



# OPERtunities



## Preserving health care for the future

OPERS has been working to formulate a Health Care Preservation Plan (HCPP) that may allow us to continue providing health care benefits into the future. As detailed in previous issues of *OPERtunities*, health care costs are rising at double digit inflation. In addition to this alarming rise in costs, workers are retiring younger and living longer. This fact, coupled with the baby boomer generation retiring, is going to cause our retiree population to double in the next 20 years. Employers and pension systems across the nation are struggling to continue providing meaningful health care benefits to their retirees.

(Continued on page 2)



# Preserving health care for the future *(Continued from cover)*

## National trends in health coverage

### *Private sector retiree health coverage is dropping*

- **1991 - 80%** offered retiree coverage
- **2003 - 57%** offered retiree coverage
- **86%** likely to increase cost sharing and retiree contributions
- **20%** likely to terminate health care plans for future retirees

### *Public sector trends*

- **64%** of states likely to increase cost sharing and retiree contributions
- **10%** of states likely to terminate health care plans for future retirees

Sources: Kaiser/Hewitt 2003 Survey of Retiree Health Benefits and 2003 Kaiser study, "How States are Responding to the Challenge of Financing Health Care for Retirees"

If we act now, we can hope to preserve future benefits and avoid the drastic coverage changes that some other retirement systems and private employers have had to make. If we choose to do nothing, our health care fund runs the risk of being depleted in as few as 13 years, and our current and future retirees would have to pay a large percentage of the cost of their health benefits. We do not intend to let this happen.

OPERS is now sharing with you a draft of the health care preservation plan (HCPP). The plan concepts described are merely proposed and have not been approved by the OPERS retirement board.

The information in this article is a summary of a longer, more detailed discussion that we will be presenting to retiree, member, and employer audiences around the state this summer to solicit feedback on the pro-

posed plan (see presentation schedule on page 4). For your convenience, the presentation will also be available in its entirety on our website, [www.opers.org](http://www.opers.org), beginning June 21.

The HCPP has a tentative effective date of Jan. 1, 2007. Under the proposed HCPP, our current and future retirees are divided into three separate groups and the plan will affect each group differently. **First, those who are currently retired or eligible to retire as of Jan. 1, 2007 are considered "current retirees."** Current retirees will be less affected by plan changes because they have fewer years to plan and save. **Second, active OPERS members who will become eligible for retirement after Jan. 1, 2007 and were hired prior to Jan. 1, 2003 are considered "future retirees"** under the proposed HCPP. **The third group, called "new hires," is comprised of active OPERS members who were hired after Jan. 1, 2003, without any prior service credit.**

Under the proposed health care preservation plan, all future retirees and new hires, who have at least 15 years of service, will receive a graded monthly allocation (GMA) toward health care coverage after retirement.

## The following are key elements of the DRAFT HCPP:

- The proposed plan is balanced; all retirees, active members, and employers share in the solution.
- Employees with less service will pay more for health care than those with more service.
- Those who are retired or will be eligible to retire as of January 1, 2007 will be less affected by plan changes because they have fewer years to plan and save.
- Changes will be phased in gradually over a period of five years.
- The plan will give the Board maximum flexibility to adjust benefit levels if conditions are more favorable.
- OPERS is working hard to minimize increasing costs for members and retirees by seeking national health care reforms, aggressive vendor negotiations, and other cost saving techniques.
- We must address the problem now. **Doing nothing is not an option.** Making changes today will prevent drastic changes in the future.

A full allocation (100 percent) is equal to the amount that OPERS spends, on average, to pay health care expenses for a retiree for one month. Based on your length of service at retirement, you will receive a percentage of this amount as your monthly allocation and the difference between your allocation amount and the monthly cost of health care coverage will be charged to you as a premium.

If you wish to add your spouse to the OPERS health plan, they will also receive a percentage of the full monthly allocation amount, based on your length of service at retirement, and the balance will be charged to you as a premium. (See proposed examples of allocation percentages on chart at right. Allocation percentages will change with each year of service credit. The proposed percentages are shown here in five year increments.)

OPERS members retiring with

between 10 and 15 years of service will be eligible for health care coverage but they must pay 100% of the cost. (Members with between 10 and 15 years of service on Jan. 1, 2007 are grandfathered at the 15 year level).

