

- Update from Executive Director
- Vouchers Hurt Ohio Partnership
- Chapters are meeting!



Kara Mendenhall, ORTA
Executive Director

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Greetings ORTA Members!

We are on the cusp of summer as I look forward to the Memorial Day weekend ahead. My husband and I were able to attend a baseball game in person yesterday! Not a big deal unless put into the context of the last year and a half of isolation and pandemic. We were still required to wear masks, and the seating was socially distanced by design, but we were at a major league park and enjoyed the experience of the crowd, the food, the players on the field, and, for the first time ever, catching a baseball! If that doesn't put you in mind of summer, nothing will.

The beginning of June brings relaxation of the restrictions we have been living under for the duration of this pandemic. It is my hope that if you haven't yet been vaccinated, you will seriously consider getting the shots. We are all in this together and need to understand that we rely on others to participate to help keep us safe. Now those even as young as 12 can be vaccinated! It is such a relief to me to have these protections available to people. What an achievement!

Those of us on the Executive Committee are beginning to move around the state to local meetings again. We are planning to attend several regional gatherings and hope to see many of you at the get-togethers as the year progresses. It seems that there are changes afoot in many of the locals with members who are no longer with us, or those who have been affected by the virus and can no longer participate. We have several openings in the regional liaison positions, so if you would like to participate at that level, please contact one of us or the state ORTA office to know how to apply. We are always looking for energetic members to work with us!

This year brings some semblance of normalcy to graduation season again. Even if there are limited tickets available for graduates' family members, there are at least some folks watching in person as their diplomas are received. Much different from the non-ceremonies of last year! Although we will be working through the effects of this pandemic for many months yet, I hope the ability to see family and friends again helps to ease some of the stress the virus has brought our way. I wish you all a pleasant beginning to summer and a joyous reunion with life lived in person!

Sending my best regards until we meet...



Kara Mendenhall, ORTA 2021 President



Dr. Robin Rayfield, ORTA
Executive Director

FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Greetings, ORTA Members!

STRS News

The STRS Board met on May 20, 2021. As expected, there was significant discussion on the Performance Based Incentives Program (investment bonuses program). The program is very complex and involves measures against performance in 1 year and a 5-year performance and measure. One thing seemed to be clear to me... STRS employees clearly understand the PBI program and at least some of the board members do not. The board did approve a PBI program for 2022 with Board member Wade Steen voting no on the motion. All other members voted yes.

Forensic Audit

Mr. Siedle's work is coming along. He has learned a great deal about the investment program at STRS and some of what he has learned is troubling. STRS is not cooperating with Mr. Siedle's work. Specifically, STRS refuses to provide public records that show how much of our retirement resources are invested in each of the alternative investments, nor how much those investments are worth at the present time. STRS is not being transparent with the information on where our money is invested and how well those investments are doing. In fact, Mr. Siedle is convinced that the only way to shed light on these investments is through the courts. You can see a video of the press conference Mr. Siedle and his lawyer Marc Dann held to announce the legal action against STRS lack of transparency at the [ORTA YouTube Channel](#).

STRS Elections

STRS elections resulted in 1 new board member being elected. Rudy Fichtenbaum received the most votes of the retirees that were on the ballot. Bob Stein received the second most votes and was also elected for a 4-year term beginning in September of this year.

Local Chapter Meetings

Several chapters have begun meeting this month and last month. I have attended several meetings and will be happy to visit your chapter. Our Executive Committee members are also happy to attend your chapter's meeting. Please contact the ORTA office and we will let you know if we are available (614-431-7002) or by email r-rayfield@orta.org

Opportunity Part-time Work

I was contacted by a company (Brehon Technology & Vocational Support) asking that I pass along an opportunity to work part-time as a job coach. The company seeks former educators in the following counties to help people with developmental disabilities in developing work skills: Union, Champaign, Logan, and Clark. If interested in this opportunity contact Michael Murphy at 419-230-0209.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robin Rayfield".

Dr. Robin Rayfield, ORTA Executive Director

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MEETING IN PERSON WITH MERCER CO.

The **Mercer Co. Retired Teachers Association** met in early May at C.J. Highmarks restaurant.

