



## OPERS Board of Trustees 2026 Election Talking Points for Employers

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Groups whose representatives' position to the OPERS Retirement Board are up for election this year are:

- **State Employees** – Representing approximately 47,000 employees working at a job for the State of Ohio.
- **Municipal Employees** – Representing approximately 59,100 employees working for one of Ohio's municipalities.
- **College/University Employees** – Representing approximately 56,300 non-teaching employees at state colleges and universities in Ohio.
- **Retiree** – One of two seats representing approximately 190,800 age and service, disability, and defined contribution (DC) plan retirees. This group includes re-employed retirees.
- An election announcement can be found on the OPERS website, [opers.org/elections](https://opers.org/elections). This announcement provides general election information, including lists of employers falling under each employer group noted above.
- Those elected will serve four-year terms beginning Jan. 1, 2027.
- Any public employee, who is a member of OPERS in one of the categories up for election, is eligible to represent their group, except one who is receiving a disability allowance.
- Any OPERS retiree receiving an age and service benefit, disability benefit, or benefits under the DC plan is eligible to represent retirees. Beneficiaries, surviving family members, or POAs are not eligible to run for election or nominate candidates by signing a petition. Beneficiaries, surviving family members and POAs are also ineligible to vote. If a person is receiving age and service payment, the candidate may only run for a retiree position, even if re-employed.
- A retiree must reside in the state of Ohio in order to be eligible to run for a Board position.
- Interested individuals still unsure after checking the employer lists available at [opers.org/elections](https://opers.org/elections) should check with their employer or OPERS on their proper employer Board seat classification.
- Judges and magistrates are not eligible to hold a seat on the OPERS Board.
- Ballots are mailed to all voting groups on Aug. 25, 2026.
- All ballots must be received by 11:59 p.m. EDT, Friday, Oct. 2, 2026, in order to be counted.

### PETITIONS/ CANDIDACY PACKETS

- Petition packets will be available for pick-up at the OPERS office, 277 East Town Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215 and on the OPERS website, [opers.org/elections](https://opers.org/elections), or can be mailed by request on or after June 1, 2026.
- Also, nominating petition packets will be mailed to employers on Monday, June 1, 2026, for distribution to interested candidates.
- Under Ohio law, an eligible candidate seeking an employee member position is required to obtain a minimum of 500 member signatures. Within that 500, at least 10 different counties must be represented by a minimum of 20 signatures from each county. Employees signing petitions should indicate the county of their employment.

- Eligible candidates seeking a retiree position are required to obtain a minimum of 250 retiree signatures. Within that 250, at least five different counties must be represented by a minimum of 10 signatures from each county. Retirees signing petitions should indicate the county in which they reside. Signatures of a retiree's spouse or beneficiary do not count toward the signatures required, unless they are also a retiree of OPERS as described under the General Information section.
- We require that those signing the petitions provide the last four digits of their Social Security number and their county of residence for retirees. Any signature without this information may not be able to be verified and may not be counted towards the candidate's total.
- It should be noted that duplicate signatures on petitions will not be counted.
- OPERS must receive original documents. Candidate/petitions cannot utilize electronic signatures. Petitions cannot be emailed (scanned) or faxed. Former petition forms will not be counted; candidates must use current election forms provided in the current petition packet.
- ORC 3501.38(B) states petitions filed with any other public office shall be in ink.
- Potential candidates should check specific employers/offices/counties in regards to solicitation policies and procedures.
- A qualifying candidate must submit a biographical statement with the affidavit form provided for inclusion with the ballot mailing (typed, not handwritten). This statement cannot exceed 200 words and must be submitted with the petitions and the provided Certification by Candidate for Election form no later than 4:30 p.m. EDT, Monday, Aug. 3, 2026. The Board reserves the right to edit these biographical statements with notice to a candidate.
- Any items listed on your Biographical statement WILL be published (including home phone number). Your biographical statement including spelling, layout, etc., will go on the ballot as is presented - font is the only item to change for consistency purposes.
- Candidates must also submit the provided packet forms referencing State Retirement System Candidate Campaign Finance Requirements from the Ohio Secretary of State. These forms should be submitted to the Secretary of State's office according to the directions provided on the packet's cover letter. Any questions regarding these forms should be directed to Secretary of State's Campaign Finance Division at (614) 466-2655 or 1-877-767-6446.
- Any written or spoken campaign materials must include the following statement: Neither the OPERS Board nor OPERS as a system endorses any particular candidate or statement. These materials must be submitted to Eric Harrell, General Counsel, at [eharrell@opers.org](mailto:eharrell@opers.org) for pre-approval (prior to dissemination). Third parties sending campaign materials out on candidate's behalf must also include the OPERS disclaimer and submit the materials for pre-approval.
  - Turnaround time for any advertising approval is three business days upon receipt of materials. This is both for candidate as well as third parties.
  - Any posting on the OPERS blog/Facebook pages that includes any endorsement for a candidate will be removed from posting.
- Monday, Aug. 3, 2026 at 4:30 p.m. EDT is the deadline for candidates to complete and submit the petitions, forms and biographical information to OPERS. This is an actual receipt date at the OPERS office, not a postmark date.
- Overnight or certified mail or hand delivery of Candidate petition packet information is strongly encouraged to ensure timely delivery. This also applies to petition signature forms.

## **BOARD COMMITMENT**

- The OPERS Board of Trustees generally meets on the third Wednesday of each month in Columbus to review and formulate policies concerning OPERS. At times, Board and committee meetings may also be scheduled on the preceding Tuesday each month, depending on the meeting agenda. From time-to-time, the OPERS Board may call special meetings.
- On average, OPERS Board members should expect to spend at a minimum 40-50 working days each year on OPERS Board business (excluding preparation time discussed below), including meetings, education, committee commitments, and/or planning. New board members, or those with a limited financial background, should anticipate spending a little more time during their first year to accommodate additional training.
- OPERS Board retreats are scheduled once or twice each year for strategic planning or other topics.
- OPERS Board members are required to complete specific education sessions and an orientation for new board members within 90 days of taking seat.
- Preparation for each OPERS Board meeting involves reviewing board materials that are available electronically approximately one week prior, which takes about eight hours to review.
- Board members are not penalized for absence from their regular employment while attending authorized Board meetings. Although Board members receive no additional compensation, reimbursement is made for necessary expenses while serving the System.
- Board members are subject to Ohio Ethics Laws which generally govern conflict of interest situations and prohibit board members from soliciting or accepting anything of value from persons or corporations doing business with the System. Board members must annually file Financial Disclosure Statements with the Ohio Ethics Commission. Board members are also prohibited from soliciting or accepting payment of travel expenses, including expenses incurred with the travel for lodging, meals, food and beverages, from anyone other than OPERS.
- Board members are trustees of the System funds and are subject to strict fiduciary standards of conduct. The Board members must act solely in the best interests of the participants and beneficiaries and for the exclusive purpose of providing them with benefits and defraying reasonable administrative expenses.
- Removal from the Board: Board members may be removed by a trial court if the member commits misconduct in office. If a board member breaches his or her fiduciary duty, the Ohio Attorney General may file a civil action against the member and seek restitution.