The proposed HCPP features a cafeteria style health plan. This means that you will use your monthly allocation to purchase health plan coverage options consisting of medical, drug, dental, vision, and long-term care. You can customize a health plan that best suits your needs. Our current health plan features just one level of coverage. Under the

proposed HCPP, you will have the option to choose from several different levels of coverage, some of which will result in a smaller premium. These changes to our plan structure will be phased in over five years.

Any excess between your allocation and the cost of the options that you select will go into a Retiree Medical Account (RMA) and can be used for future health care expenditures and be rolled over from year to year.

Years of Service at Retirement	Current Retirees		Future Retirees		New Hires	
	Retiree Allocation	Spouse Allocation	Retiree Allocation	Spouse Allocation	Retiree Allocation	Spouse Allocation
30	100.00%	90.00%	100.00%	75.00%	100.00%	50.00%
25	100.00%	85.00%	83.33%	55.56%	75.00%	37.50%
20	100.00%	80.00%	66.67%	38.89%	50.00%	25.00%
15	100.00%	75.00%	50.00%	25.00%	25.00%	12.50%
10	100.00%	75.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

To view proposed allocation percentages for OPERS Law Enforcement members, please visit [www.opers.org](http://www.opers.org) and access the DRAFT HCPP plan document.

## Contribution Rates

Under the proposed HCPP, OPERS will also seek additional health care funding by a proposed increase in member and employer contribution rates. These proposed rate increases will be phased in over three years. After three years, both employers and members will be contributing the maximum amounts allowed by law. Employer rates will be raised from 13.31 percent or 13.55 percent to the maximum 14.00 percent. Member contribution rates will be raised from 8.5 percent to the maximum 10 percent. The table at right provides examples of how this contribution rate increase would affect our members. Examples listed are per pay and based on 26 pay periods per year.

Member contribution rate increase examples			
Member earning	\$20K	\$40K	\$70K
Per pay at 8.5%	\$65	\$131	\$229
Per pay at 10.0%	\$77	\$154	\$269
Per pay difference	\$12	\$23	\$40

**For more details regarding the proposed HCPP and for examples of how it may affect you, please visit our website, [www.opers.org](http://www.opers.org).**

## OPERS website and meetings provide additional proposed HCPP details

The preceding article is merely a snapshot of our proposed health care preservation plan. If you are interested in further details on why OPERS has developed the HCPP and examples of how it may affect you, we invite you visit our website, [www.opers.org](http://www.opers.org), where you can view a more detailed presentation beginning June 21.

If you are unable to access the presentation on our website, OPERS invites you to attend a health care preservation plan educational meeting near you. (*See dates and cities below.*) These meetings will be approximately one and a half hours long and will be held twice in each city at 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. on the indicated date. To register, please call 1-800-222-7377. You will receive a confirmation letter containing directions to the venue.

**OPERS is very interested in your thoughts about the HCPP.** You will be presented with a questionnaire to complete after viewing the presentation, either online or in person. By completing it, you will be providing the OPERS board with data to consider as they prepare to adopt a final HCPP this fall.

### Proposed HCPP Educational Meeting Schedule

- June 29 . . . . . Toledo (Perrysburg)
- July 1 . . . . . Columbus (Reynoldsburg)
- July 6 . . . . . Cambridge
- July 8 . . . . . Athens
- July 8 . . . . . Mansfield
- July 13 . . . . . Cincinnati (Eastgate)
- July 15 . . . . . Cleveland (Independence)
- July 20 . . . . . Akron (Cuyahoga Falls)
- July 22 . . . . . Columbus (Reynoldsburg)
- July 22 . . . . . Cleveland (Strongsville)
- July 27 . . . . . Dayton
- July 29 . . . . . Youngstown

## OPERS is active in health care reform

OPERS is committed to serving as your advocate for affordable health care coverage. Now, more than ever, we are taking an active role in the shaping of policies and legislation that will affect health care costs now and in the future.

### *Federal Medicare prescription drug plan*

Initial versions of this important legislation did not clearly define what the impact would be on a public pension system. OPERS officials wrote letters and held meetings with legislators to advocate on your behalf. As a result, OPERS will benefit from the new federal program. Early estimates indicate we could realize an annual savings of \$50 million that will be applied towards extending the solvency of our health care fund.

### *CEM*

Cost Effective Measurement, Inc. (CEM), a firm that OPERS uses to compare its cost-effectiveness relative to other pension systems, has recently expanded their services to include health care benchmarking. OPERS will use this service to gain insight into best health care practices, learn how other systems are financing rising health care costs, and learn how our plan designs, communications, and performance measures compare with other systems.