Dr. Robin Rayfield spoke about ORTA news such as the forensic audit, the STRS Board Election among other topics.

The next in-person meeting will be on September 21st at C.J. Highmarks.

To learn more about the Mercer Co. chapter, please visit their [website](#).



Dr. Robin Rayfield is shown with member Paula Byers

“VOUCHERS HURT OHIO” ALLIANCE

Recently, ORTA was contacted by **Bill Phillis** from the **Ohio Coalition for Equity and Adequacy of School Funding** regarding proposed legislation that will have a negative impact on retirees. For that matter, the proposed legislation (HB 290) will have a negative effect on public education.

HB290 (vouchers for all) would reimburse parents of current private school students for tuition paid to private schools at the current rate of \$4,500 for elementary students; \$6,000 for secondary students. (The voucher folks are lobbying for the voucher levels to be raised to \$8,000 at the secondary level and \$6,000 at the elementary level). The sponsors of HB290 want vouchers to include homeschooling and tutoring.



There are about 150,000 tuition-paid private school students and 80,000 homeschoolers in Ohio. The cost of current private school tuition students and homeschoolers would be in excess of **\$1.1 billion**. HB290 would absolutely devastate public schools. Other considerations:

- More students in private schools mean fewer in public schools. Fewer students means fewer teachers contributing into the STRS pension fund.
- Private schools are not held to the same standards as public schools.
- Student achievement in private schools is less than public schools. Students are less prepared for the challenges they will face!

ORTA asks that you reach out to your state representatives and senators to voice your concerns regarding HB 290 and vouchers. To learn more you can contact **Vouchers Hurt Ohio**. You can also check out the ORTA website at www.orta.org for more information. ORTA will provide a bullet point document so that you can reach out to your elected official to voice your concerns. This is a critical issue facing our pension system. Attacks on the public-school hurts everyone, children, teachers, parents, and communities. You may also wish to contact your local school board members, asking them to join the Vouchers Hurt Ohio litigation.

We would also like to mention that HB 110 and that this legislation includes the Fair School Funding provisions of former HB 1. The Fair School Funding Formula would provide predictable income for public schools across the state. This would also provide a constitutionally sound ‘fix’ to the current funding formula that creates so much angst in the public schools regarding school finance. HB 110 has cleared the house and is in the senate. Encourage your senator to support HB 110.

NEW NEWS IN NOBLE CO.

The **Noble County Retired Teachers** met on Thursday, April 8, at Lori's Family Restaurant in Caldwell. The banquet room was set up for social distancing and all members wore masks.

President **Don Ullmann** and his wife Deloris provided all members with a small bottle of hand sanitizer.

Members brought in items for the annual donation to PAWS (Providing Animals with Shelter), the Humane Society of Noble County. Items included food, toys, bowls, collars, paper towels, wipes, cat litter, etc., as well as a little over \$200 in monetary donations.

Pictured is **Chandra Ontko**, president of the **Noble County PAWS** accepting our contributions.

The April program committee followed the theme of "pets" and provided each member with a homemade cookie decorated like a dog or cat. The door prizes awarded were bottles of hand soap with labels decorated with dogs and cats. There was a 50/50 drawing with proceeds given to PAWS.

It was a nice spring meeting with delicious food, great conversations with friends and colleagues.

Noble Co. also awards a yearly book grant to a graduating student. The 2021 recipient of the NCRTA \$500 Book Grant is **Raegan Feldner** of Shenandoah High School. After graduation, Raegan plans on attending The Ohio State University seeking a bachelor's degree in Agriscience Education. Her future goal is to teach high school agriculture and be an FFA Advisor. Raegan has been involved in numerous school activities as well as a great deal of involvement in her church and community. Congratulations, Raegan!



Pictured Above (Top): Members gathered to enjoy a meal and safe socializing; Middle left: Raegan Feldner, recipient of book grant and Cynthia Stallings, NCRTA Scholarship Committee Chairperson; Bottom Right: Chandra Ontko of Noble Co. PAWS, accepting NCRTA's donations to the shelter

FOLLOW ALONG WITH THE STRS FORENSIC AUDIT

Edward “Ted” Siedle’s work is underway! Mr. Siedle has written an award winning book on how these investigations work, and explains step-by-step the procedure and process of the investigations.

