

OCSEA

OHIO
CIVIL
SERVICE
EMPLOYEES
ASSOCIATION

PUBLIC EMPLOYEE MAGAZINE

AFSCME LOCAL 11/AFL-CIO
Volume 83, No. 2 • Spring 2026



OCSEA Members

Stand Strong

in the face of adversity

**Newly-added
Discount College
benefit!** SEE PAGE 11

→

OCSEA members negotiate the first state contract in 1986.



Taking a Stand to Protect 40 Years of Collective Bargaining

This year marks 40 years since OCSEA bargained and ratified its first union contract under Ohio Collective Bargaining Law. After embarking on one of the largest organizing drives in union history, OCSEA emerged as one of the lead labor organizations and voices of Ohio public workers on the job.

The 1986 contract marked the first time that state employees—32,000 across Ohio at the time—had the right to bargain a comprehensive collective bargaining agreement that would govern every aspect of their working lives. This accomplishment was the result of immense foresight and a five-decades-long effort by OCSEA, AFSCME and its allies in the fight for workers’ rights in Ohio.

Over the past 40 years, OCSEA, a member-driven labor organization, has grown and built its main state contract and benefits—well beyond what our founders likely even imagined. **But it is also not lost on us that our right to collectively bargain could be gone with the stroke of one Governor’s pen.** With the election of an anti-union, government-cutting, and profit-over-workers Governor and State Legislature, collective bargaining and public union contracts as we know it could be gone.

Does that sound far-fetched? Not for our union brothers and sisters who work for the federal government who have been fighting an onslaught of attacks since January 2025. “They have been gutting agencies, where they can, and attacking union workers and their

missions, agency by agency,” said **Dave Cann**, the Director of Membership and Organizing for the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), which represents more than 800,000 union members. Over the past year and a half, the Trump administration has fired union members, abolished dues deduction and union leave time, excluded entire agencies from collective bargaining and sought to de-certify union contracts.

Cann was a guest speaker for the OCSEA Leadership Training this spring, and he had a warning for our members: “The same target that was on our backs a year ago could be coming for Ohio employees as well. They’ve stated that they have plans like this for state government. Some of the people that were the engineers and architects of what the federal government is experiencing are candidates for office in Ohio,” he said. Of course, that’s a reference to Vivek Ramaswamy, the Republican candidate for Ohio Governor, who worked with Elon Musk in the early days of the Department



“They have been gutting agencies where they can, and attacking union workers...”

- DAVE CANN, AFGE



“I take this very seriously, and I don’t like the things they are trying to do.”

- JANICE PARKER, CHAP. 2570

of Government Efficiency, better known as DOGE. The blatant attacks, straight out of the Project 2025 playbook, sought to dismantle parts of the federal government through mass layoffs and attacking federal employee unions.

“I take this very seriously, and I don’t like the things they are trying to do,” OCSEA activist

Janice Parker said after listening to Cann talk about the attacks on collective bargaining rights for federal public employees. Parker, a Construction Project Specialist 2 for the Ohio Facility’s Construction Commission and Vice President of Chapter 2570, says this is the most important election she has seen in her lifetime for the state of Ohio. Parker

said she comes from a family of public servants and added, “I truly believe we have to come together to gain the power back, to take it back from them.”

With negotiations beginning later this year on a new state contract, a lot depends on who becomes Ohio’s next Governor. **Bryan Weaver**, the President of Montgomery Chapter 5700 and an Infrastructure Specialist 2 with Public Safety/Ohio State Highway Patrol, agrees that the November election will be consequential for public employees, especially with Ramaswamy on the ballot. “I was always told as a kid that a rising tide lifts all ships. If we have an elected leader who is only concerned about the biggest ships in the water and is okay with other people running aground, then we are going to fail—not only as a state but also as a nation,” Weaver said.

What’s the strategy for surviving these attacks on public sector labor unions? Cann from AFGE says the answer is something OCSEA has taken to heart for a long time—and that’s mobilizing and engaging members to push back effectively together.

VOTING OUR JOBS is how we make real progress for working people! This means prioritizing the issues that impact us as union members—in the workplace, at the bargaining table, at home, and in the communities that we serve as public employees.

If we’ve seen anything at all this past year, it’s that those with political power can and will eliminate public jobs and services AND public collective bargaining agreements quicker than they can give a billionaire a tax break.

Read more on the next column about how you, as a union activist, can get involved in the fight this year. This includes activism within the constraints of the law, especially for public employees covered by the Little Hatch Act. □



BRYAN WEAVER, CHAP. 5700

IT’S YOUR DEMOCRACY. PARTICIPATE IN IT!

*As public employees, you CAN be involved in political activities. This is your American Democracy too, and there’s a lot you can do to make a difference. But there are a few rules public employees must follow to stay on the right side of Ohio’s Little Hatch Act.**

WHAT YOU CAN DO UNDER THE LITTLE HATCH ACT



- Run for a non-partisan office at the local level.
- Engage in member-to-member communication regarding a political candidate.
- Campaign for an issue.
- Be a Poll Worker.
- Urge others to register to vote or to vote early.
- Wear a button to work—or outside work (See your agency’s dress code), put a bumper sticker on your car., and place signs in your yard supporting a candidate or issue.
- Participate IN ANY WAY upon retirement.