### *Pharma Futures*

OPERS is using its influence as a large institutional investor to work toward the stabilization of prescription drug prices through our participation in Pharma Futures. Pharma Futures is a coalition comprised of pension system officials, corporate governance and finance experts, and biotech and pharmaceutical company leaders brought together to explore how prescription drug costs can be contained. OPERS is serving on the steering committee of this coalition which has the potential to make a significant impact on drug pricing structures.

### *Public pension system coalition*

OPERS is participating in a coalition with several other large U.S. public pension systems. The systems are joining together to explore how pension systems, united as a group, can work toward enacting positive health care reforms at the federal level.

## The Comprehensive Annual Financial Report

# Summary Report

For the years ended Dec. 31, 2003 & 2002

## From the OPERS Executive and Finance Directors

We are pleased to present this summary of Ohio Public Employees Retirement System's *Comprehensive Annual Financial Report* for the fiscal year ending Dec. 31, 2003. OPERS management maintains the highest standards of prudent stewardship of OPERS' assets and delivers dedicated service to our members and our retirees. OPERS was established and exists solely for the purpose of providing retirement, disability, and survivor benefits to Ohio's public employees. This purpose continues to be our central focus, as demonstrated by the accomplishments and initiatives of 2003.

### New in 2003

Many of the accomplishments of 2003 centered on implementing new legislation. OPERS implemented two new pension plans, the Member-Directed (Defined Contribution) Plan and the Combined Plan, as mandated by legislation enacted in 2000. Under each of these retirement plans, members have the opportunity to direct the investment of their OPERS contributions, allowing them to build assets for retirement. Implementing the two plans required the coordinated efforts of virtually every division within OPERS.

Also, a Partial Lump-Sum Option Payment (PLOP) for benefit payments was rolled out — well ahead of the mandated delivery date of July 1, 2004. PLOP allows age-and-service retirees to take part of their retirement benefit in a lump sum at the beginning of retirement. Also in 2003, again because of previously enacted legislation, OPERS established a Qualified Excess Benefit Arrangement (QEBA) for OPERS members whose monthly retirement benefit would otherwise have been limited by Internal Revenue Code Section 415.

### Customer service - today and tomorrow

OPERS management establishes strategic plans annually to ensure all organizational activities are cost effective and customer-service oriented. In preparation for the anticipated "retiree population explosion," many of the initiatives of 2003 centered on positively positioning OPERS to be able to continue to exceed customer service standards, even though the number of members and retirees is continuing to grow. These initiatives, combined with a continued focus on operational efficiency through increased information technology enhancements, will allow the system to service the increased number of members

and retirees without increasing the staff correspondingly.

As a result of our commitment to customer service, both the internet-based Member Benefit System (MBS) and the telephone interactive voice response (IVR) system showed strong—and growing—usage by members and retirees. The OPERS call center continued to experience increasing volumes in 2003. During the past year, the call center handled some 469,044 calls.

### Preserving health care for the future

One of the largest initiatives in 2003 was the Health Care Preservation Plan, specifically targeting how OPERS can continue to provide adequate and affordable health care now and into the future. While providing pension benefits has always been OPERS' primary responsibility, OPERS has also made it a priority to provide health care benefits as well. While neither guaranteed nor mandated by statute, the OPERS board and staff recognize the importance of post-retirement health care coverage for benefit recipients and are working diligently to formulate a plan that may allow us to continue providing these benefits despite the constant upward trend of health care costs.

### Investments

The system's investments are governed by Section 145.11 of the Ohio Revised Code. The OPERS Board determines the asset allocation strategy for the system's

investments. That asset allocation strategy requires a prudent diversification of investments within the fund enabling OPERS to reduce overall risk while targeting an adequate rate of return for the fund over the long-term.

For the year ended Dec. 31, 2003, total return on investments was 25.33%, the second highest single-year



return since 1985. OPERS ended the year with net assets of approximately \$59.1 billion, an increase of \$11.1 billion over the 2002 year-end net assets of \$48.0 billion.

### State and Federal legislation

At the state level, there were a number of pension bills introduced and carried over into 2004, including major pension reform legislation aimed at improving oversight and accountability of Ohio's five retirement systems. At the federal level, OPERS will be positively impacted by the enactment of the Prescription Drug and Medicare Modernization Act of 2003. OPERS tracked the development of this legislation from its inception and worked closely with the Ohio Congressional delegation and other public plans to ensure that public plan sponsors are eligible to participate in the new program. Beginning in 2006, OPERS will be able to use the new federal program to offset some of our prescription drug costs, which will help extend the solvency period of our health care fund.