Mr. Siedle has graciously provided copies of his book to the ORTA office, and we want our members to read alongside while the work is being done.

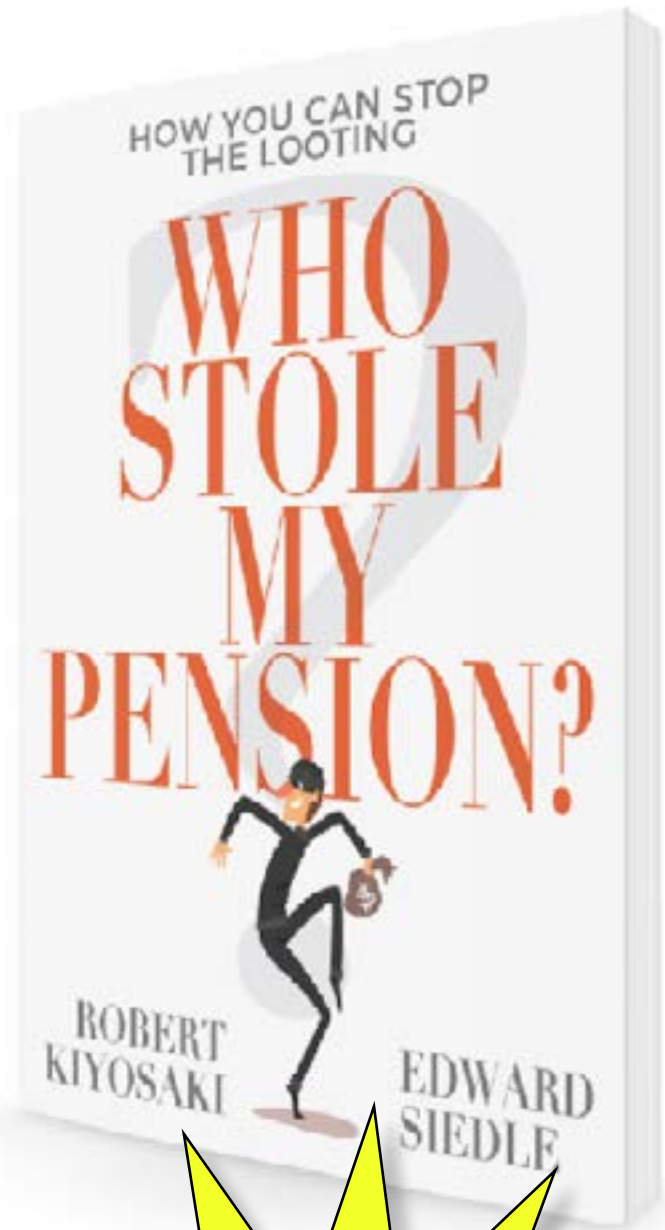
This book will help us understand the results of the audit upon completion, and will be a resource for questions you may have about the audit process.

Call our office today to find out more details on getting a copy TODAY!

614.431.7002



Above: Edward “Ted” Siedle, author of “Who Stole My Pension?”





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OHIO RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION



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c/o Mia McLean, Membership
Worthington, OH 43085**



****Remember, the date we process your payment is your new due date for the following year (i.e. 05/30/21, new due date is 05/30/22). If you pay your ORTA dues to your local chapter, your payment is applied upon receipt to our office.**

Thank you!



PAYING TRIBUTE AND GROWING A MEMORIAL

Former Painesville Schools special needs teacher and Ohio Retired Teachers Association Member, **Lillie Wilson** made a lasting impact on numerous students and colleagues through her life and tenure as an educator.

To remember her, on May 12, her former coworkers from the “Lathrop Lunch Bunch”, along with Wilson’s family planted a flowering dogwood tree to honor her lasting legacy and memory.

The tree and memorial can be seen in Lathrop Park, ---located at 61 Roosevelt Drive, in Painesville.



Photos By Sheena Holland Dolan – The News-Herald

First Above:: Judy Grant, former principal of Lathrop Elementary School; Second Above: The volunteers add more soil to the planted dogwood

IN MEMORIAM

Stark Co.

Mary Ann Sparks, Stark Co. Life Member and ORTA Lifetime Member

Trumbull Co.

