



For immediate release
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Union leaders disappointed at YES vote on SB 5, vow to keep fighting

WESTERVILLE – Leaders of the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association are vowing to continue to fight legislation that will eliminate most of the bargaining rights state employees and other public workers currently have under Ohio Revised Code 4117, after the Ohio Senate passed the bill today on a 17-16 vote.

OCSEA leaders are not only disappointed with the vote, but denounced the entire process of speeding such a far-reaching bill through the Senate in just three weeks. In fact, a 99-page substitute bill released yesterday never even had a hearing, nor were questions entertained during a brief committee meeting when the revisions were released.

“This is unconscionable, to have no valid discussion of this bill and then to ignore the voices of hundreds of thousands of Ohioans, who oppose it. We have been shut out, but we will not shut up,” said OCSEA Pres. Eddie L. Parks. “We refuse to be silenced. The vote today will just mean our voices will be raised even louder tomorrow.”

Under the bill as it was originally proposed, state employees had no collective bargaining rights at all. But under pressure from OCSEA members across Ohio who called and visited Senators almost daily, an announcement was made allowing state workers to bargain for wages only. Then, in the substitute billed offered yesterday, bargaining for a very limited number of terms and conditions for state employees was restored.

However, those changes came with a price, concluded OCSEA leaders. “This is the definition of bait and switch,” said Parks. “While they claim we can bargain, the increase in management rights and other provisions that fine us for striking or that allow the State to open up our contract during fiscal emergencies, defeat the purpose of bargaining altogether.”

“Taken altogether, the amendments take away far more than they give,” said Parks. “The changes continue to leave all control at the top and the unions no chance to make any difference at the bargaining table. Now, the bill makes criminals out of public employees, and slaps them with a fine, firing and even jail time if they participate in a strike. It also gives the legislature final decision-making power in any contract disputes and allows the state to declare a fiscal emergency and unilaterally open up union contracts mid-stream.”

The union is gearing up to fight a similar bill in the Ohio House of Representatives.

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.

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