WHAT YOU CAN’T DO UNDER THE LITTLE HATCH ACT



- Run for partisan political office.
- Participate in “non-labor-to-labor” phone banks and door-to-door canvassing.
- Donate to a candidate’s campaign or do fundraising if you work for the candidate (e.g., Attorney General).
- Stump or speak out publicly for a particular candidate.
- Do literature drops at the workplace in support of a candidate.
- Wear a t-shirt at work endorsing a candidate.
- Circulate a petition to get a candidate on the ballot.
- Campaign on social media for a candidate or a political party on work time or in your capacity as a public employee.



Get election resources at
OCSEAVotes.org



*Ohio’s Little Hatch Act restricts the activity of classified public employees and was passed by Ohio to prevent public officials from making promises of employment or promotion due to a person’s political party or affiliation. Employees who violate this law could face discipline up to and including removal. ORC: 123:1-46-02 & 124.57

ASSAULTED ON THE JOB

THE STAFFING CRISIS AT INDIAN RIVER

Kim King doesn't have any memory of being brutally assaulted two months ago at Indian River, the Dept. of Youth Services facility in Massillon. Kim, who's a member of Chapter 7330 and a Sergeant at the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility, had volunteered to work overtime at Indian River because the DYS facility is chronically understaffed.

"I was walking [a youth inmate] down the hallway back to his room, and the next thing I know I wake up in an office, surrounded by staff, telling me that they got me and that I was assaulted," King said. She had been knocked unconscious by an incarcerated youth who stole her keys and unlocked cell doors, which led to other youth also being assaulted. It took four minutes for help to arrive because Kim was working alone in a unit where there are supposed to be two officers—a staffing and safety failure that is commonplace at Indian River.

Kim has worked for 18 years at SOCF in Lucasville, a correctional facility that houses some of the most dangerous adult inmates in Ohio. She says the risks are higher for staff at Indian River. "I feel safer walking into my job [at SOCF] than each time I walked into DYS, basically, because I knew we had security and safety measures in place, along with I know our response is seconds to get to any situation," she said.

DYS Chap. 7660 President Davion Thomas is interviewed by a reporter outside the Indian River DYS facility.



"What happened to Kim was egregious. It was brutal," said **Davion Thomas**, a Juvenile Correction Officer (JCO) at Indian River and the President of Chapter 7660. Unfortunately, Kim is not the only staff member assaulted recently at Indian River. In fact, another officer was attacked the same weekend as Kim. Following the assaults, OCSEA staff toured the facility and found all the units staffed by only one JCO (Juvenile Corrections Officer), a clear violation of safety protocols.

Indian River has a long history of violent attacks on staff and youth at the facility. In October 2022, there was a nearly 12-hour standoff when some youth barricaded themselves into a building. And early this year, a teenager was paralyzed after a fight involving another youth.

OCSEA says enough is enough and is calling for a change of leadership at the top of DYS.

"Staff want to do their jobs the right way and go home safe at the end of their shifts," Thomas said. "And at the same time, the youth also deserve a stable and structured environment that actually supports the rehabilitation process." DYS stopped the transfer of more youth into Indian River for the Month of April. But Thomas says that's only temporary relief and doesn't solve the underlying concerns about staffing levels and safety procedures.



This photo was taken a day after Kim King was assaulted.

“I WORRY SOMEBODY’S GOING TO BE KILLED UP THERE.”

- KIM KING, SOCF CHAP. 7330

While Kim King recovers from being assaulted, she's concerned about the ongoing safety of her union brothers and sisters still working at Indian River, "I worry that somebody's going to be killed up there." In the meantime, corrections officers from DRC continue volunteering to help fill the staffing gaps at the troubled facility, and OCSEA keeps fighting to protect its members. □

Scan QR code to read all current news related to Indian River



KNOW YOUR RESOURCES



OHIO CRIME VICTIMS COMPENSATION

HELPING VICTIMS RECOVER

In the event that you are an innocent victim of a violent crime, financial assistance may be available through the Ohio Attorney General's Office. OCSEA members who are assaulted on the job can apply for this compensation.

The **Crime Victims Compensation Program** aims to help make victims whole by reimbursing expenses incurred as a result of the crime. These may include:

- *Medical costs*
- *Counseling for immediate family members of victims of homicide, sexual assault or domestic violence*
- *Lost wages*
- *Costs incurred by family members of homicide victims to attend criminal proceedings*
- *Financial support for dependents of homicide victims*
- *Funeral and burial proceedings*

All instructions and criteria for filing a claim can be found at **OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/Victim**, or by scanning the QR code to the right.



SCAN HERE

New Leadership, New Opportunities

CHRISTOPHER MABE, OCSEA President

The challenges we face as a public sector union never go away. But there is something that has helped us weather many storms over the years, and that's strong leadership in our union. We've been lucky to have tough and resilient leaders throughout OCSEA's history. People like **Ron Alexander** and **Jean Fightmaster** set a high standard for union activists. Now, I'm excited about the newest addition to our leadership team.

In January, **Cynthia Watiker** took over as OCSEA's Vice President, replacing **Rocky Jolly** who retired after many years of dedicated service to our union. Rocky is a tough act to follow. He served with distinction in numerous roles for OCSEA, and we wish him well in retirement.



