

OCSEA

OHIO
CIVIL
SERVICE
EMPLOYEES
ASSOCIATION

PUBLIC EMPLOYEE MAGAZINE

AFSCME LOCAL 11/AFL-CIO
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What's at stake?

**Organizing to win
in 2026**



Growing seeds for a better world

OCSEA members make a difference at newly opened State Tree Nursery



ODNR union members Sam Umstead and CJ Myers are part of the team that runs Ohio's only state nursery.



"Hoop houses" or greenhouses built by OCSEA members are key to the nursery's tree growth program.

There's excitement growing at the Buckeye State Tree Nursery in Zanesville, Ohio, and OCSEA members are at the center of the action—making a difference for Ohio communities and building a strong environmental future for the next generations.

For Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources union members **Samantha Umstead** and **CJ Myers**, being a part of the only state-run tree nursery in Ohio is both exciting and unique. And the work there is being done in house, which is music to our union ears!

The Buckeye State Tree Nursery is operated by ODNR's Division of Forestry for the purpose of growing and providing high-quality seedlings, genetically adapted to

Ohio, for reforestation and conservation. The Zanesville nursery opened in 2024 after being established by the Ohio General Assembly and signed into law by the governor. This comes after previous state nurseries, three in total—including one in Zanesville—were shuttered in the late 1990s and into the 2000s. The last nursery in Marietta, Ohio, closed in 2008.

Umstead, a Horticulturalist 2, says she's proud to be a part of the new initiative. "Reopening the nursery and knowing this is getting started again is very exciting," she said. "I get to collect seeds from all over the state—North, South,



Scan QR Code to watch video highlights from the Buckeye State Tree Nursery

East, West, Central. And people are very excited when they drop them off." New to the position and formerly an intern with ODNR Forestry, Umstead calls it a "dream job."

"Once [seeds] get planted in the spring, they grow for a season. Once at least a year old, they are used in all kinds of state projects—mine reclamation sites, reforestation, for the H2Ohio Program and the [Northwest Ohio] Windbreak Program," Umstead said. The H2Ohio Program helps grow and protect vegetation along Ohio's riverbanks and waterways. The NW Windbreak Program helps landowners design and plant field wind-

breaks to control soil erosion, wildlife habitats, snow management and more.

"The fall is a very busy time for us," said Umstead, who met with us about her work in September.

To date, Myers and his ODNR team have built 10 "hoop houses" or greenhouses at the nursery site, including an irrigation system that



Tree seeds from all over Ohio are donated to the nursery and prepared and stored for planting.

"We're very busy seed collecting and processing seeds, a lot of acorns and walnuts, different fruit species as well—American plum, Mexican plum," she said. The team of ODNR union members at the nursery inventory and process seeds and then put them into storage to get them ready for fall planting or to prepare them for winter dormancy before planting in the spring. While the

trees are only used for state projects at this time, the state has said that, "in time," trees from the nursery will likely be available for purchase by the public.

"No two days here are the same has been our motto around here," said Myers, a Natural Resources Technician 2. "There's so many different irons in the fire; it keeps things interesting. Processing seeds one day, the next day you could be replacing a culvert or the next day you could be working on building the next hoop house," he said.

draws from a nearby water source. Groundbreaking last fall has made way for an additional eight greenhouse bays to be built in house. This should include a gutter connect system and upgrades for even better airflow, "critter" control, material and irrigation efficiency, and electricity, said Myers.

"The favorite part of the job is the sense of seeing progress. Seeing what you've built, getting to see what you've accomplished," said Myers. Growing up on a dairy farm, Myers is now proud to call himself a "tree farmer" too.

"Building infrastructure, operating equipment, mechanical and tool knowledge, managing people—all those skills that I learned growing up translate to this job," said Myers.

He also says he's proud that ODNR employees, union members, get to do this work: "It's important that we're able to keep most of the work in house," he said. This means learning different kinds of jobs, building a stronger workforce, and promoting within, said Myers. □





The Change We Need!