OPERS will continue to take a more active role in the shaping of national policies and legislation aimed at controlling rapidly escalating health care costs. In addition to its continued participation in the National Coalition on Health Care, OPERS is also increasing its efforts to work with other public pension plans and organizations to make sure that health care policy decisions are made in the best interests of our retirees and the System.

Respectfully,

*Laurie Fiori Hacking*

LAURIE FIORI HACKING  
Executive Director

*Karen E. Carraher*

KAREN E. CARRAHER  
Finance Director

**Note** - This summary report is derived from the information contained on the OPERS 2003 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. The complete CAFR is available on the OPERS website, [www.opers.org](http://www.opers.org), or by calling 1-800-222-7377.

## Financial Section

### 2003 Highlights

- The OPERS investment portfolio reported a total return of 25.33% for the year 2003.
- Plan net assets increased by \$11.1 billion, or 23.2%, during 2003, primarily due to strong investment returns.
- Due to three straight years of market declines (2000-2002), OPERS' actuarial accrued liabilities exceeded its actuarial value of assets, creating an unfunded actuarial accrued liability of \$7.2 billion as of Dec. 31, 2002, the date of the latest actuarial valuation.
- OPERS' funding objective is to meet long-term benefit obligations

and, to the extent possible, fund health care benefits. As of Dec. 31, 2002, the date of the latest actuarial valuation, the funded ratio of OPERS was 86%. In general, this means that for each dollar's worth of future pension liability, OPERS has accumulated \$0.86 to meet that obligation. The latest actuarial report indicates that if future activity proceeds according to assumptions, OPERS will accumulate sufficient assets to pay all pension liabilities for active members and retirees within 29 years.

- Additions to plan net assets for the year 2003 were \$14,518,671,062, which includes member and employer contributions of

\$2,650,173,494 and net gains from investment activities and other miscellaneous income totaling \$11,868,497,568.

- Deductions from plan net assets increased from \$3,079,456,058 during 2002 to \$3,407,293,143 in 2003, or about 10.6%. The increase relates to increases in pension benefits and health care payments. Refunds of member contributions (including interest and qualifying matching employer funds) increased by approximately \$6 million, or 3.3%, to \$193,209,598 from 2002 to 2003.

### OPERS' Net Assets

For the Years Ended Dec. 31, 2003 and 2002 (\$ in millions)

	2003	2002	Amount Increase/ (Decrease) from 2002 to 2003	Percent Increase/ (Decrease) from 2002 to 2003
Current and other Assets	\$ 716	\$ 827	\$ (112)	(13.5%)
Investments at Fair Value	63,823	49,906	14,319	28.7%
Capital Assets	127	118	9	7.6%
Total Assets	64,666	50,851	14,216	28.0%
Total Liabilities	5,568	2,865	3,104	108.3%
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$59,098</b>	<b>\$47,986</b>	<b>\$ 11,112</b>	<b>23.2%</b>

## Additions to Fiduciary Net Assets

For the Years Ended  
Dec. 31, 2003 and 2002

	2003	2002	Amount Increase/ (Decrease) from 2002 to 2003	Percent Increase/ (Decrease) from 2002 to 2003
Employer Contributions	\$ 1,626,778,671	\$ 1,683,021,503	\$ (56,242,832)	(3.3%)
Member Contributions	1,023,394,823	1,094,343,553	(70,948,730)	(6.5%)
Net Investment Income	11,868,086,475	(5,684,965,700)	17,553,052,175	308.8%
Misc. Income	411,093	623,421	(212,328)	(34.1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$14,518,671,062</b>	<b>\$(2,906,977,223)</b>	<b>\$17,425,648,285</b>	<b>599.4%</b>

## Deductions in Fiduciary Net Assets

For the Years Ended  
Dec. 31, 2003 and 2002

	2003	2002	Amount Increase from 2002 to 2003	Percent Increase from 2002 to 2003
Benefits	\$3,144,246,755	\$2,836,137,068	\$ 308,109,687	10.9%
Administrative Expenses	69,836,790	56,267,175	13,569,615	24.1%
Refunds	193,209,598	187,051,815	6,157,783	3.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,407,293,143</b>	<b>\$3,079,456,058</b>	<b>\$ 327,837,085</b>	<b>10.6%</b>

