



RETIREE FOCUS



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

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Payment Schedule

Your payment is deposited into your bank account on the first business day of each month. If the first day of the month falls on a weekend or holiday, your payment will be deposited on the previous business day, except for January, which will be deposited on the first business day of the new year.

Payment Stubs

You receive your payment stub twice a year with your *Retiree Focus*. It details your gross monthly allowance and deductions, and these amounts for year-to-date. You also receive a payment stub whenever there is a change in your benefit, including a change in your COLA, tax withholdings, or health care premiums.

New Executive Director Announced

Ray Higgins has been named executive director of the School Employees Retirement System of Ohio by the Retirement Board.

Higgins previously served as executive director of the Public Employees’ Retirement System (PERS) of Mississippi. For the past eight years, he oversaw all facets of the retirement system, which included 22 defined benefit plans that served more than 300,000 members, a state deferred contribution plan, and a retiree health insurance plan.

Throughout his career, he has been involved in state legislative affairs representing the retirement systems in Mississippi and Georgia.

Before joining PERS, he spent almost 20 years working for the State of Georgia, including serving as deputy director and chief operating officer for the Employees’ Retirement System of Georgia.

Higgins received a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in finance from Georgia Southern University, and a Master of Science degree in finance and investments from Georgia State University.

PAYMENT SCHEDULE

July:	July 1, 2026
August:	July 31, 2026
September:	September 1, 2026
October:	October 1, 2026
November:	October 30, 2026
December:	December 1, 2026
January:	January 4, 2027



Social Security Cards Are Safer at Home

Scams to steal your personal information are at an all-time high. It is important to safeguard personal documents. According to the Social Security Administration, this includes your Social Security card.

A Social Security card is not an identification document. In many situations, you only need to know your Social Security number (SSN). Your physical card is not necessary for most business needs.

You do not need to show your physical card to apply for certain benefits. You can simply provide your SSN for benefits like:

- Housing

- Health insurance
- Food assistance

Additionally, physical cards are not required in Ohio as evidence for the Department of Motor Vehicles or Driver License. Acceptable evidence includes:

- W-2 forms
- Form SSA-1099
- Non-SSA-1099 forms
- Pay stubs

Keeping your cards at home reduces the risk of loss or theft and helps you keep your information safe.

A Case of Mistaken Identity: SERS and SERO

Similar-sounding names can sometimes cause confusion. Acronyms SERS and SERO are similar enough to do just that.

SERS stands for School Employees Retirement System of Ohio, the pension system from which you receive your monthly benefit.

SERO stands for School Employee Retirees of Ohio. It's a non-profit retiree advocacy and education organization. SERO provides its members with discounts on products and services, including dental and vision plans.

How Do You Pay Your Premiums?

The easiest way to tell whether you have dental and vision coverage through SERS or SERO is how you pay your premiums.

If your dental and/or vision premiums are being deducted from your pension benefit, you have a SERS plan. If they are being deducted from a checking or savings account, you probably have a SERO plan.

To learn more about SERO, call 614-431-0387 and press option 3, or visit www.ohio-sero.com.

Reminder: Make Sure You Can Receive Messages



Make sure your answering machine or voicemail is set up and not full so SERS can leave messages. The SERS Staff cannot inform you about important issues, including those affecting health care enrollment or returned mail, if there is no way to leave a message on your answering machine or cell phone. If a missed call from SERS shows up on your phone's caller ID, contact our offices at 800-878-5853.

Reminder Checklist



Until your next issue of *Retiree Focus* arrives in January, remember:

- ✓ 1099-R Forms are mailed in January
- ✓ That if your marital status changes or beneficiary passes away, contact SERS
- ✓ To make sure SERS has your current address, phone number, and email

THE VALUE OF SERS BENEFITS



The Value of SERS Benefits

The SERS staff is committed to serving members. In a digital world where AI is becoming the norm, SERS invests in the

human touch. You can still call the SERS offices five days a week and talk to a live person who can answer your questions. As evidenced by the more than 125,000 calls processed on average per year, SERS remains dedicated to “Serving the People Who Serve our Schools.”

Fast Facts

Average Benefit Recipient

Age **75.2**

Monthly Pension **\$1,440**



Q: Can I change my death benefit beneficiary?

A: Yes. The beneficiary or beneficiaries of your death benefit, which is a \$1,000 lump-sum benefit paid upon your death, can be updated by calling SERS at 800-878-5853 to request a Beneficiary Change Form. By law, if you do not designate a beneficiary, statutory succession applies. Statutory succession is:

1. Spouse
2. If no spouse, children (share and share alike)
3. If none of the above, parents
4. If none of the above, estate



Education on Demand

Explore the SERS Education Center. It features flexible learning through educational videos available 24/7 on our YouTube channel. Videos cover diverse topics, including Open Enrollment and Medicare Basics. The Medicare Basics series provides information on when to sign up, available coverage, your choices when signing up, and Medicare Part D.



For more information, visit the Video Center in our Education Center on our website at www.ohsers.org.