Ohio's AFSCME Affiliates endorse Amy Acton for Governor

Scan QR Code to see highlights from the endorsement event



Ohio voters will elect a new governor on November 3, 2026, and for state employees, that means we have the opportunity to pick our next boss. With that in mind, Ohio's AFSCME affiliates have united to endorse Democrat **Amy Acton**, the former Director of the Ohio Dept. of Health, as the best candidate to lead Ohio for the next four years.

"Ohio deserves a Governor who truly understands the everyday struggles that working people face and that's why we are supporting Amy Acton," said OCSEA President **Chris Mabe**. "Amy has always stood with labor, and she's strongly committed to public service."

AFSCME President **Lee Saunders**, who joined OCSEA, OAPSE, AFSCME Council 8 and AFSCME Retires Chapter 1184 for the endorsement announcement, said Acton has the national union's full support. "Dr. Acton is ready to meet the moment—to lift up, empower and show solidarity with working people in Ohio. I pledge to you that you will get whatever you need to be victorious."

Dr. Acton grew up in Youngstown and has dedicated her life to public service. "People are longing for public servants again who solve problems instead of making problems," Acton said as she accepted the AFSCME endorsements during a news conference at OCSEA's offices in Westerville.



Jessica appears with Dr. Acton at the OCSEA Biennial Convention in August 2025.

JESSICA BALDWIN
E-Board & Steward,
Columbus RSC Chapter 2538

When Dr. Amy Acton spoke at the OCSEA Biennial Convention last August, **Jessica Baldwin**, a Senior Disability Claim Adjudicator with OOD (Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities), was very eager to meet her. "When I heard her speak and tell her story at a conference last year, I thought, 'Wow. You are a person who changes lives with knowledge and experience and by listening and paying attention.'"

As a union member, Jessica strives to do the same. She became a steward about a year ago. "I'm still trying to get the hang of it, so I've been joining all the things that I can so I can learn to fight for myself and my colleagues," she said. She also recently became an Executive Board member of her chapter to keep learning and getting involved.

When asked what made her so interested in meeting Dr. Acton, Jessica said, "For one, the pandemic changed my life. Not in ways that you would expect. I was working downtown at BWC (Bureau of Workers' Compensation) at the time, and I had to take a bus an hour each way. My mental health and my physical health were struggling really bad," said Jessica. "What Dr. Acton did was really important for the people and for public health, but it impacted me by giving me the opportunity to work from home. I started exercising more. I was riding my bike during my lunch break. My mental health was not so severe. I ended up running a marathon during the pandemic. I know that wasn't the goal or the purpose, but it was life changing," she said.



"It also protected people like my mother-in-law who is a double organ transplant recipient, and other people I know that have severe and chronic illnesses, who are older and have weakened immune systems," Jessica said of Dr. Acton's leadership. "To lead people to focus on caring about your neighbors and about each other and to remain calm through all of that is a really big deal," she said.

Meeting Dr. Acton left an impression. "She made sure to look at my badge and take in my name and remember it. That says a lot. She is genuine, authentic, caring, compassionate. She wants to hear what you have to say," she emphasized.

Jessica urges her fellow state workers to vote their jobs. "My job is adjudicating social security and disability claims, so I definitely want to choose someone who is going to stand for social security and disability benefits in the long run," she said. "As a public service employee, I think people don't understand the work that we truly put into things. Government work is looked at as 'lazy people that don't want to do anything,' and that is definitely not the case. And because of that perception, I feel like our agencies continue to drive a work culture that isn't healthy. I would look to Dr. Acton to want to make mentally and physically healthier spaces for state workers," she added.

"Amy Acton clearly states that this isn't a left or right issue. Ohio needs to stand for Ohio. We're Ohioans above any political affiliation. She wants to care for everybody. **She's not in it for personal gain or power. She's in it for the people**," said Jessica.

"I would hope that my fellow union members would look at where the candidates' priorities are. Dr. Acton's priority is you. Other candidates are not looking at you, they're looking at their interests," she said.

