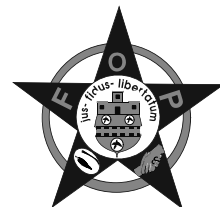


Associate's Newsletter



WINTER 2005

Welcome to the Associate's Newsletter.

The Associate's Newsletter is a quarterly publication of the Fraternal Order of Police, Ohio Labor Council. Information contained herein is suitable for posting on all FOP/OLC bulletin boards.

RETIREMENT HEALTH SAVINGS PLAN-IS IT FOR YOU?

With the rising cost of health care to employers and employees alike, higher deductibles and co-pays are cutting into member's disposable retirement income. One response to increased cost has been the establishment of retirement health savings plans, which allow employees to set aside an amount of their income in pre-tax dollars, invest the funds in a vehicle of their choosing, and withdraw from the account for medical expenses and not pay taxes on the amount withdrawn.

One such plan has received the endorsement of the National Fraternal Order of Police. The ICMA Retirement Corporation has worked with the FOP to fashion a plan that suits the needs of FOP and affiliated members. Essentially, here's how the program works:

A Lodge (or FOP affiliated bargaining unit) must vote to participate in the plan. The Ohio Labor Council has adopted the plan, thus making all OLC members eligible to participate. Not all members of the Lodge (or bargaining unit) must actually participate in the plan, but the plan must have the endorsement of the lodge. Members will individually enroll in the plan and determine their own level of contribution. As with most health care plans, there is an annual "window" during which members may enroll. The member will determine the amount he/she wishes to have deducted from each paycheck, and the amount will be forwarded to ICMA. The member will be given investment options for his/her contributions. All contributions made to the plan, and any accumulated value of the account, are tax free. While the individual may determine the level of contribution, once that level is established, it cannot be changed for three years. There is an option, however, for members to adopt a "laddered" contribution which changes the contribution rate after so many years. The "laddered" rate is spelled out in ICMA brochures.

Members may use the assets of the plan when 1) the member reaches age 45, whether still working or not or 2) the member retires or 3) 30 days after FOP(or OLC) membership is dropped. Assets of the plan may only be used for qualifying medical expenses of the member, spouse or dependent. Reimbursement for medical expenses are made through ICMA and made directly to the member. All reimbursements are tax free.

If the member should die while assets are still held in the account, surviving spouses and dependents may still be reimbursed as long as assets are held in the account. If a spouse or dependent no longer exists, a designated beneficiary may access the account on a taxable basis.

As with all savings investment accounts (IRAs, 401(K)s, there are annual maintenance fees which accompany membership. Check with an ICMA representative for current details.

Why is this information being given in the OLC Associates Newsletter? Contributions to the plan are negotiable with your employers. If a bargaining unit chooses to pursue a Health Retirement Savings Plan check-off from the paycheck, they can also pursue an employer contribution to the plan in an employee's name. Since we're dealing with pre-tax dollars, employers may be amenable to making a health savings plan contribution as an alternative to a larger wage increase. For bargaining committees, it may be an option worth pursuing.

TRAINING IMPORTANT TO ASSOCIATES

The Ohio Labor Council has conducted training for bargaining unit associates for many years. The training sessions last all day, with lunch provided. Held throughout the state, training discussions include negotiations, member's rights, grievance processing and any other subject of interest to the attendees.

Knowledge and information is essential to providing leadership on the local level. When members have questions, local Associates either need to have answers or know where to find them. The Labor Council staff has spent years refining the best approach to labor relations in the state. Sharing that experience with Associates provides a flow of information to individual members. Training is the best way to prepare Associates for their leadership positions. With a high turnover of local Associates, training is an ongoing effort.

A training school has been scheduled for State Unit 2 on January 18, 2006 at the Clarion Hotel in Dublin, Ohio.

If you and your bargaining unit would like to have the staff conduct a training session in your part of the state, please notify your staff representative or contact Chet DeLong at 1-800-367-6542. Your membership looks to you for leadership. Be prepared to offer it.

KEEP US INFORMED!

As an Associate for the FOP/Ohio Labor Council, we ask you to perform a number of tasks. One of the most important, but the most over looked is that of keeping us informed. You are probably wondering what I am talking about because you know you keep us informed of any grievances, when you need a labor-management meeting and you and several of your members always inform us when the administration is up to no good. So what's left? How about where we can contact your members? How many have moved in the last 6 months or last year? We have nearly 10,000 members and trust me, they are a very mobile group. You may ask why we don't send mail to the department? For a couple of reasons, one, it is not very personal and two, it is not always reliable.

We need you to remind the membership that if they move, they need to notify us. An example of why it is important is a recent mailing we did to approximately 600 of our members to advise them of free training we were offering. Nearly 70 of the letters came back as undeliverable. That's over 10 percent of the members we were not able to contact. That is also \$24.42 in wasted postage. If we were to do a membership wide mailing and this 10% returned figure held true, that would be nearly \$370 of your money wasted. We don't like doing this and we don't think you want us wasting money either. Please let your members know how important it is to keep us informed of any address changes. You may e-mail changes to kcherry@fopohio.org.

DUES INCREASE FOR 2006

This is to notify you that beginning **January 1, 2006** there will be an increase in Fraternal Order of Police, Ohio Labor Council Inc. dues and fair share fees. The dues rate will be **\$30.50** per month and the fair share rate will be **\$27.76** per month.