Organizing Affairs Now Helps Reduce Stress Later

Preparing your important papers, information, and wishes now while you are healthy can help ease difficult situations if you later become ill or incapacitated.

Organize Your Files

Set up a file in a secure place that lists all your records along with names and phone numbers of contacts.

- Put your important papers and copies of legal documents in one place.
- Tell someone you trust where to find those papers.
- Talk to your loved ones about advance care planning.
- Give permission in advance for a doctor or lawyer to talk with your caregiver.

Online Accounts

Make a list of your online accounts. These range from bank and brokerage accounts to email and social media accounts like Facebook, shopping accounts, and online storage for documents.

Contact Information

Have contact information for friends, associations, and organizations ready. Include your attorney, accountant, stockbroker, and executor of your will.

Organize Your Wishes

You have some decisions to make. Help yourself and your survivors by:

- Reviewing your finances with your loved ones and making sure they know where your assets and documents are kept.
- Discussing burial preferences and arrangements you have already made.
- Seeing an attorney and having your will or trust prepared.
- Completing advance directives, including a durable power of attorney, living will, and health care proxy.



Make sure your loved ones have access to your:

- ☒ **Personal Documents:** Birth certificate, Social Security information, marriage certificate, divorce decree, military papers, naturalization papers, will or trust, and burial instructions
- ☒ **Retirement and Death Benefit Information:** Copies of retiree annual statements, as well as SERS' number and address
- ☒ **Property Tax Information:** Copies of tax bills, deeds, and liens
- ☒ **Insurance Policies:** Copies of life, auto, homeowners, property, accident, liability, long-term care and hospitalization policies
- ☒ **Bank Accounts:** Account number and locations of checking and savings accounts, CDs, safe-deposit boxes, savings bonds, stocks, and bonds
- ☒ **Credit Cards:** Account numbers, phone numbers, and addresses



Retiree Had Time of Life Serving Schools



While Canton, Ohio, is probably best known as home to the Pro Football Hall of Fame, it is also home to another pro star.

Looking through Susan Mays Parks' collection of photos from her time serving in Canton City Schools, it is obvious that she enjoyed her job. The photos are very precious, as she keeps many handy on her iPad. They "are near and dear to me," she said.



During her time serving the schools, she made some cherished memories and forged some lasting friendships. Along with guiding many students over the years, her school days were filled with skits, Halloween parties at roller skating rinks, and pies in the face for student fundraisers.

"Working with the students and the staff was very fulfilling, and honestly, some of the best times of my life," she said.

Mays Parks started her career as a secretary in the main office at Timken Senior High School in 1976 before

becoming the attendance officer at McKinley Senior High School and Timken Senior High School.



As attendance officer, she had the opportunity to work closely with students and staff. She was committed to assisting students in achieving their potential by helping them develop habits that led to regular school attendance and future success.

She found her work "very rewarding," she said. "Both high schools were part of Canton City Schools and part of my life."

She retired in 2007 after more than three decades serving the schools.

In her retirement, she has been playing a lot of golf. She also has been maintaining a "Spring Break" tradition with three of her closest friends from her days at Timken Senior High School. This year, they are celebrating their 45th year of friendship and tradition of vacationing together in Las Vegas for Spring Break.



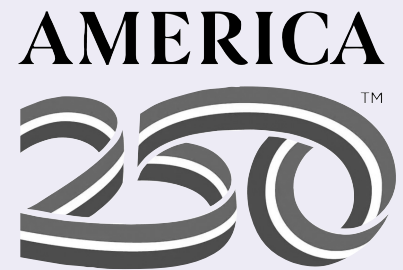
When she misses her old school days working in the schools, she just pulls up the saved photos on her iPad and remembers.

The United States Celebrates Milestone Birthday

July 4, 2026, marks the 250th birthday of the United States. As the country celebrates the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, this historic milestone is being commemorated with an array of parades, fireworks, and exhibitions.

Americans can expect a wide range of events from local festivals to national gatherings. Festivities include:

- Historical reenactments at Revolutionary War battlefields
- Public readings of the Declaration of Independence
- Tall, era-specific ships sailing into historic harbors
- Educational programs hosted by the National Park Service
- Military tributes honoring veterans
- Art installations and museum exhibitions exploring the nation's heritage
- Parades, concerts, and fireworks



Notable Local Events

Ohio Statehouse Exhibitions

The Ohio Statehouse in Downtown Columbus is hosting special historical exhibits, including a showcase of artifacts from the Revolutionary War and the Freedom Train.

Johnston Farm Ice Cream Social

The Johnston Farm and Indian Agency in Piqua is hosting a Red, White, and Blue Ice Cream Social, offering treats and historical insights into the Revolutionary War era.

Dennison Train Ride

The Dennison Railroad Depot Museum is offering a special America 250-Ohio Strawberry Festival Train Ride.

Liberty Tree Planting

Wayne County students are actively participating in statewide initiatives by planting local "Liberty Trees" to honor America's heritage.

For more information about local events, visit America250-Ohio.org or Ohio.gov.



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