JEREMY TWIGG

Vice President,
OVH Chapter 2200



As someone who has dedicated his life and 25-year career to public service, OCSEA activist **Jeremy Twigg** says the Ohio Governor's race is important to public employee union members on so many levels. From having a voice on the job and protecting state services to preserving public wages, benefits and pensions, Jeremy says there's just too much on the line to sit it out or to support a candidate who could care less about public employee workers.

"**We have to vote our jobs, plain and simple**," said Jeremy, a U.S. Army Veteran and union Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) at the Sandusky Ohio Veterans Home. The vice president of OVH Chapter 2200, Jeremy says maintaining collective bargaining and the union contract is at the top of his priority list.

"Imagine every time there's a new administration, your wages or benefits fluctuate," he posed. Collective bargaining gives public employees a sense of security through bumping rights, seniority, pay and benefits, health and safety, a voice at the health care and pension



See page 13 to learn how you can help elect union-friendly candidates like Dr. Acton through the AFSCME PEOPLE program!

tables. Without a contract, plus the potential abolishment of state property taxes, public employees will be nothing but fodder," he said.

"I honestly believe Dr. Acton will give us the fairest shake at the [bargaining] table. If we are to get any kind of decent deal, it's going to come with her being in charge," said Jeremy.

"People are mad at politicians but take it out on public workers. I think she'll bring a positive light back to Ohio," said Jeremy. "With her background and how she cares for people, you know that serving Ohio—not making money—is her driving force. That's what we're all in public work for; we all believe in serving our state and communities, and she falls in line with that," he said.

Jeremy has reservations about her opponent Vivek Ramaswamy and the harm he could have on public union members. "She's publicly voiced her support for unions and public works; he's publicly voiced his support for big business and cutting public workers," said Jeremy, referring to Ramaswamy's role and support in cutting thousands of federal union worker jobs around the country through DOGE.

"Electing a billionaire—in reality, what is the purpose of someone with that kind of money to get involved in politics? The only way I see it, if you're a billionaire, you have probably stepped on a lot of people on the way up and your decision will be made to impact your bottom line, not serving the public," he said.

"It's all about robbing the state. I've seen the impacts of privatization. Private prisons are ripping off taxpayers and funneling funds to corporations. 'How can I put more money in my pockets and my friends' pockets?'" he said.

Jeremy is deeply concerned that 40 years of Ohio collective bargaining will be dismantled with the swipe of a pen, saying "I fear, first they'll dismantle public collective bargaining and then they will go after the public pensions."

"This election is not just about our union, this decision will impact all public employees, their services—and their pensions," he said. "During Senate Bill 5, I was working at Indian River [DYS], and even management saw the harm. Retirees too! Anyone who has any kind of stake in state pensions will be harmed," he warns.

"Public employees take pride in their jobs, but that pride is removed when you factor profits into the equation and reduce pay, benefits, and career opportunities," said Jeremy. "When billionaires and politicians purposefully remove transparency in government, it's the citizens AND public employee who will lose in the end," he said. □

When we organize, we win!

CHRISTOPHER MABE, OCSEA President



OUR NEXT BOSS

We can't say yet what bargaining our next state contract will be like, but we do know this—there will be someone new sitting on the other side of the bargaining table. Because of term limits, Governor DeWine can't run again, and this November Ohio voters will pick his successor. The choice will boil down to two candidates: a billionaire who's criticized Ohio workers for being lazy and mediocre or someone who's dedicated her life to public service. As state workers, who would be a better boss? The answer is obvious. That's why Ohio's AFSCME affiliates, representing more than 100,000 public service workers, endorsed Dr. Amy Acton for Governor.

Over the past year we've gotten to know Amy Acton as she's spoken at our conferences and convention. There's no doubt she would treat the members of our union with dignity and respect because she has stood on picket lines and worked in public service just like us.

HELPING INJURED WORKERS

While we work toward electing a labor-friendly Governor and prepare for bargaining our next contract, we are working every day to support our members. A few months ago OCSEA started offering workplace security insurance as a benefit to members at no cost to you. It's the type of insurance we hope you'll never need, but the reality is many of our members work in dangerous jobs. There are more resources available as well, including a program from the Ohio Attorney General's office to compensate victims of violent crime. That includes employees at DRC, DYS, DODD and the Dept. of Behavioral Health who suffer an assault or violent crime on

the job. We will be sharing more about this program in the coming months.