Chris Mabe and Cynthia Watiker attend Leadership Training in February.

Many of you have gotten to know Cynthia from her work on the OCSEA Board of Directors and as President of Franklin County JFS Chapter 2508. She is very passionate about public service and the benefits that unions can provide for working families. Through her work as the chair of our Future of Work Committee, Cynthia has been leading our efforts to prepare for the challenges and opportunities that new technology will bring to our workplaces. She is committed to developing and mentoring our next generation

of leaders, and I encourage you to read more about Cynthia on page 7 of this magazine.

Leadership Training

Speaking of leadership, more than 120 members have attended OCSEA leadership trainings so far this year. Their enthusiasm and willingness to learn has been impressive. This year, we expanded the trainings to include not only chapter leaders but also stewards. The three-day training covers many topics ranging from best practices for running a chapter, to how taxes and the state budget impact our jobs.

Leadership training is just one example of how we are growing our union for the future. The conferences we hold throughout the year are another way to learn and get more involved in OCSEA. Check out our weekly E-newsletter for the latest news on conferences and other opportunities for union activism.

Time for change at DYS

If you've been following the news lately, you've probably heard about staff assaults at Indian River, the Dept. of Youth Services facility in Massillon. I personally toured the prison in April, and I can tell you the working conditions there are outrageous. Because of chronic understaffing and gross mismanagement by DYS, assaults on staff and youth have become routine.

Juvenile Correction Officers, and officers from the Dept. of Rehabilitation and Corrections who've volunteered to help alleviate the staff shortage, are being forced to work alone in units housing more than a dozen incarcerated youth. That should NEVER happen! We've put public pressure on DYS through the media, filed grievances and called for leadership changes at

the top of DYS. We will not stop fighting until the conditions at Indian River improve because our members should be able to do their jobs without the fear of being assaulted.

Member outreach

Over the next several months we will be reaching out to members as we prepare for a pivotal year. We are nearing the last year of our state contact which expires in February 2027. That means it won't be long before bargaining begins on our next contract. OCSEA staff have started calling members to find out what you think our priorities should be. If you receive a phone call from OCSEA, please answer it and take a moment to answer a few questions. In the meantime, check your MyOCSEA account to make sure your contact information is up to date. The feedback we receive from these calls helps our bargaining team better represent your interests.

November election

When it comes to representing your interests, there's something else this fall that is critically important. In November Ohio will be electing a new Governor and other statewide office holders. This is an opportunity to pick our next boss—the person who decides who sits across the bargaining table from us.

OCSEA and Ohio's other AFSCME affiliates have endorsed Amy Acton for Governor because she supports organized labor and respects our work as public employees. That's in stark contrast to her opponent, Vivek Ramaswamy, who's called Ohio workers lazy and mediocre. Stay tuned for details on how you can get involved in GOTV to help elect a leader who cares about public service. □

OCSEA
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Ohio Civil Service
Employees Association



AFSCME

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VICE PRESIDENT
SECRETARY-TREASURER

Christopher Mabe
Cynthia Watiker
Kathleen M. Gersper

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District 1: Nachael Church (DBH), Sue Sekel (Civil Rights Commission)

District 2: Tim Runyon (DR&C), *vacancy*

District 3: Raymond Harker (DR&C), Jackie Stuckert (ODJFS)

District 4: Annie Pleasant-Combs (ODJFS), Eric Kusky (DR&C)

District 5: Doug Korba (DR&C), Jennifer Wolfe (DODD)

District 6: Deena Gray (Attorney General), Marcus Harris (DBH), Natalie Qualls (Development), Karen Ryther (OOD), Leslie Tilton (DR&C), Melissa Yank (BWC), Donna Howard (Public Safety), Damon Neal (ODJFS), Matthew Tyack (Industrial Commission), *Christina Wilcox (DAS)*

District 7: Deborah Weaver (DODD), Sherry Little (BWC)

District 8: Tom Dearth (DR&C), Jason Underhill (DBH)

District 9: Jeff Condo (OVH), April Duckworth (DR&C)

Retiree Representative: Ron Alexander

OCSEA HEADQUARTERS:
390 Worthington Road, Ste. A,
Westerville, OH 43082

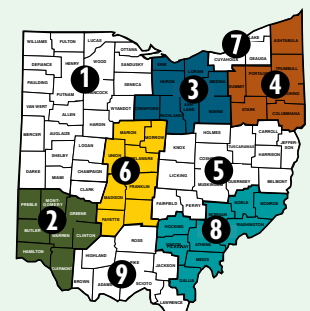
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OCSEA Districts

Meet Cynthia Watiker, OCSEA's new Vice President

Cynthia Watiker became OCSEA's Vice President in January when Rocky Jolly retired. Watiker has been a respected leader in the union for many years serving as President of Chapter 2508 and as a member of the OCSEA Board of Directors. As she begins her new leadership role, we asked her a few questions for this edition of the *Public Employee Magazine*.



Why did you decide to pursue a career in public service?