## Investment Section

### 2003 Highlights

Our efforts to redevelop and reposition the investment program over the past few years were rewarded in 2003 as financial markets in the U.S. and abroad rebounded from a bear market that was more severe than any witnessed since the 1930s. Here are the highlights:

- OPERS' assets grow by \$11.1 billion on the strength of investment gains.
- The fund earns an investment return of 25.33%, the highest return achieved since 1985.
- The fund outperforms its composite benchmark by eight-tenths of 1%, resulting in an incremental investment gain of \$427 million of value to the fund.
- The fund's one-year return ranks in the top one percent of a peer group of comparable public funds with assets in excess of \$10 billion.
- The fund's three-year return ranks in the top 5% of the same peer group universe.
- The fund's five-year return ranks at the sixty-fourth percentile of the same peer group universe, reflecting a lower allocation to higher-returning equities in the latter part of the bull market of the 1990s.

## Asset Allocation Investment Summary

	2003		2002	
	Fair Value	% of Total Fair Value	Fair Value	% of Total Fair Value
Global Bonds:				
U.S. Government and Agencies	\$ 3,370,439,779	5.76 %	\$ 2,137,382,339	4.50%
Corporate Bonds	4,451,504,914	7.60	4,003,668,368	8.43
Mortgage & Mortgage Backed	4,476,817,033	7.64	3,930,905,540	8.28
<b>Total Global Bonds</b>	<b>\$12,298,761,726</b>	<b>21.00</b>	<b>\$10,071,956,247</b>	<b>21.21</b>
Common Stock	27,738,137,217	47.34	22,105,983,968	46.54
Real Estate	3,498,816,611	5.97	4,639,006,704	9.77
Private Equities	310,549,287	0.53	257,932,891	0.54
International	12,504,839,226	21.34	9,507,773,672	20.02
Short-term Investments				
Commercial Paper	0	0.00	26,384,606	0.06
U.S. Treasury Obligations	503,939	0.00	884,029,935	1.86
Short-term Investment Funds (STIF)	2,241,345,998	3.82		
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$58,592,954,004</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>\$47,493,068,023</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

## Portfolio Structure

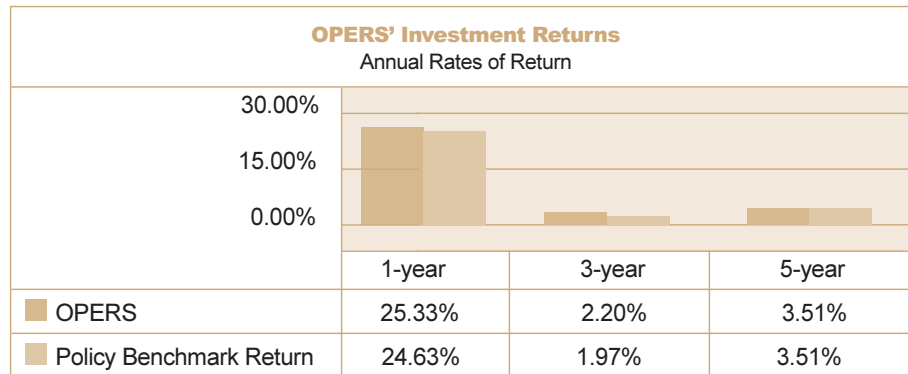
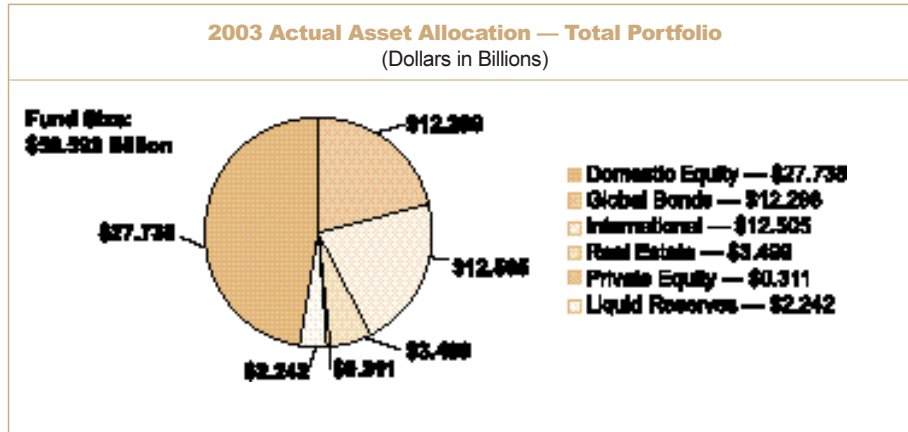
OPERS' total investment portfolio is comprised of both defined benefit (DB) and defined contribution (DC) assets. The DB assets originate from member and employer contributions to the Traditional Pension Plan and employer contributions to the Combined Plan. The management of these DB

assets is the responsibility of OPERS' investment staff under the direction of the OPERS board. DC assets originate from employee contributions to the Combined Plan and both member and employer contributions to the Member-Directed Plan. The investment of DC assets is self directed by the members of the Combined and the