NEW NAME

You might have noticed something different on the front cover of this magazine. The name has changed to *Public Employee Magazine* to better reflect the publication schedule for a magazine you receive three times a year. Nothing else has changed—we remain committed to keeping our members informed through social media, weekly electronic newsletters, YouTube videos and our magazine. And speaking of our E-newsletter, I want to give a shout-out to our communications team for winning an award from the International Labor Communications Association for producing one of the best E-newsletters in the nation!

ACTIVISM & EDUCATION

Union activism will be front and center in 2026 with a packed schedule of conferences and learning opportunities. We have expanded our popular leadership trainings this year to include stewards as well as chapter leaders so more members can learn and grow as unionists. Our first leadership training filled up quickly, but we have several more planned for the first half of the year.

Our conference schedule kicks off in early March with the Committee for Minority and Community Affairs Conference in Cleveland. With a theme of "From Grassroots to Greatness" the CMCA conference will focus on labor and political action. The importance of the upcoming election will also be the theme for our President's Conference in July. You can find the entire conference schedule on page 13. I strongly encourage members to get involved and take advantage of these opportunities to grow the strength of our union. □



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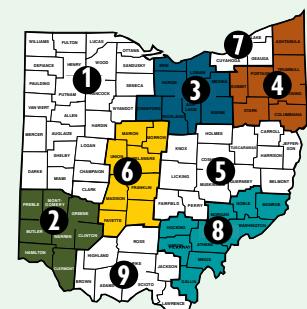
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OCSEA Districts

\$12,000 in awards!



Dues-paying members, spouses and dependents are eligible!

Since 1989, OCSEA has sponsored the Les Best Scholarship Program that awards a total of \$12,000 in scholarships to members and their families EVERY YEAR. The scholarship program is exclusive to dues-paying OCSEA members, and has three categories: Member, Spouse and Dependent.

Application and Selection Process

Les Best applications are accepted January 1 through April 30 each year and can be downloaded directly at ocsea.org/lesbest. Each category has its own application and requirements including submitting academic/personal references, providing proof of college acceptance, and writing an essay. In June, the scholarship selection committee—a group of distinguished third-party judges—will examine and consider all required materials submitted and will award up to 12 scholarships. To learn more about the selection process, visit the Les Best website. Winners are announced each summer on the OCSEA website at OCSEA.org/lesbest and published in the Fall issue of the OCSEA magazine.

Flexibility for working adults

The Member and Spouse categories are very flexible for working adults, as applicants can attend college full or part-time. Applicants are eligible for the scholarship as long as they are taking at least one college credit course. Dependents must be enrolled full-time.

Scholarships for college, vocational and apprenticeships

The dependent scholarship category allows applicants to attend accredited colleges and vocational schools or union apprenticeships as well. This opens up eligibility for those not attending a four-year college and recognizes those who choose to enter trade schools and union apprenticeship programs, which is vital for trades and to grow the economy.

Multiple scholarship wins

The program also allows applicants to win up to three times. Award winners are encouraged to apply yearly. □

History of the Scholarship

Les Best was an OCSEA state officer and a math teacher at the Ohio Veterans Children's Home. Believing in OCSEA's dedication to improving the quality of life for its members and their children, Les felt an obligation to promote higher education and training.

In 1989, he proposed that OCSEA begin a scholarship for the children of active members and retirees. Les Best died that same year, after serving OCSEA for 10 years as an officer and 22 years as a member of its Board of Directors.

Les was loved by many and his memory and dedication lives on through the Les Best Scholarship.



Download an application at
ocsea.org/LesBest
The deadline to apply is April 30, 2026

SCAN THE QR CODE TO VISIT THE WEBSITE NOW

VETERAN VOICES

Members Recognized at the 2025 Veterans Conference



DRC Honor Guard members salute at the the Missing Man table.