After graduating from The Ohio State University with a degree in communications, I was at a point in my life of 'what do I do next?' I had decided I did not want to go into broadcasting or journalism. My father worked for the City of Columbus for many years and served as a judge, so I decided to go to work for Franklin County and put my communications skills to use there. I started at Franklin County Children's Services and eventually went to work for Franklin County Job and Family Services. I like helping people, and I saw there was a need to communicate with the public and I was able to do that. I've now spent 23 years in public service.

You mentioned your father Guy Reece worked for the city of Columbus and served as a judge. What lessons did you learn from your parents to help you be a union leader?

Growing up as a "military brat", I definitely saw discipline being a strong factor in my dad's character because in the military, you have rules to follow. Another big thing my dad instilled in me is to always have a goal and a plan, so I tend to be that way, and I think that translates to being in a union and working to help our members. I lost my biological mother Lorraine at the age of 20. It was a sudden loss. My mom was just the most compassionate person I knew. So, my ability to have empathy and be compassionate is something I got from my mom. My stepmom Shirley, who's been my stepmother for 25 years, has also been a big influence on my life. She's very savvy. I'm a product of all three of them, and I bring that experience to the union.

You graduated from the Harvard Trade Union Program. What did you gain from that experience?

The Harvard Trade Union Program has been around for nearly 90 years. Since the program's inception, it has taken leaders from various labor unions and organizations, and it's given them a strong foundation in leadership and responsibility. I had the opportunity to meet and learn from union brothers and sisters from across the country. We became friends and still keep in touch. The program has courses in all types of things including politics, government and finance. It's a good blend of information to strengthen your leadership skills to help your union and community.

What are your priorities in your new role as Vice President of OCSEA?

Having served as a board member and chapter president, I want to take that experience and help more of our members become leaders. I look forward to working with our state board, our chapters and staff to grow the next generation of activists. That's how we will continue to build our union and ensure we have fair and equitable jobs in state and local governments across Ohio. I grew up believing in organized labor, and I've seen how a union benefits the family and household. My two daughters had opportunities and blessings because of the union, and it's important to me that other people experience that as well.



Saluting Vice President Jolly on his retirement

After years of dedicated service, leadership, and unwavering commitment to working people, OCSEA Vice President **Gerard "Rocky" Jolly** retired from State of Ohio service in January and stepped down from his position of Vice President.

Brother Jolly, a union activist with The Ohio State School For The Blind, was first elected Vice President in August 2019 and was reelected in 2023. For nearly three decades, he has held many positions within the union including Ohio State School For The Blind Chapter 2529 President, District 6 President, OCSEA Board of Directors member, and a Board Trustee for the Union Education Trust (UET) and Union Benefits Trust (UBT). Rocky was a pillar of the collaborative Combined Charitable Campaign (CCC) throughout his state career, including serving as its state co-chair during the duration of his time as Vice President.

Jolly's impact can't be measured just in years served, but in the countless members he stood up for, the contracts he helped secure, and the strength he brought to our union every single day. We wish him luck as he settles into retirement. □

Member Spotlight: Lena Kise

MCI Corrections Officer beats the odds



Lena Kise (far right) with her husband, Joey, and their family.

Lena Kise, a Correction Officer at the Marion Correctional Institution and a member of MCI Chapter 5110, remembers the moment she was diagnosed with colon cancer. “I just wanted to see my daughters get married. I don’t know why that’s the first thing that crossed my mind was them in a wedding dress. And I hadn’t gotten to experience that,” Lena said.

That life-altering moment happened in July 2018. Lena had not been feeling well for a few weeks when doctors diagnosed her with Stage 4 colon cancer, meaning that the cancer had spread to her liver. What followed was 28 rounds of radiation treatment and eight rounds of chemotherapy at The Ohio State University’s James Cancer Hospital. “It’s just so overwhelming,” she said. “Every day, it was like, am I going to die today?”

The five-year survival rate for Stage 4 colon cancer is just 15 percent. Not only did Lena beat the odds, but she also returned to her public service job in January 2022 after spending more than three years on medical leave. “I wanted to finish what I started, and I didn’t want cancer to win. And it was kind of my way of fighting back and getting my life back,” she said on returning to work.

Lena credits doctors at OSU for saving her life: “I think I was in the right place at the right time with the right doctors,” she said. She is also incredibly grateful for the support she received from her family of union members at MCI. Some of them offered to donate leave time, and a prison bake sale raised \$1,800 in donations. OCSEA also helped Lena keep her seniority when she returned to work. “We all work together, and we don’t realize how big of a family we are here until

something like this happens,” she said with gratitude.

Brian Miller, the President of MCI Chapter 5110, calls Lena an inspiration and a pleasure to work with. “Watching her fight through such a difficult battle and come out the other side has only deepened the respect and admiration I have for her,” Miller said. “Her strength, resilience and determination is truly remarkable, and we’re all better for having her as part of our team.”

When Lena was diagnosed at 48 years old, the recommended age to start colonoscopy screenings was 50. But, with cancer rates rising, the age for screenings has been lowered to 45 for those with an average risk of cancer. Individuals with a family history of cancer should start even sooner. With that in mind, Lena has a message for all her OCSEA sisters and brothers: “If you’re eligible for colon screening, you should get one. It’s [cancer] out there; it’s happening to a lot more younger people,” she said.

