recommendations to the legislature on any changes the ORSC finds desirable with respect to benefits, sound financing of benefit costs, and prudent investment of funds (R.C. 171.04(A));

(2) Report annually to the governor and legislature on its evaluation and recommendations with respect to the operations of the public retirement systems and their funds (R.C. 171.04(B));

(3) Study all proposed changes to the public retirement laws and report to the legislature on their probable costs, actuarial implications, and desirability as a matter of sound public policy (R.C. 171.04(C));

(4) Review semiannually the policies, objectives, and criteria of the systems' investment programs (R.C. 171.04(D));

(5) Have prepared, at least once every ten years, an independent actuarial review of the annual actuarial valuations and quinquennial actuarial investigations prepared by each system (R.C. 171.04(E));

(6) Have conducted a fiduciary performance audit of each system at least once every ten years (R.C. 171.04(F));

(7) Provide each Council member with copies of all proposed rules submitted by the retirement systems and submit any recommendations to the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review (R.C. 171.04(G)); and

(8) Review the police and fire contribution rates and makes recommendations to the legislature that it finds necessary for the proper financing of OP&F benefits (R.C. 742.311).

The Council has its own consulting actuary and investment consultant, PTA/KMS and RVK. PTA/KMS conducts reviews independent of the systems' actuaries, including a review of the actuarial analysis required for all retirement legislation having any measurable financial impact on the systems. RVK conducts a semiannual review of the policies, objectives, and criteria of the systems' investment programs. The Council played an instrumental role in establishing the statutory requirements for an actuarial analysis of retirement legislation and the semiannual review of the systems' investment programs.

Additionally, in the past the Council has engaged the services of the William M. Mercer Company to undertake a comprehensive disability study of OP&F and from PTA/KMS for independent actuarial audits of all systems. The Council has also contracted with Funston Advisory Services for a fiduciary audit of STRS, SERS, OP&F, and HPRS, and AON for a fiduciary audit of PERS. The Council also contracted with PTA/KMS to provide analysis of the pension reform acts of 2012. These independent experts provide insight and analysis necessary for Council members to make informed decisions.

*SERS and STRS information based on FY ending 6/30/2025; PERS, OP&F, and HPRS information based on calendar year ending 12/31/2025.

Ohio Retirement Study Council
30 East Broad St., 2nd Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Bethany Rhodes

Phone: 614-228-1346
Fax: 614-228-0118
E-mail: info@orsc.org
www.orsc.org

Ohio Retirement Study Council

Function of the Ohio Retirement Study Council

FY 2025* (updated 2026)

Voting Members

Representatives
Adam Bird, Chairman
Sean Brennan
Phil Plummer

Senators
Mark Romanchuk, Vice-Chair
Willis Blackshear
Bill Blessing

Governor's Appointees
Lora Miller
Dr. Anthony Podojil
Gary Scherer

Background

The Ohio Retirement Study Council (ORSC) was created in 1968 to assist the state legislature, governor, and other public officials in the formation of sound public pension policy and is one of the oldest public oversight councils in the country.

The general purpose of the Council is to advise and inform the state legislature and other elected officials on all matters relating to the benefits, funding, investment, and administration of the five statewide retirement systems in Ohio: the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS), covering all state and local government workers; the State Teachers Retirement System (STRS), covering teachers at public schools, colleges, and universities; the School Employees Retirement System (SERS), covering non-teaching school employees; the Police and Fire Pension Fund (OP&F), covering full-time police officers and firefighters; and the State Highway Patrol Retirement System (HPRS), covering state troopers. In addition, the Council provides legislative oversight of the Ohio Public Safety Officers Death Benefit Fund which is a state-funded program providing death benefits and health care to the survivors of law enforcement and public safety officers killed in the line of duty, and the Volunteer Fire Fighters' Dependents Fund which is a program providing benefits to disabled volunteer firefighters and their survivors. The Cincinnati Retirement System is the only municipal retirement system in Ohio and falls outside the jurisdiction of the Council.

ORSC was created in response to financial crises involving local police and fire pension funds. Prior to 1967 police and firefighters were members of local pension funds rather than a statewide fund. In the mid-1960's, many of Ohio's 454 local police and fire pension funds faced financial disaster. They had routinely disregarded the financial impact of benefit increases and, as a result, many were close to financial insolvency. Consequently, they were consolidated into a statewide fund in 1967. At that time, the local pension funds transferred assets totaling approximately $75 million to the Ohio Police and Fire Pension Fund and accrued liabilities of approximately $490 million. The cities were given a 67-year period, beginning in 1969, to pay their unfunded accrued liabilities. As of December 31, 2025, the remaining unfunded accrued liability totaled nearly $12.5 million.

Because of this financial crisis, the General Assembly realized there was a need for continuing oversight of the state pension funds to ensure they remained financially solvent unlike the local police and fire pension funds. The creation of the ORSC was a direct result of the consolidation of those funds.

Legislators are accustomed to dealing in two-year budgetary cycles, whereas decisions about public pension plans typically involve significant long-term costs, such as 30-year pension obligations. If not made carefully and with foresight, such decisions can seriously threaten the budgetary stability of state and local governments years later when the pension obligations become due. They can also result in an unfair burden on future generations of taxpayers and adversely affect the credit rating of the state or local government's debt.

Merits

There are several merits of Ohio's permanent pension oversight council. First, pensions are an increasingly complex subject area requiring a degree of expertise and knowledge. Second, pension laws demand continuous supervision and attention. A single retirement bill could have serious unintended fiscal consequences that are not fully recognized for many years. Third, there is a need for continuity of policy based on sound pension principles rather than special interests. Change of policy should always be possible, but it should be accompanied by knowledge of the past. Fourth, permanent pension councils can apply consistent policy to retirement bills. A great deal of pension law grows by patchwork, yielding in time to favoritism and special interests in the absence of consistent application of sound public policy. Finally, legislative term limits make the establishment of permanent pension councils essential if legislators are to have an independent source of information to help them place retirement issues in the widest possible context of public policy.

Statutory Duties

The Ohio Revised Code mandates that the Council perform the following statutory duties:

1) Make an impartial review from time to time of all laws governing the public retirement systems and make