



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release
Sept. 14, 2016

Court says it lacks jurisdiction in prison farm case; union vows to fight

Westerville – The union representing the state prison farm workers today received an order dismissing their case regarding the farm closures. Despite the OCSEA’s adamant arguments otherwise, Franklin County Court of Common Pleas Judge Holbrook determined that the subject of an Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) is the same as the matter before the court and, therefore, the court lacks jurisdiction in the case.

The union’s ULP filed with the State Employee Relations Board asks that the Ohio Dept. of Rehabilitation and Correction bargain with the union over the prison farm layoff. The union’s court filing requested the court prevent DR&C from selling off farm assets until *after* the union and DR&C arbitrate a pending grievance.

The ULP is still pending before the State Employee Relations Board and is expected to be heard in October. The union has also filed a grievance under their contract with the State of Ohio.

“We are disappointed, but believe this is still a strong case. We will continue to fight the prison farm closures using every means at our disposal,” said OCSEA Presidents Christopher Mabe. “The sale has been a taxpayer rip-off from the very beginning, especially given the massive investment of money, people and resources in the farm operations.” A recent auction of dairy farm equipment at London Correctional Institution brought in just pennies on the dollar for some brand new equipment.

“The administration couldn’t get Senate Bill 5 passed, so they’re trying to undermine our rights in other ways,” said Shawn Gruber, Corrections Assembly President for the union. “Refusing to bargain with us on a layoff, is one of those things they tried to get under SB 5,” he said. “We aren’t going to stand for it.”

The Ohio Civil Service Employees Association sought an injunction from the court in an effort to protect the rights of the affected employees the union represents. Under the OCSEA collective bargaining agreement with the state, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction is required to give appropriate notice and to bargain with the union when a closure is announced. In addition, it must provide the union with a rationale explaining the reasons for the closure, all of which DR&C has failed to do.

The union is planning an event in Mansfield to protest the auction of the state’s beef cattle in October.

OCSEA represents approximately 30,000 state and local government employees who work in a wide range of security, regulatory, administrative, direct care, maintenance, customer service and other

positions. OCSEA represents 8,600 employees in DR&C. For more information, contact Sally Meckling, 614-865-2602 or 614-404-3881 (cell).