With retirement planned for next January 2027, Lena’s life has come full circle. She’s a grandma now looking forward to becoming a full-time “nana.” And this June, she will watch her youngest daughter Sarah get married, fulfilling a dream that helped motivate her during a grueling battle with cancer. “You’d be surprised what you can do. It’s the will to survive,” she said. □



“I wanted to finish what I started, and I didn’t want cancer to win. And it was kind of my way of getting my life back.”

- MCI CHAP. 5110 MEMBER LENA KISE ON RETURNING TO WORK



Scan QR code for colorectal cancer resources





Congratulations to our 2026 OCSEA Leadership Training graduates!

OCSEA Leadership Trainings build future of the union

More than 120 union leaders and activists have attended three OCSEA Leadership Trainings held in the first few months of 2026. This year, the training was expanded to include not only chapter leaders but also union stewards to go through the three rigorous days of learning, networking and team building. Intimate, hands-on trainings were held in February, March and April.

“The groups have been so engaged. They’ve been excited to learn about the challenges and opportunities we face as a union, and they’re taking back knowledge that will help them become stronger leaders and to grow stronger chapters,” said OCSEA President **Chris Mabe**. “We’re really proud of the leaders they are becoming.”

The curriculum covers a wide range of topics including the state budget, the nuts and bolts of running a successful chapter and recent attacks on union members who work for the federal government.

Yessica Garcia, a training coordinator for ODJFS in the Office of Workforce Development and a member of Erie/Huron Chapter 2201, says attending the training was one of the best decisions that she’s ever made. “I’m meeting a lot of my brothers and sisters in the union, and it’s a good networking opportunity,” said Garcia.

Furthermore, nearly 40 activists attended a two-hour evening Financial and Leadership Training on April 14. In addition to rebates, reporting, forms, minutes and more, the training also covered officer and executive board duties. □

Education



Networking



Team-Building



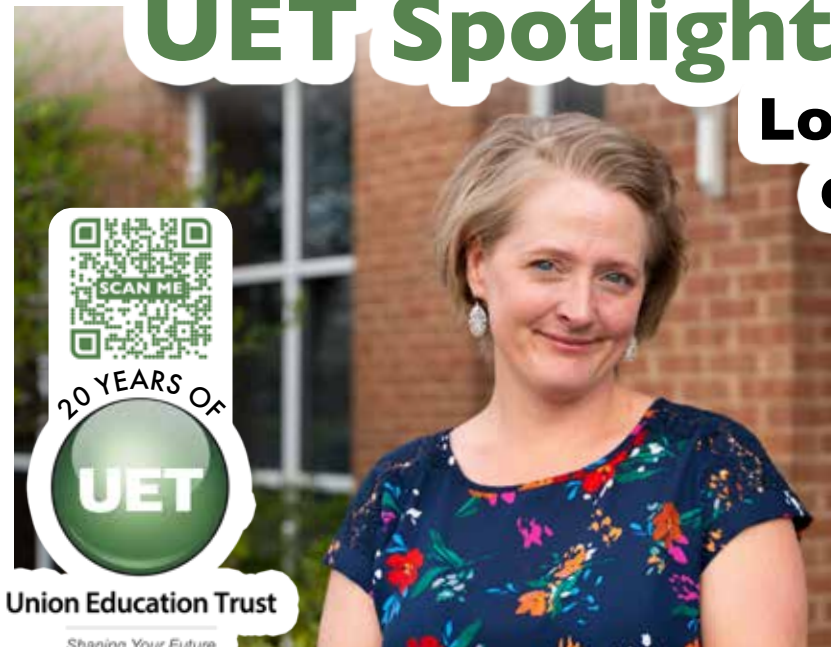
“I’m meeting a lot of my brothers and sisters in the union, and it’s a good networking opportunity.”

– YESSICA GARCIA,
ERIE/HURON CHAP. 2201



UET Spotlight: Laura Woods

Love for lifelong learning drives OCSEA member



“I just want to be a lifelong learner and be curious,” said **Laura Woods**, a union activist with Franklin Chapter 2500 and an Energy Data Analytics Specialist with the Ohio Adjutant General’s. It’s this desire for perpetual learning that has driven Laura to use her union education benefits to the fullest. It has also pushed her to persistently promote the Union Education Trust (UET) to anyone who will listen—especially her union co-workers.

Laura says the union education resources available through the UET help take your educational journey to the next level—no matter where you are in your life. “What are the things that I can learn to help me be a better public servant and be better at my job?” she constantly asks herself—and wants others to ask of themselves too. She says her UET funds have been fundamental in her own public service journey and in improving the skillsets she needs to serve Ohioans and advance the mission of the Ohio National Guard.

“The UET is so accessible and meets you where you are. It really is exciting,” said Laura who has used every program the UET has to offer.

Laura, who began in state service first with the Ohio EPA nearly 13 years ago, says she took advantage of her contractual UET funds early on in her career. She has continued to utilize those funds as a member working at the Adjutant General’s as well.

Laura had earned a PhD in engineering and was hired as a Research Coordinator at the Ohio (EPA) where she found challenges in information access that impacted her duties and ideas. She researched the UET **Career Improvement Program (CIP)** and found she could pursue a master’s degree in information architecture and Knowledge Management completely online from Kent State University. She completed that program, taking 2-3 courses per year, working with her spouse to study while parenting and with advisors to complete the degree requirements. She shares almost all of the coursework has been beneficial to her job performance and service impact.