Dorothy Arlene Harshman Morocco, Trumbull Co. Life Member and ORTA Lifetime Member

Van Wert Co.

Ronald Bagley, Van Wert Co. Life Member and ORTA Lifetime Member



***Deceased Member submission Policy update:
If you submit member(s) passing, please forward any obituary or funeral arrangements for our records.**

***“When our time on Earth has been complete,
Our spirit moves on, more mysteries to seek.
Celebrate what this person meant to you,
Cherish the memories when this life
you review.”***

—B.J. Woodruff

IMPORTANT CONTACTS

ORTA (Ohio Retired Teachers Association)

250 E. Wilson Bridge Road | Suite 150
Worthington, OH 43085
614-431-7002 | www.orta.org

STRS

(State Teachers Retirement System of Ohio)

275 E. Broad Street | Columbus, OH 43215
(888) 227-7877 | www.strsoh.org

AMBA Benefits

(Association Member Benefits Advisors)

6034 W. Courtyard Drive | Suite 300
Austin, Texas 78730
(800) 258-7041 | www.myambabenefits.info/orta



MEMBERSHIP CARDS ARE NOW AVAILABLE!

If you're a paying dues member and would like to receive a membership card, please contact our office.

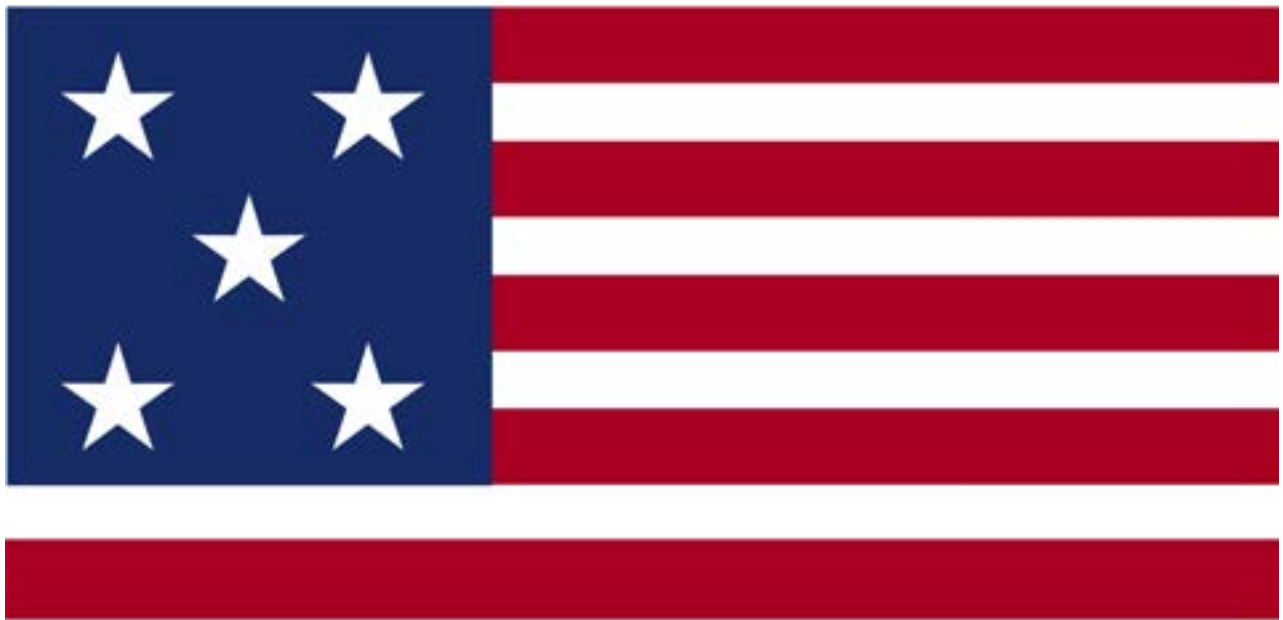
Please note, 2021 Membership cards are only sent upon request and if you are current on your membership status.

Call today to verify your membership standing to receive a 2021 Member ID.



• HAPPY MEMORIAL DAY •

MONDAY, MAY 31ST, 2021



• FROM •



OUR OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED
MONDAY, MAY 31ST, 2021