Scan to download Department of
Veteran Services resources poster



Pres. Chris Mabe (left) and guest speaker Lucas Denney (right) celebrate our veterans during the conference.



OCSEA Veterans Committee members Eric Kusky, Chris Mabe, Buffy Andrews, Jeff Condo, Doug Korba (chair), and Gina Ison.



Speakers Roy Campbell Jr. (left) and Chaplain David Long (right) share veteran stories and resources.

Last November, members gathered at the Mohican State Park Lodge for the annual OCSEA Veterans Committee Conference. It was the most highly-attended Veterans Conference in OCSEA's history, with many new and familiar faces joining in to honor OCSEA's veterans as well as veterans everywhere. This year's conference theme was "The Legacy of Service: Honoring Veterans through Unity & Sacrifice."

Veterans Committee chair **Doug Korba** kicked off the conference, followed by the Presentation of Colors by the DRC Honor Guard. Veterans Committee member **Eric Kusky** led the Missing Man Ceremony, a solemn, symbolic military tradition honoring POWs, MIAs, and fallen service members.

Guest speaker **Matt Miller**—Mayor of Ashland, Ohio—gave a warm welcome and posed a question to the crowd: "What can we learn from our veterans? We must focus on what unites us, not divides us. Let's focus on what's important to all of us, not the little details that make us different," noting that these are important skills service members learn to protect and serve each other.

President **Chris Mabe** thanked everyone for attending and reminded members of the importance of the upcoming 2026 election. "We, as state workers, have a unique ability to choose our boss," he said. "We have seen how society folds without the service of public employees. The government shutdown showed us how important our work is," said Mabe. "People have the right to freedom of speech, different opinions, to live and love. Many of us veterans have been to other countries and seen the trials and tribulations when these freedoms aren't there," he reminded attendees.

Lucas Denney, Assistant Director at the Dept. of Veteran Services spoke about the Ohio Veterans Homes, praising the members who work there. "If you go there, you can feel it; it's special," said Denney. "But our mission does not stop at the homes. We have a special team that provides training on veteran employee resources. Far too often, our vets are underemployed. That's something we're working on," he said. Scan the QR code above to download a veterans resource poster for your union bulletin board.

Retired U.S. Army Chaplain **David Long**, who also lead a prayer, spoke about his experience in the service, telling stories both humorous and somber. Roy Campbell Jr., former VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) District 5 Commander, urged veterans to become members of the VFW, citing its important role in local communities. He said that VFW membership is dwindling as we lose older veterans. "We have to work together to honor veterans that have passed," said Campbell.



Carrington Melton (second from right) receives the Veteran of the Year award.



Carrington (second from left) mans a table at a resource fair for veterans as part of his work at ODJFS.

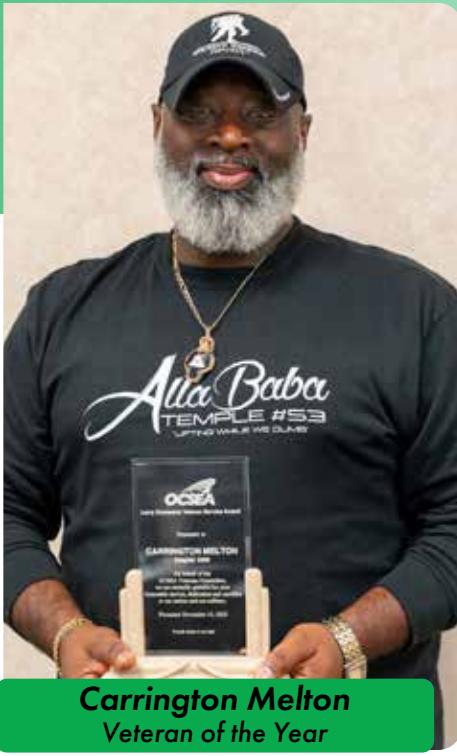
VETERAN SERVICE AWARDS

The Larry Cremeens Veteran of the Year was **Carrington Melton** of ODJFS Chapter 2599. Melton served in the U.S. Army for 16 years, with two deployments—Desert Storm & Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan). He volunteers with several veteran organizations including the VFW, American Legion and DAV (Disabled American Vets). He was nominated by coworker **Melissa Golphin**, who said, “Carrington’s commitment in the veteran community defines the word service!”