Additionally, Laura has used the **Computer Application Training (CAT)** program to stay sharp and keep up with new technology, especially as data have moved from paper to digital over her career. “From SQL and SharePoint, the Cloud and data management, the CAT program has been helpful in learning new skills and getting refreshers when I need them,” she said.

Laura says she plans to continue her educational journey through use of the **Professional Enhancement (PE)** program. She has identified professional training from the Association of Electrical Engineers that will help with energy audits and cost conservation throughout the Adjutant General facilities.

Laura says her dedication for public service runs deep, back to her childhood and into her young adult life. “My mother worked in human services back home in Mississippi. Working in TANF, food assistance, Medicaid,” said Laura. How hard her mother worked, for her family and her community, stays with her. And, thankfully, her mother was able to retire from public service with dignity from her career of service and a pension, she says.

“Have something that interests you? Use UET to pursue it. You won’t regret it.”

As a young working student and parent, Laura relied on some public assistance like Medicaid and WIC, but following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, with her baby just ten weeks old and her home destroyed, she relied on help from FEMA and the American Red Cross to get emergency food and housing and other building blocks to start over. “They all helped to get my feet under me as a young parent. I was able to finish school, getting my engineering degree two years later, and make the big steps I needed for my son and me,” she said. She moved to Ohio after earning a scholarship to attend The Ohio State University where she could continue her education. Laura said it was her pursuit of education, love of learning and community support that kept her going. Many of her research team went to work in universities or federal jobs, but Laura said she felt working for the state or county would help her feel closer to the community, helping create policy to help others in her new home state of Ohio.

“My hope is that my journey can be motivating for others, and that they will see what’s so exciting about using UET too. There’s no reason not to. Have something that interests you? Use UET to pursue it. You won’t regret it,” said Laura. □



For OCSEA Members & Families

NEW PARTNER!

UNION COLLEGE BENEFIT EDVANCE



Going back to school shouldn't be this hard. Edvance makes it easier.

Going back to school is often an important step to building a stronger future for yourself and your family, but it also means figuring out things like affordability, scheduling, and school selection.

Edvance makes it easier. They offer OCSEA families access to even more affordable, fully online programs matched to your goals with guidance every step of the way!

If you've thought about going back to school, these questions have probably already crossed your mind:

How can I afford college?	Edvance offers reduced tuition rates - up to 40% off. Combine this with any eligible financial aid or scholarships to save even more.
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Popular programs for OCSEA members & families include **Business Administration, Organizational Leadership, Healthcare Administration, Criminal Justice, IT/Cybersecurity, Social Work/Human Services, Psychology, and more!**

See more education benefits!

Find details on ALL education savings options including Discount College through EBS at OCSEA.org/Extras.



**See what's possible.
It's free to explore!**

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unioncollegebenefit.online/OCSEA



CMCA Chair Sherry Little and Pat Burdock.

Cynthia Watiker, Brian Pearson, Ronald Hickman and Chris Mabe.



Annual OCSEA minority Conference: From Grassroots to Greatness

OCSEA’s annual **Committee on Community and Minority Affairs (CMCA) Conference** was held in early March near Cleveland. Nearly 200 OCSEA members took part in the event which elevated the theme “From Grassroots to Greatness,” discussing the importance of grassroots activism from chapters to the ballot box.

Friday evening, chapter leaders from all over the state participated in basic and advanced steward trainings aimed at building knowledge and contract enforcement skills that protect OCSEA members. “Grassroots starts with our chapters and knowing our rights and helping others to do the same,” said CMCA chair **Sherry Little**, on why the trainings are an important part of OCSEA’s conferences.

Saturday’s session maintained the “grassroots to greatness” theme with informational tables and speakers that inspired and educated attendees on tools to push their own limits on building greatness as union activists.

Brian Pearson, the Executive Secretary for the North Shore AFL-CIO (Cleveland), talked about his journey to greatness in the labor movement, and told attendees that the “first step is showing up. You did that by attending today!” said Pearson.

“I wanted to be a firefighter since I was 5 years old. I was a millennial who came in just after Senate Bill 5. A union card was a real badge of honor,” said Pearson. “Our [Labor] Movement has pulled more folks out of poverty than any policy or politician. The time to find the next generation is now. Ask them to get involved. Leadership means

growing the union’s capacity, not just solving problems but building power,” he said.

Speaker **Ronald Hickman** also talked about the power of leadership. Hickman is the Dean and Ruth M. Anderson Endowed Chair at the Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing at Case Western Reserve University. “Titles don’t save lives, people do. Teamwork does!” said Hickman, stating activism starts with individuals on a collective mission.

“Progress rarely happens without setbacks. Learning is only done through failure,” said Hickman, who has seen public

service through the lens of an ICU Nurse. He encouraged attendees to help open doors for others through grassroots efforts. “Momentum creates opportunity. Opportunity creates possibility. Possibility creates greatness,” he said.

The activism energy was elevated by the event’s final speaker, **Patricia Burdock**, a retired OCSEA activist who continues to shine greatness on her community and got attendees on their feet to inspired music. Burdock works with young women and families in the Cleveland com-

Members of the Community and Minority Affairs Committee put on the CMCA Conference each year.





