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John Cirino, Geauga County Engineer's Office employee

## Retire

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"I don't think that's right — you should be grandfathered in," he said. "With the newly hired, that's different. And if I stayed for 30 years, I'd be 69 when I retired. I'm so far along. I can understand if I only had eight years or something in, but 21 years and you're going to change it, that doesn't feel right. I'm hoping (the state) doesn't pass it."

One of the pension reform pieces of legislation, House Bill 69, is currently in committee. Another bill that will also impact public workers is Senate Bill 5, which potentially could face a referendum vote in November.

If voters don't overturn the law, areas that will be affected include reducing public workers' take-home pay, benefits and collective-bargaining rights, according to a recent Columbus Dispatch article.

Along with the School Employees Retirement System of Ohio fund, the State Teachers Retirement and the Public Employees Retirement systems — Ohio's two biggest — set all-time records for retirement applications, the Dispatch reported.

"This year, we've had a couple of employees in our utilities department that may not have their 30 years in. I think that the point that's really concerning them is the elimination of that 3 percent cost-of-living raise," said county Director of Administrative Services Bill Margalis, who is also Wickliffe mayor. "I think they'd like to see the guarantee of the 3 percent in the future."

While no one has specified to him the possible pension reform and Senate Bill 5 impacts as the reason behind

retirement, Margalis, who also is in charge of human resources for Lake County government, doesn't doubt that has some bearing.

"I'm assuming if they're leaving before their 30 years, it's because of the pending legislation that's out there," he said. "We've had certainly a large amount of retirements happening here in the county since Senate Bill 5 has been introduced and the talk of the (Public Employees Retirement System) changes coming. And not all of them have been because they were here for 30 years, some were between 25 to 30 years."

As for the city of Wickliffe, one employee retired at the end of 2010, but he had already more than 30 years put in, Margalis said.

"I think he probably would have stayed on longer if these changes weren't pending," he said. "He still is able to work, but I think that kind of made his decision happen quicker."

Margalis said he believes amid all the uncertainty, the mentality has been to "get out while you can."

If these proposed pension changes take hold, Cirino said some of his co-workers who have been at the Engineer's Office even longer than he has won't get grandfathered into anything.

"Because they're not of retirement age, nothing is grandfathered in," he said. "The only way they grandfather it in is if you're of retirement age when they implement the new rules, so you could have 25 years or more in and if you're not of the retirement age, you would not be grandfathered into anything."

Gauga County Administrator David Lair said the county has seen more retirements of late, but that can also be attributed to demograph-

# Is it time to retire?

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Cassandra Shofar  
CShofar@News-Herald.com

## Possible pension reform may be causing more retirements

John Cirino stands on the precipice of retirement, but because of possible public pension reform, he may decide to take the plunge early.

The 60-year-old has worked for the Geauga County Engineer's Office for 21 years. He might retire

early if proposed pension reform — which could cut out the 3 percent cost-of-living adjustment for retirees — comes to fruition.

"Cutting out the 3 percent cost-of-living raise is the only thing that's going to affect me," Cirino said.

"I've been there so long and because of my age, everything else I'm grandfathered into, but they won't grandfather me in on that for some reason. I was hoping to retire when I was 62, which would be another year and a half. But I don't know if I'm going

to be able to go that long because it's not worth it for me to stay if they're going to cut that 3 percent out."

Cirino said if he retires before 62, he'll have to likely get another full-time job.

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