"I just love to help others. I live off my 3 'I's—I impact, influence, and inspire someone every day," said Carrington.

Carrington works for the Ohio Dept. of Job and Family Services in the Office of Workforce Development where he is a Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Specialist. "I do advanced case management with homeless veterans, low-income, disadvantaged and transitioning out of the military," he said.

"Through life, you have to find your purpose. And you have to understand your assignment and your mission. So, my mission is with veterans and veterans' families until the day the good Lord takes me. That's what I focus on, that's all I do. If they took community service away today, I don't know where I'd be," he said.



Carrington Melton Veteran of the Year



Scan QR codes to see the photo gallery and video highlights of the 2025 OCSEA Veterans Conference



VIDEO

raiser honoring Justin's life and legacy. The Justin R. House Annual Softball Tournament brings awareness and raises funds to stop veteran suicides. His efforts have raised over \$50,000 thus far.

“Suicide is a very, very important issue, especially in the military. There’s a lot of things that go on that people don’t see every day and they try and mask,” Tyler said. “We got with the family and decided on a way to honor him and other veterans,” he said. “We donate all of the money to the rescue mission Stop Soldier Suicide, and try and help out as best we can and raise as much money as we can,” he said. □



Tyler Evans Veteran Supporter of the Year



Players in the Justin R. House Annual Softball Tournament, started by Veteran Supporter of the Year Tyler Evans, are pictured above.

UET comes at “right time and the right place” for union activist



“The UET came at the perfect time,” says **Curtis Bishop** reflecting on the union education benefits that have helped him and other OCSEA members afford their post-secondary education and training opportunities. Curtis, who has been a Therapeutic Program Worker (TPW) and member of Northcoast Behavioral Health Care Chapter 7715 for two years, says his financial aid for college had just run out when he found out about the Union Education Trust (UET).

As Curtis nears the end of his pursuit of bachelor's in criminology studies, he says he's been able to take advantage of the benefit for two years in a row and doesn't know what he'd do without it. “At one point I was able to get one of my classes for free. You can't beat that,” says Curtis.

Curtis, 35, says he began his educational journey with a business management associate degree but knew he wanted more. After 12 years working for “Corporate America,” he found himself in public service at the Dept. of Behavioral Health (DBH) (formerly Mental Health and Addiction Services). He said he knew that he had to take the next steps that would prepare him for a law degree, and that the UET could help make that a reality.

“I knew I wanted to be a lawyer since I was in fourth grade,” said Curtis. “As a

young black man from an urban city, I saw a lot of people like me who weren't getting representation,” he said. “I knew I wanted to be a lawyer, someone who cares about fighting for justice—for justice for people like me.”

And since entering public service, Curtis says he's begun to set his sights on utilizing that law degree in the public arena. “What's the next step?” was going through my head. If I do get into law, I would like to stay in public service,” he said.

When asked what the UET means to him, he responded, “It means a lot to me, everything to me. It was a blessing. And it turned out at the right time that I needed it. I wished I found it on the first day!” he said. “The UET is there for union members who need it, especially people who don't qualify for financial aid,” he said.

Curtis jokingly said he should be an “official representative of UET.” “I tell everybody I know about it. ‘Oh, you're in school? Do you know about the UET?’,” he said. Curtis even recently created a step-by-step amateur video for chapter members about how to go through the UET process. “I explained it to one member who had been off work for a bit, and then made a video to share with her, and then it just made the rounds in the chapter,” he said. Curtis says there are a lot of younger people at his facility who he wants to educate about the process so they can take advantage of the money available to them from their union.

Curtis is a newer union steward for Northcoast Behavioral Health Chapter 7715. He got involved because—just like with his desire to be a lawyer—he wants to make sure there is justice for his union sisters and brothers.