Members attend Steward Training on the evening before the CMCA Conference.



Member attends first minority conference, reflects on activism



munity through her Exodus Family Foundation, Inc.

“There’s always a fight to be won,” said Burdock who also recalled her activism during SB 5 and within her Cleveland BWC chapter. At one point in her presentation, she brought together seasoned leaders and newer activists to shake hands, look each other in the eye and encouraged them to build power through their joint strength and skills.

OCSEA President **Chris Mabe** ended the conference by urging members to support Dr. Amy Acton for Governor

and other union-friendly candidates by participating in “boots on the ground” efforts. “Each one teach one!” said Mabe, referring to a philosophy of positive change and solutions through sweeping one-on-one conversations with co-workers, family and community members—grassroots at its finest! □

Scan QR code to watch video highlights from the CMCA conference



Members get inspired at the CMCA Conference.



OCSEA activist **Laura Miller** attended her minority conference and is excited to take back as much information as possible to her chapter members. Miller, an OCSEA Public Safety (Ohio State Highway Patrol) union activist with Chapter 7810 says there were some “really awesome” talking points about bringing members into union participation that she hopes to put to work.

“It’s important to attend these events because you can gain all kinds of useful information and stay in touch politically and about anything that could affect your work,” said Miller.

“It’s important to attend these events because you can gain all kinds of useful information and stay in touch politically, and about anything that could affect your work.”

— LAURA MILLER, CHAP. 7810

Miller says she really resonated with the speakers who talked about the power of union engagement, especially Ronald Rickman, an RN and dean at Case Western University. “The second speaker talked about Youngstown Ohio. And, I’m from Warren Ohio, and we are like sister cities. He talked about work ethic, determination and having a routine—small routines can lead to big result in the end,” said Miller. As an U.S. Airforce Veteran, Miller said those ethics are extremely valuable to her and inspired her own work ethic and led her to a career in public service.

Miller was also inspired by the conference Get Out the Vote message: “Get out the vote is important, because what’s on the ballot affects our jobs, and that’s just the short of it; it impacts all of our lives in so many ways. I come from a family that taught us the importance of not only work ethic but political action,” said Miller.

Subordinate Body Meeting & Election Notices

CHAPTER MEETINGS		
BODY	DATES/TIMES	LOCATION
Chapter 200	June 2, Aug. 4 & Oct. 6 - 5:30 p.m.-7 p.m.	IBEW Local 32, 1975 North West St., Lima, OH 45801
Chapter 1820	June 4 & Sept. 17 - 6 p.m.-7 p.m.	June 4 - Parma Exam Station, 12000 Snow Rd., Parma, OH 44130 Sept. 17 - Hwy Patrol Post 18, 5225 W 140th St., Cleveland, OH 44142
Chapter 2320	July 13 & Oct. 19 6:30 p.m. with E-board meeting to follow	The Elks Lodge, 109 South Main St., New Lexington, OH 43764
Chapter 2500	July 16 & Oct. 15 E-Board: 6 p.m.; Meeting: 6:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.	Hybrid and OCSEA - Room 195, 390 Worthington Rd., Westerville OH 43082
Chapter 2503	July 13, Aug. 10 & Oct. 19 - 6:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.	On Zoom: Contact Bmvchaptermeeting@gmail.com to request meeting link.
Chapter 2535	June 17, Aug. 12 & Oct. 7 - Noon-1 p.m.	William Green Building, 30 W. Spring St., Columbus, OH 43215
Chapter 2538	E-Board: July 22 & Oct. 21 - 6:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m. Meetings: July 29 & Oct. 28 - 6:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.	OCSEA - Room 195, 390 Worthington Rd., Westerville, OH 43082
Chapter 2599	E-Board: July 16 & Sept. 17 - 6 p.m.-8 p.m. Meetings: July 23 & Sept. 24 - 6 p.m.-8 p.m.	On Teams: Contact tonya-reese@att.net to request meeting link.
Chapter 3510	June 17, Aug. 19 & Oct. 21 - E-Board: 6:30 p.m.; Meeting: 7 p.m.-8 p.m.	VFW Hall 1133, N. Ottokee St., Wauseon, OH 43567
Chapter 4500	July 16 & Oct. 15 - E-Board at 6 p.m.; meeting to follow	Pizza Cottage, 969 Mt. Vernon Rd., Newark, OH 43055
Chapter 5000	June 8 & Sept. 14 - 5:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m.	Cocca's Pizza, 5193 S. Canfield-Niles Rd., Canfield, OH 44406