Member-Directed Plans, but is limited to investment vehicles approved by the OPERS board. The DB portfolio accounted for more than 99.9% of all OPERS investment assets as of Dec. 31, 2003.

## Investment Returns

The OPERS investment portfolio returned 25.33% in 2003, exceeding our policy benchmark of 24.63% and yielding \$427 million in extra return for the System. The OPERS defined benefit portfolio (the portfolio that OPERS' investment staff manages) returned 25.39% in 2003. We compare our overall portfolio return to a composite benchmark return that could be achieved by a portfolio that is passively invested in the broad market, with percentage weights allocated to each asset class as specified in OPERS' Statement of Investment Objectives and Policies. The return of the composite benchmark for 2003 was 24.63%. The historical returns for the investment portfolio and composite benchmark are shown at left.



## OPERS Retirement Board

The nine-member OPERS retirement board is responsible for the administration and management of OPERS. Six of the nine members are elected by the employee and retiree groups that they represent. The remaining three, Ohio Attorney General, Auditor of State, and the Director of the Department of Administrative Services for the State of Ohio, are statutory members.

**Charlie Adkins, Chair**  
*State College and University Employees*

**Ronald C. Alexander, Vice Chair**  
*State Employees*

**Sharon M. Downs**  
*Retirees*

**Cynthia Sledz**  
*Miscellaneous Employees*

**Barbara J. Thomas**  
*County Employees*

**Ken Thomas**  
*Municipal Employees*

**Scott Johnson**  
*Director, Department of Administrative Services*

**Jim Petro**  
*Attorney General*

**Betty D. Montgomery**  
*Auditor of State*



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# Pension reform legislation passes

In a flurry of activity before summer recess, the Ohio General Assembly passed Senate Bill 133 addressing pension reform. Governor Taft is expected to sign the bill soon, and it will become effective 90 days thereafter.

Over the past several months, members and retirees of OPERS were influential in voicing opinions that helped shape provisions of the bill. Many aspects of the bill that were not in our members' and retirees' best interests were eliminated or modified. The oversight and accountability elements of the bill reflect the ethical and operational practices already in place at OPERS.

Fortunately, the so-called "Buy Ohio" provision was substantially altered. The bill's original language contained mandates and quotas that would have required pension systems to invest very high percentages of your retirement dollars in Ohio investment managers and brokers regardless of their performance.

The bill that passed contained modified language that eliminates the mandates and quotas in favor of a more policy-oriented approach toward increasing utilization of Ohio-qualified investment managers and brokers. This is consistent with OPERS' investment practice that already directs business to Ohio companies when they offer the best service or product.

Regarding board make-up, OPERS believes the current board composition is efficient, productive, balanced and represents the interests of our members and retirees. However, the recently-passed pension reform bill expands the OPERS board from

9 to 11 members, removes the state auditor and attorney general, and adds one additional elected retiree member and three "investment experts" appointed by state elected officials to the board. A decade ago, OPERS recognized the value of more board investment expertise and has utilized the services of outside investment advisors on a regular basis.

While OPERS maintains that the change in board make-up is unnecessary, we will work to implement the new composition requirements. Though elected board members representing active workers are now a minority, the number of elected versus appointed board members is still a majority. With the new board composition, active members and retirees will be able to elect seven members to the eleven-member board. The first additional retiree member will be appointed to the board by the Governor, but will be an elected member thereafter. The three "investment expert" members will be appointed, one each,

by the governor, the state treasurer, and jointly by the speaker of the house and the president of the senate.

A provision that was included in the House version of the pension reform bill was the so-called "super authority" the state treasurer would have over administration and management of Ohio's five public retirement systems. We are pleased to see that the final bill eliminated the provision.

For further information available on this important new legislation, please visit the OPERS website, [www.opers.org](http://www.opers.org).