“I want to be the voice for my co-workers. There's a lot of good people who are scared to say anything, and with my skills and background, I can be that voice,” he said. Curtis comes from a line of union activism. His father, **Curtis Bishop Sr.**, is a retired OCSEA activist who served as president and vice president at Warrensville Developmental Center near Cleveland.

Curtis says his father continues to guide him today on what it means to “be union!” □



Union Education Trust

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Eligible State bargaining unit employees can get up to \$8,000 each year for education and training!

UET provides financial assistance to pay tuition and mandatory fees every fiscal year with these programs:

\$5,000

Career Improvement Program

\$2,000

Professional Enhancement

\$1,000

Computer Application Training

**Learn more & apply at
UEdTrust.org**



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THANK YOU TO OUR WINTER WEATHER WARRIORS!

From plowing our wintery roads and maintaining state facilities to transporting prisoners and tending to state lands and waterways (and everything in between), OCSEA members stay busy at work even on the coldest and blustiest of days!

Thank you to all our OCSEA public union members who keep us safe and healthy every day, no matter the weather. You make Ohio happen!

Scan the QR code to read one winter weather hero's story!



JOE ESTES
Hamilton-Clermont Chapter 3100



OCSEA local contracts: Small, but mighty!

Franklin County JFS union team secures strong three-year contract

While most OCSEA members fall under the large main State contract, there are a dozen OCSEA local government contracts that get negotiated by localized teams of union members in cities, water districts and other local government agencies around the state.

One of those agencies is the Franklin County Job and Family Services (FCJFS). Members in that local government chapter, FCJFS Chapter 2508, bargain and approve the stand-alone contract each three-year cycle. At the latter part of 2025, members of the FCJFS union bargaining team worked hard to secure a strong union contract for its members before its end-of-year expiration. The union contract was approved through 2028 by the membership at a ratification vote held at the OCSEA Union Hall on Monday, November 17, 2025.

The ratified contract secures an 8.5% wage increase over the



The FCJFS team bargains with management on a variety of issues from wages to leave, and everything in between.

life of the three-year contract as well as annual increases for longevity lump sum payments for years of service. It also reflects the county's minimum wage increases and includes increases to the number of hours that employees can accrue comp time before payout from 50 to 80 hours and increases Paid Family Leave from 8 to 10 weeks.

The elected bargaining team included union members **Cynthia Watiker, Sylvia Gaddis, Dorraine Johnson, Kevin Menefield** and **Jonathan Wright**, who brought a variety of skills and experience to the union table. Staff support included OCSEA Staff Representatives **Doug Mosier** and **Robert Knipp**.

"We're proud of this contract and what it affords to our sisters and brothers in Franklin County," said OCSEA Vice President Cynthia Watiker, who served as chapter president during negotiations. "I'm proud of the team and the staff, and the members, who supported us through the entire process, from the table to ratification."

FCJFS determines eligibility for core programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid. Additionally, it provides access to a wide range of supportive services programs offered

by community organizations, everything from early childhood home visiting and after-school programs to workforce development and job training programs.

When SNAP benefits were at risk during the national government shutdown this fall, Watiker spoke out on behalf of members who provide those benefits to Ohioans. "FCJFS employees work with the impacted residents everyday—face to face and over the phone," said Watiker. Calling it a "waiting game" as uncertainty lingered, Watiker's concerns grew of what those cuts, and future cuts, could mean for the public servants she represents and the services they provide.

"We're just doing our best, trying to say the right words to those who are fearful, and continuing to service residents as they need us," said Watiker. □



The 2025 FCJFS union bargaining team includes Johnathon Wright, Kevin Menefield, Dorraine Johnson, Cynthia Watiker and Sylvia Gaddis (not photographed).



Members learn about and vote on the three-year FCJFS contract in November.

WHAT IS AFSCME PEOPLE?

As public employees, our **wages, benefits** and **working conditions** are in the hands of politicians.

