



## NEWS RELEASE

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# Public employee unions wear red to show unity, common ground with opposition groups

WESTERVILLE – Hundreds of members of the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association descended on the Ohio Statehouse for day three of testimony against Senate Bill 5. The bill makes significant changes to local government and school employees' ability to bargain for wages and benefits, and completely wipes out those rights for State of Ohio employees.

Public employees from all over Ohio wore red shirts with the words "NO to SB 5" to show their unity against the bill. "We are wearing red to show we are united in this fight and also to send a message to the Tea Party that we have more in common with them than they realize," said Eddie Parks, President of OCSEA. "We are middle class just like they are, and like them, we are just trying to make a decent living, raise our families and have a better life. We invite them to join us in building better communities and strengthening the middle class."

Several representatives from OCSEA provided testimony today to the Senate Insurance, Commerce and Labor Committee in an effort to separate the myths from the realities about the collective bargaining law.

OCSEA Chief of Staff Carol Bowshier, herself a former state employee and a 26-year veteran with OCSEA, said the notion that employees have not made adjustments to declining revenues is absurd, citing that: "For the period of 2009 to 2012, state employees have willingly accepted \$238 million dollars in compensation losses alone. And, during the same period, OCSEA's active participation in value-based health care plan redesign will have saved the State of Ohio another \$100 million dollars."

Bowshier said the notion that state government is bloated is another myth not supported by the reality in Ohio. "The fact is that Ohio state government is lean. In recent census data, Ohio ranks 44 out of 50 states in the number of state workers per 10,000 residents. Ohio employs 124 state workers per 10,000 population, lower than all but six states. And we currently have the lowest number of state employee since 1983."

Also testifying was Jean Fightmaster, an OCSEA retiree and long-time employee of the Bureau of Workers Compensation. Fightmaster said repeal of "collective bargaining" would "turn back the clock," not to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and recalled stories of blatant discrimination against women and minorities before the bill passed.

Other OCSEA members came forward to discuss the value they provide to Ohio taxpayers and how collective bargaining has enhanced their performance on the job. Mike Sherron, a Site Coordinator and Emergency Responder for Ohio EPA said: "Every day, the employees I work with at Ohio EPA protect the state's resources, ensure the success of multi-million dollar cleanups, and provide locations for companies to develop or expand their businesses, all of which make dramatic improvements in our communities."

Others OCSEA members who testified about the vital services they provide are: Larry Cremeens, a military veteran who works as a Customer Service Representative helping veterans and unemployed workers find jobs, and Joan Hunter, a Correction Officer at the Dayton Correctional Institution.

*OCSEA represents approximately 34,000 state employees who work in a wide range of security, regulatory, administrative, direct care, maintenance, customer service and other positions. For more information, contact Sally Meckling, 614-865-2602 or 614-404-3881 (cell).*