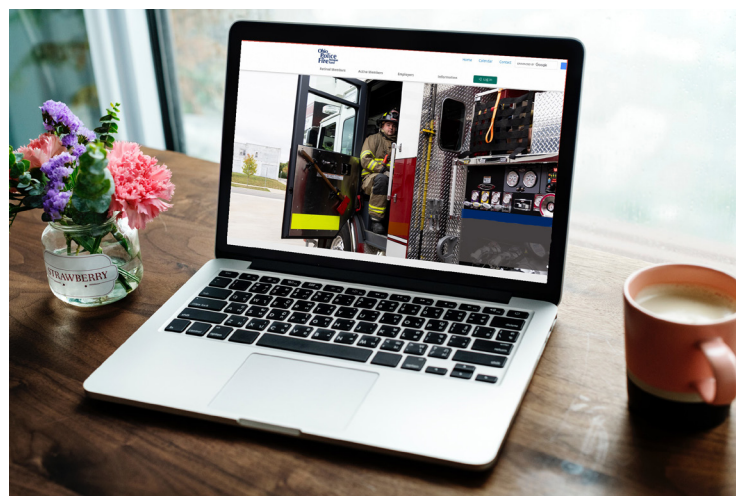


Eligibility for the OP&F health care stipend: What to do when you have a QLE

To become eligible for the OP&F health care stipend, a Qualifying Life Event, or QLE, must first occur. A common QLE is the involuntary loss of group health care coverage, which usually happens when a member or spouse retires or becomes unemployed and their employer's plan is no longer available.

There is a 60-day window to apply for the OP&F health care stipend after a QLE occurs. The first step to applying is to complete OP&F's Health Care Stipend Eligibility Form, found on the OP&F website. The completed form can be emailed to questions@op-f.org, sent via U.S. mail, faxed to OP&F at 614-628-1777, or dropped off at OP&F offices in Columbus. This will start the process for OP&F to establish eligibility to receive the health care stipend.

OP&F will acknowledge receipt of the form and request additional documentation, such as proof of loss of coverage and proof of enrollment in an eligible plan. We will also send the member's information to our retiree health care partner, Alight, who will mail a welcome kit and other materials. Additional information is on the health care section of the OP&F website, and Alight's OP&F-specific websites. Links to these websites are also under the retiree section of the OP&F homepage.



Budgeting your HRA: Understand that the stipend may not last all year

When OP&F and Alight fund a Health Reimbursement Arrangement for retirees, the total amount the member is eligible to receive is posted. While members eligible for the health care stipend program can use these funds to be reimbursed for approved expenses, they must also realize that the amount likely will not cover the cost of premiums for the entire calendar year.

OP&F urges members to track their expenses and be aware of what will be available to them later in the year. Alight, and their partners eHealth and YSA, can set up the auto-reimbursement program to only reimburse a portion of a plan's premium so that the stipend can last for the entire year. This type of payment plan could avoid the stipend from depleting and a member being faced with larger payments late in the year.

Also, members should be aware that if any stipend money remains in the Health Reimbursement Arrangement at the end of the year, it will not roll over to the next year.

For Medicare-eligible retirees, remember that any changes or enrollments must be through Alight to stay eligible for the stipend.

2024	Medicare Status		Monthly Medical/RX Stipend	Monthly Medicare Part B Reimbursement	Total OP&F Monthly Support for Health Care
	Retiree	Spouse			
Retiree only:	Medicare		\$143	\$107	\$250
	Non-Medicare		\$685	\$0	\$685
Retiree + Spouse:	Medicare	Medicare	\$239	\$107	\$346
	Medicare	Non-Medicare	\$525	\$107	\$632
	Non-Medicare	Medicare	\$788	\$0	\$788
	Non-Medicare	Non-Medicare	\$1,074	\$0	\$1,074
Retiree + Dependent(s):	Medicare		\$203	\$107	\$310
	Non-Medicare		\$865	\$0	\$865
Retiree + Spouse + Dependent(s):	Medicare	Either Medicare or Non-Medicare	\$525	\$107	\$632
	Non-Medicare	Either Medicare or Non-Medicare	\$1,074	\$0	\$1,074
Surviving Spouse:	Medicare		\$143	\$107	\$250
	Non-Medicare		\$685	\$0	\$685

2024 Direct Deposit dates for benefit checks

Check date:	Deposit date:	Check date:	Deposit date:
Jan. 1	Jan. 2	July 1	July 1
Feb. 1	Feb. 1	Aug. 1	Aug. 1
March 1	March 1	Sept. 1	Sept. 3
April 1	April 1	Oct. 1	Oct. 1
May 1	May 1	Nov. 1	Nov. 1
June 1	June 3	Dec. 1	Dec. 2
		Jan. 1, 2025	Jan. 2, 2025



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E-mail: questions@op-f.org
Monday-Fridays 8 am-4:30 pm EST

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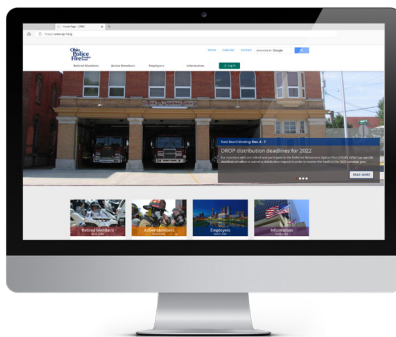
PRUDENCE • INTEGRITY • EMPATHY

Securing the future for Ohio's Police and Firefighters

IMPORTANT DATES

Jan. 23-24Board of Trustees meetings
Jan. 15.....OP&F closed in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
March 5-6Board of Trustees meetings
April 1Nominating petitions for trustee elections due
April 23-24Board of Trustees meetings

DO WE HAVE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS?



If your email address is not on file, please add or update it securely on the Member Self-Serve area of the OP&F website. You may also complete a Change of Address form and email to questions @op-f.org or send it to OP&F at 140 E. Town Street, Columbus, OH 43215.

SUSPECT DISABILITY FRAUD? CALL 844-FRAUD HOTLINE (844-372-8345)