## Thank you

In reflecting on the final bill, OPERS Executive Director Laurie Fiori Hacking said, "We would like to thank our members and retirees for voicing their opinions over the past several months on the issues surrounding pension reform. Their willingness to speak out made a large difference in the final outcome of this legislation. We would also like to thank the members of the Ohio General Assembly for the thought, attention and careful consideration they put forth in crafting pension reform legislation. While we still believe the changes in board composition to be unnecessary, we hope the result of this legislation will be continued public trust in the integrity of the state's pension systems."

# Survey indicates that members are very satisfied with the service they receive from OPERS

We would like to thank those of you who provided feedback to our 2004 Member Satisfaction Survey. Here's what some of you have to say about your satisfaction with OPERS.

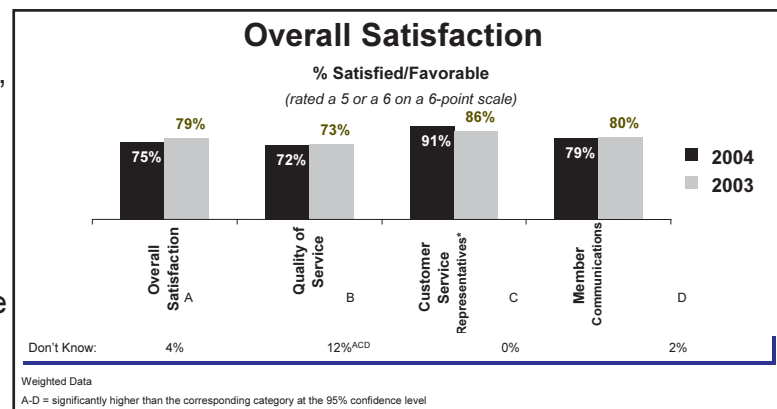
Overall, the 2004 survey shows that our members are very satisfied with the service they receive from OPERS. As an example, customer service shows the highest level of satisfaction in 2004. This rating increased to 91% this year, up from 86% in 2003. Results in the remaining categories are as follows: Satisfaction with member communications is at 79% very satisfied, overall satisfaction is at 75%, and quality of service is at 72%.

Consistent with the high levels of satisfaction, most members responding to the 2004 survey were not able to suggest improve-

ments that would increase their overall satisfaction with OPERS. However, from the few members who contributed suggestions, the most common one was for OPERS to provide more frequent and detailed communication or contact, especially for newer members, as well as state and law enforcement members.

The survey also found that, although a vast majority of our members have access to the Internet, few are utilizing the OPERS website, [www.opers.org](http://www.opers.org). The majority of our members say they have not visited the website because they did not have a need to

use it. However, our website offers a variety of information and services. You can find information on the different OPERS retirement plans, retirement benefits, seminars, news events affecting OPERS, and obtain access to your personal account information through the Member Benefits System (MBS). To register to use MBS, please visit [www.opers.org](http://www.opers.org).



## OPERS Answers

*the questions our members are asking today!*

**Q.** Do I need to make an appointment to come into the OPERS office?

**A.** Walk-ins are welcome, however we recommend you schedule an appointment at least two weeks in advance to avoid waiting. This also gives us time to fully prepare for your counseling session.

**Q.** Is the HCPP "set in stone" or will changes be made based on the survey feedback?

**A.** No, it is not "set in stone." That is why we are seeking feedback prior to the OPERS board committing to a final plan.

**Q.** What will happen to the HCPP if health care costs go down?

**A.** The HCPP is designed to allow the OPERS board maximum flexibility to delay negative effects on our benefit recipients, or give additional benefits when the situation warrants.

**Q.** Will my sick/vacation leave count towards my final average salary at retirement in the Traditional Pension and Combined Plan?

**A.** This could vary based on your employer's reporting procedures as determined by Ohio Revised Code section 145.01(R) and Ohio Administrative Code 145-1-26.

# Calendar of OPERS Educational Seminars

## Providing Long-term Awareness Now (PLAN)

*“Do you have five years of OPERS service credit?” Then it’s time to learn more about OPERS!*

PLAN is for those members who have at least five years of service credit and are generally mid-career public employees. Topics discussed include OPERS benefits, Social Security, financial and estate planning and others. A total cost of \$5 covers the one-day seminar, a non-member guest, lunch and reference materials.

