



# Future Matters

Start Thinking About Tomorrow – Today

January 2025

## WE ARE DIFFERENT

Although there are five state retirement systems in Ohio, SERS stands apart from the other systems.

Membership includes public school employees in positions that do not require a teaching or administrator's license or registration; employees of private employers who provide services common to the normal daily operation of a school under a contract; and, non-teaching employees of certain public institutions of higher education.

Our membership is not the only aspect that makes us different.

Unlike our counterparts, SERS is 76.61% funded for pensions over a 21-year period. It has \$18.5 billion in assets, is the 58th largest public pensions fund in the nation, and uses a three-year highest Final Average Salary to calculate pension benefits.

Our most important role during the year is advocating for you.

We do this in a number of ways: individual meetings with legislators, attending legislative Ohio Retirement Study Council monthly meetings, and in our interactions with media and representatives from other organizations. Your work is invaluable to the successful operation of schools across the state, and we want everyone else to know that too.

We deliver the message that SERS is transparent, accountable, engaged, and most of all sustainable.

Over the last 10 years, our investment returns are in the top 2% of all pension systems in the Wilshire pension fund universe, and over the last four years, we have the highest returns with the lowest risk of all the plans. This year, our private equity returns have been recognized by the American Investment Council as having the 7th best returns over the last 10 years compared to all other public pension plans.

SERS is financially sound, and we continue to make progress on our funding while delivering your benefits.

Finally, the Board voted to approve a 2.5% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) increase for eligible benefit recipients in 2024. This was greater than the CPI of 2.3%. At its September 2024 meeting, the Board approved another 2.5% COLA increase for eligible benefit recipients in 2025.

We are undeniably different. We try to prove that every day – not just to legislators and advocacy groups – but to you, our membership.



*from the desk of*

**Richard Stensrud**  
Executive Director

As you might have seen, Ohio's public pension systems have been in the news for a variety of reasons. Hopefully you've also noticed, SERS is not the focus.

By any metric, SERS is performing at high levels. Our investment program is ranked in the top decile in the country. Our customer service ratings are at the top of the scale. Our financial condition is solid. We have reduced our liabilities and improved our funded status. And we have not requested, and do not need, additional employer contributions. There is nothing broken that needs to be fixed.

We regularly share these messages with Ohio legislators.

You perform important duties that contribute to the success of school districts across the state. We recognize you have different needs than members of other Ohio public pension systems.

We believe that you are best served by a Board and staff dedicated to your unique retirement needs and will continue to deliver that message.

Thank you for all you do.

# DREAMING ABOUT RETIREMENT? START WITH EDUCATION



## SERS Offers Educational Opportunities at Every Stage of Your Career

Prepare for retirement with education. We can help. SERS offers many educational opportunities to learn about your retirement.

### WEBINARS: LEARN WITH SERS

#### In the Distant Future: Lunch Break Webinars

If you are more than five years away from retirement, a Lunch Break webinar is for you. Webinars are designed to focus on select topics that are important for SERS members to know. They run for about 30 minutes and provide a short educational session along with a question-and-answer session.

Visit our website at [www.ohsers.org](http://www.ohsers.org) for upcoming dates. You also can watch a prerecorded webinar through our website.

#### Getting Closer: SERS Essentials for Retirement Success Webinar

If you are a member within three-to-five years of retirement, the SERS Essentials For Retirement Success monthly webinars are for you.

During this hourlong live webinar, participants will hear a presentation covering important topics followed by a question-and-answer session.

Visit our website at [www.ohsers.org](http://www.ohsers.org) for upcoming dates.

#### You Can See It on the Horizon: Virtual Retirement Conferences

In the spring and fall, SERS holds a series of Saturday meetings for active members close to retirement. If you are about two years away from retirement, attend a conference. During a conference, you have the opportunity to ask questions of staff members. Topics include Service Retirement Basics, Health Care, and the Retirement Process.

Upcoming dates and registration information will be available on our website at [www.ohsers.org](http://www.ohsers.org).

#### YouTube It: Retirement Conferences

You also can watch a previously recorded Retirement Conference video on the SERS YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/SERSofOhio](http://www.youtube.com/SERSofOhio), or [www.ohsers.org/education/video-center](http://www.ohsers.org/education/video-center).

#### You Have Arrived: Consider Meeting with a Counselor

If you are within a year of retiring, meet with a counselor. SERS offers personal retirement counseling by appointment Monday through Friday, 8:15 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. Sessions are available in-person, by phone, or by video. They are for those retiring within the next 12 months. To schedule an appointment, call 1-800-878-5853.

## SAVINGS AND INVESTMENTS

According to a 2020 Bureau of Labor report, the average American worker will have **12 different jobs** between ages 18 and 50. This means most people will be piecing together **retirement income from many different sources**, including public and private pensions, 403(b)s, Social Security, 401(k)s, and IRAs.



### What's in your portfolio?

- 403(b) account
- Traditional or Roth Individual Retirement Account (IRA)
- 401(k)
- Stocks
- Annuities



## OHIO DEFERRED COMPENSATION (ODC) is a 457(b) plan.

As an Ohio public employee, you can **supplement your retirement** by enrolling in Deferred Compensation.

Through payroll deferrals, you can save **extra money** and allow ODC's financial experts to invest those pre-tax dollars.



Visit [ohio457.org](http://ohio457.org) to enroll



**School Employees Retirement System of Ohio**  
Serving the People Who Serve Our Schools®  
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