CHAPTER MEETINGS		
BODY	DATES/TIMES	LOCATION
Chapter 5300	June 9, July 21 & Oct. 27 - E-Board: 6 p.m.; Meeting to follow.	Chester Firehouse, 46480 SR 248, Chester, OH 45720
Chapter 6000	July 7 & Oct. 13 - E-Board: 6 p.m.; Meeting to follow.	Pizza Cottage, 3938 Pond View Dr., Zanesville, OH 43701
Chapter 7000	June 18, Aug. 20 & Sept. 17 - 6 p.m.-7 p.m. See election details on next page	379 W. Longview Ave., Mansfield, OH 44903
Chapter 7600	July 13 & Oct. 19 - 6 p.m.-6:30 p.m.	VFW, 1935 Avalon Ave. NE, Canton OH 44705
Chapter 7760	Meetings: June 9, Aug. 11 & Oct. 13 - 12 p.m.-12:30 p.m.; E-board: July 14 & Sept. 8 - 12 p.m.-12:30 p.m.	Ohio EPA, NEDO Conference Room ABC, 2110 E. Aurora Rd., Twinsburg, OH 44087
Chapter 7800	June 9 - 5 p.m.-6 p.m.	Buena Vista Cafe meeting room, 1305 Buena Vista Ave., Warren, OH 44483
Chapter 7810	June 15 & Sept 21 - E-Board: 6 p.m.; Member meeting: 6:30 p.m.	USWA 2155 Hall, 1265 Main St., Niles, OH 44446

DISTRICT MEETINGS		
BODY	DATES/TIMES	LOCATION
District 1	July 11, Sept. 5 & Nov. 7 - 10 a.m.-1 p.m.	IBEW, 1975 North West St., Lima, OH 45801
District 6	Meetings: June 1, Aug. 3, Oct. 5 & Nov. 2 - 6:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.; E-Board: June 22, July 27, Aug. 24, Sept. 28 & Oct. 26 - 6 p.m.-7 p.m.	OCSEA - Room 195, 390 Worthington Rd., Westerville, OH 43082
District 8	July 28 - 6:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.	Holiday Inn, 11 E. Park Dr., Athens, OH 45701

Subordinate Body Meeting & Election Notices

ASSEMBLY MEETINGS		
BODY	DATES/TIMES	LOCATION
BWC Assembly	Meetings: June 13 & Sept. 12 - 9:30 a.m.-12 p.m. See election details below	OCSEA - Room 195, 390 Worthington Rd., Westerville, OH 43082
DBH/ DODD/ OVH Assembly	June 12, July 17, Sept. 18 & Oct. 9 - 10 a.m.-12 p.m.	OCSEA - Bowman, 390 Worthington Rd., Westerville, OH 43082
DYS Assembly	July 18 - 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	via Zoom
Industrial Commission Assembly	June 13 10 a.m.-11 a.m.	On Zoom: Contact mttyack@ocsea.org to request meeting link.
ODJFS Assembly	E-Board: June 12, Aug. 7 & Oct. 2 - 6 p.m.-8 p.m.; Delegate Meetings: June 13, Aug. 8 & Oct. 3 - 10 a.m.-12 p.m.	OCSEA, 390 Worthington Rd., Westerville, OH 43082 (E-Board: Room 188, Delegate Meeting: Room 177)

ASSEMBLY MEETINGS		
BODY	DATES/TIMES	LOCATION
ODNR Assembly	June 27, Aug. 15 & Oct. 31 - E-Board: 9 a.m., Delegate Meetings: 10 a.m.	OCSEA - Room 195, 390 Worthington Rd., Westerville, OH 43082
ODOT Assembly	Sept. 19 - 10 a.m.-12 p.m.	OCSEA - Room 195, 390 Worthington Rd., Westerville, OH 43082
Public Safety Assembly	Aug. 1 Nov. 7 (Virtual) - E-Board: 10 a.m., Delegate Meetings: 11 a.m.	Aug 1 - OCSEA Rm 195, 390 Worthington Rd., Westerville, OH 43082; Nov. 7: Contact publicsafetyassembly@gmail.com to request meeting link.

SUBORDINATE BODY ELECTIONS			
BODY	DATES/TIMES	LOCATION	POSITIONS TO BE ELECTED
BWC Assembly Election	Election: June 13, 2026 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nominations: 10:15 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.; Voting: 11 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.; Run Offs: 11:45 a.m. - 12 p.m. 	OCSEA - Room 195, 390 Worthington Rd., Westerville, OH 43082	President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary & 3 Executive Board
Chapter 2100 Election	Election: June 10, 2026 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nominations: 5:45 p.m. - 6 p.m.; Voting: 6:15 p.m. - 6:45 p.m.; Run Offs: 7 p.m. - 7:15 p.m. Must be present to vote	ODOT District 6 Office - Brian Hupp Conference Room, 400 E. William St., Delaware, OH 43015	President, Vice President, Secretary/Treasurer, 4 Executive Board, Delegate and Alternate to the following: District 6 Council, ODOT Assembly, ODNR Assembly & Public Safety Assembly.
Chapter 7000 Election	Election: Oct. 15, 2026 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nominations: 6 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.; Voting: 6:30 p.m. - 7 p.m.; Run Offs: 7 p.m. - 7:15 p.m. 	379 W. Longview Ave., Mansfield, OH 44903	President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary & 3 Executive Board

Notices in this magazine

OCSEA subordinate bodies have the option to publish notices in this union publication three times a year. This notice meets the 15-day requirement for election notices per the *OCSEA Subordinate Body Constitution Article VI, Section 3.*

Magazine Notice Deadlines:

Fall 2026: Submit no later than Sept. 14, 2026

Election must be held on or after Nov. 19, 2026

Submit notices online: ocsea.org/meetingnotices



LOCAL 11 AFL-CIO

Ohio Civil Service Employees Association

390 WORTHINGTON ROAD, STE. A WESTERVILLE, OH 43082-8331



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