City	Date
Dayton . . . . .	August 4
Cincinnati . . . . .	August 25
Columbus . . . . .	October 20
Cuyahoga Falls . . . . .	November 18

## Retirement Awareness Program (RAP)

*“Are you planning to retire within five years?” Let us help you prepare!*

RAP is for those members who are within five years of retirement and have at least five years of service credit. Topics discussed include OPERS benefits, financial planning, deferred compensation, Social Security, estate planning, and more. A total cost of \$5 covers the one-and-one-half (1-1/2) day seminar, a non-member guest, lunch and reference materials.

City	Date
Athens . . . . .	September 2 & 3
Youngstown . . . . .	September 9 & 10
Dayton . . . . .	October 7 & 8
Strongsville . . . . .	October 28 & 29
Cincinnati . . . . .	November 4 & 5

**To register for any OPERS educational seminar, please visit [www.opers.org](http://www.opers.org) or call 1-800-222-7377.**

## Retirement Readiness

*“Are you planning to retire in 12 to 18 months?” Let us help make sure you’re ready!*

Retirement Readiness is for those members who are within 12 to 18 months of retirement. Your OPERS benefits are discussed, along with the various documentation and paperwork needed for processing your pension benefits. This seminar lasts between three and four hours and there is no charge.

City	Date
Toledo . . . . .	August 4
Dayton . . . . .	August 5
Strongsville . . . . .	August 19
Cincinnati . . . . .	August 26
Perrysburg . . . . .	September 8
Youngstown . . . . .	September 8
Independence . . . . .	September 15
Cincinnati . . . . .	September 22
Columbus . . . . .	September 29
Canton . . . . .	October 6
Cuyahoga Falls . . . . .	November 19
Cincinnati . . . . .	December 2
Toledo . . . . .	December 8
Columbus . . . . .	December 15

## Remote Counseling Sessions

*“Are you ready to retire?” Let us bring a counseling session to you!*

If you live outside the Columbus area and are ready to begin the retirement process, you can schedule a remote counseling session. During your session you can discuss OPERS benefits with a counselor, as well as review your personal account. **Counseling sessions are also available by phone. Call 1-800-222-7377 to make an appointment.** Remote counseling sessions are scheduled for the following dates and cities throughout Ohio.

City	Date
New Phil./Dover . . . . .	August 2 - 6
Strongsville . . . . .	August 16 - 20
Hamilton . . . . .	August 30 - September 3
Ashtabula . . . . .	September 13 - 17
Perrysburg . . . . .	September 27 - October 1
Cuyahoga Falls . . . . .	October 11 - 15
Montpelier . . . . .	October 25 - 29
Portsmouth . . . . .	November 8 - 12



Ohio Public Employees  
Retirement System  
277 East Town Street  
Columbus, OH 43215-4642  
1-800-222-PERS (7377)  
or [www.opers.org](http://www.opers.org)

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## Calendar of OPERS Educational Seminars (continued from page 11)

### How to Select seminars

***“Are you a new OPERS member?” Let us help you choose the best retirement plan for you!***

If you are a new OPERS member, you have just 180 days from your hire date to select the OPERS retirement plan that is right for you. To help you do this, we offer informational seminars throughout Ohio during your enrollment period. The *How To Select Your OPERS Retirement Plan* seminar provides details about the benefits and features of each of the three plans: the Traditional Pension Plan, the Member-Directed Plan, and the Combined Plan. A summary of basic investment education is also included.

To register, please visit [www.opers.org](http://www.opers.org) and follow the links to Retirement Plans and decision Tools or call 1-800-222-7377. You will receive a postcard confirmation. Additional seminars may be added periodically that are not listed on this schedule. You are encouraged to visit [www.opers.org](http://www.opers.org) for a complete list of seminar dates and locations.

#### Central Ohio

Columbus . . . . . July 13  
Columbus . . . . . August 26  
Columbus . . . . . October 6  
Columbus . . . . . October 26 (2 sessions)

#### Northwest Ohio

Findlay . . . . . July 21  
Sandusky . . . . . August 3  
Toledo . . . . . August 4  
Findlay . . . . . September 14  
Toledo . . . . . October 27

#### Northeast Ohio

Shaker Heights . . . . . August 17

#### Southwest Ohio

Hamilton . . . . . August 24  
Dayton . . . . . September 30  
Cincinnati . . . . . October 7  
Batavia . . . . . October 20

#### Southeast Ohio

Athens . . . . . July 27  
Athens . . . . . September 14

#### Kent State

All Campuses . . . . . September 8  
via teleconference

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