



NEWS RELEASE

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Public Employees: “Where’s our seat at the table?”

Thousands of OCSEA members converged on the Statehouse today asking lawmakers to slow down the process and give public employees a seat at the table regarding a proposal to completely repeal collective bargaining rights for state workers in Ohio.

“We have been shut out of this process from the introduction of this bill,” said OCSEA President Eddie L. Parks. “No one came to us and said, ‘Let’s sit down and talk about this.’”

Public workers appealed to the Senate by signing thousands of “witness slips” to give them a chance to testify against the bill. Chair of the Insurance, Commerce and Labor Committee, Kevin Bacon, has held just one hearing allowing opponents to speak. Today’s hearing will be the second held for opponents. However, Chairman Bacon is only allowing testimony by those who had previously contacted his office last week.

“And now they’re trying to rush through a bill that will have devastating affect on over 300,000 Ohioans and countless businesses,” said Parks. “This is not something that should be rushed through without stakeholder input.”

Legislation like Senate Bill 5 is being used as a vehicle to blame public employees all across the country, for budget problems that are not their fault.

“I’m not sure how Ohio’s budget crisis got put on public employees’ shoulders,” said Marysville Reformatory for Women Correction Officer Tim Roberts. “There is no correlation between the budget and Senate Bill 5. Even the bill’s sponsor, Sen. Shannon Jones, admitted that in testimony last week.”

A recent study by the Economic Policy Institute concluded that states with or without collective bargaining agreements are suffering from the same budget shortfalls; there is no difference.

“In fact, if the state fired every state employee, including the governor, prison guards, state highway patrolmen, it would only save a little over \$2 billion of the state’s \$8 billion shortfall,” said Roberts. “And, then who would be left to protect our towns, guard the prisons, plow roads and teach our children? No one.”

OCSEA has worked with the state to save \$250 million in its current contract alone and state workers have willingly taken five pay cuts in nine years. Major changes in health care over the current contract included increased co-pays and out-of-pocket maximums, spousal surcharges and, most recently, a move to a one-vendor plan starting in July.

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).