

Ohio lawmakers won't take up pension rate hike bill

Laura A. Bischoff
State Bureau | USA TODAY NETWORK

State lawmakers won't give a pension fund covering Ohio's police and firefighters a rate increase but the retirement system leaders promise they'll ask again next year.

Ohio Police & Fire Pension Fund Director Mary Beth Foley called it a "disappointment" that state senators decided against approving legislation that would have increased how much employers are required to pay into the system.

House Bill 296 would've increased the employer contribution rate from 19.5% for police and 24% for firefighters to 24% for both police and firefighters. Employees currently pay 12.25% toward their police and fire pension. The bill called for increasing the employee contribution rate to 12.5%.

But cities, townships and villages that employ police officers said the rate hike would've cost them \$78 million a year and cut into their ability to hire new officers or give pay raises. Local government groups asked

lawmakers to pump the brakes on the proposal, giving time to come up with alternatives.

While the Ohio House approved the bill, Senate leaders signaled they'd rather not rush the decision.

Any bills that don't clear both chambers in the Ohio General Assembly this week will die and would have to be reintroduced next year.

A similar bill introduced last legislative session to shore up the police and fire pension fund failed to pass.

The fund reduced its assumed annual rate of return – how much it expects to make each year off investments – from 8% to 7.5%. That move caused its unfunded liabilities to increase on paper. State law requires the five public pension systems to be able to pay off their liabilities within 30 years. Without either funding increases or benefit cuts, Ohio Police & Fire Pension Fund will likely be out of compliance with the 30-year requirement in the coming years.

Laura Bischoff is a reporter for the USA TODAY Network Ohio Bureau, which serves the Columbus Dispatch, Cincinnati Enquirer, Akron Beacon Journal and 18 other affiliated news organizations across Ohio.



State lawmakers won't give final approval to legislation that would hike employer rates for the retirement system covering police and firefighters. Bills that don't clear both legislative chambers by this week will die. The Ohio Police & Fire Pension Fund leaders said they'll try again next year.

BARBARA J. PERENIC/COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Mixed martial arts fighting coming to Canton Civic Center

Ed Balint
Canton Repository | USA TODAY NETWORK

CANTON – Mixed martial arts fighters will square off Saturday night at the Canton Memorial Civic Center in the Hall of Fame Fights.

Caged Thunder is presenting the event.

Tickets start at \$35 and are available at <https://www.ticketmaster.com/> by searching for Hall of Fame Fights in Canton.

Doors open one hour before the 6 p.m. event at the downtown venue, 1101 Market Ave. N.

Both professional and amateur fighters from the region will be featured.

Hall of Fame Fights is also hosting the culmination

of the 2024 Caged Thunder Cup series.

Hall of Fame Fights features Canton, Massillon brawlers

The main event features Northeast Ohio's "The Relentless" Alonzo Turner (6-1) facing Canada's Xavier "Spartacus" Nash (9-8) in the CT (Caged Thunder) professional welterweight division.

The co-main event features Richfield's Dusty "The Warrior" Shaffer (2-1) facing "The Mexican Muscle" Antonio Castillo Jr. (16-18) of Massillon in the professional featherweight division.

Other professional bouts include Dom Johns (0-3) of Coshocton taking on "America's Dread Head" KO

Butler (2-5) of Canton in the CT professional middleweight class.

Several other fights are on the card, including former CT amateur welterweight champion Brogan Endres (4-3) taking on McKinley High alum Omoyele "KillSwitch" Gonzalez (4-3) in the CT professional welterweight division.

Cody "The Warrior" Wilson (4-1) faces Luke McMurry of Canton (6-2) for the vacant bantamweight Caged Thunder amateur championship.

Hall of Fame Fights also will be broadcast and streamed pay-per-view at <https://cagedthundermma.com/> via Combat Sports Now.

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