Through AFSCME PEOPLE, the voluntary political action committee (PAC), union members choose to support candidates who stand for **strong contracts, no outsourcing, affordable health care, retirement security, and no cuts to vital public services!**

Scan the QR code to learn how to **become an AFSCME PEOPLE MVP!**

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ocsea.org/PEOPLE**

No union dues are used to fund the AFSCME PEOPLE PAC. Donations are 100% voluntary.

PEOPLE MVP Jeremy Twigg shows off his OCSEA Yeti. Get yours by signing up at OCSEA.org/PEOPLE.



SAVE the DATES:

Upcoming Conferences & Events

Mark your calendars for these upcoming 2026 OCSEA conferences and events:

Committee on Minority and Community Affairs (CMCA) Conference:

In Independence | March 6-7



**REGISTER HERE
BY MARCH 1ST**

Women's Action Committee (WAC) Conference:

In Mt. Sterling | May 1-2

Stewards Conference:

In Lewis Center | June 5-6

President's Conference:

In Columbus | July 11

Veterans Committee Conference:

Location TBD | November 13-14



Subordinate Body Meeting & Election Notices

ASSEMBLY MEETINGS		
BODY	DATES/TIMES	LOCATION
DBH/ DODD/OVH Assembly	April 17 & May 15, 2026 - 10 a.m.-12 p.m. <i>See election details on next page</i>	OCSEA - Bowman, 390 Worthington Rd., Westerville, OH 43082
ODNR Assembly	April 18, 2026 - 9 a.m.-11 a.m.	OCSEA - Room 195, 390 Worthington Rd. Westerville, OH 43082
ODOT Assembly	March 28 & May 16, 2026 - 10 a.m.-12 p.m.	OCSEA - Bowman, 390 Worthington Rd., Westerville, OH 43082
Public Safety Assembly	VIRTUAL Meeting: May 9, 2026 - 10 a.m.-12 p.m.	Contact publicsafetyassembly@gmail.com for meeting access link.

DISTRICT MEETINGS		
District 6 Council	April 6 & May 4, 2026 - 6:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.; E-Board: March 23, April 27 & May 26 - 6 p.m.-7 p.m.	OCSEA - Room 195, 390 Worthington Rd., Westerville, OH 43082
District 8 Council	April 28, 2026 - 6:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.	Holiday Inn, 11 E Park Dr., Athens, OH 45701

CHAPTER MEETINGS		
Allen Chapter 200	April 7, 2026 - 5:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m.	IBEW Local 32, 1975 North West St., Lima, OH 45801
Fairfield -Perry Chapter 2320	April 13, 2026 - 6:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.	The Elks Lodge, 109 South Main St, New Lexington, OH 43764
Franklin Chapter 2500	April 16, 2026 - 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.	OCSEA - Room 195, 390 Worthington Rd., Westerville, OH 43082
BMV Chapter 2503	VIRTUAL E-Board: April 14, 2026 - 6:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.; VIRTUAL Meeting: May 11, 2026 - 6:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.	Contact chapter2503@ocsea.org for meeting access link.

CHAPTER MEETINGS cont.		
BODY	DATES/TIMES	LOCATION
BWC Chapter 2535	VIRTUAL Meeting: April 8, 2026 - 12 p.m.-1 p.m.	Contact myank@ocsea.org for meeting access link.
RSC Chapter 2538	E-Board: April 22, 2026 - 6:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.; General body Meeting: April 29 - 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.	OCSEA - Room 195, 390 Worthington Rd., Westerville, OH 43082
Northwest Chapter 3510	April 15, 2026 - 7 p.m. - 8 p.m.	VFW Hall, 1133 N. Ottokie St., Wauseon, OH 43567
Mahoning Chapter 5000	April 13, 2026 - 5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.	Cocca's Pizza, 5193 S. Canfield Niles Rd., Canfield, OH 44406
Musking- um-Coshoc- ton Chapter 6000	April 20, 2026 - 6 p.m. - 7 p.m.	Pizza Cottage, 3938 Pond View Dr., Zanesville, OH 43701
Richland Chapter 7000	April 16 & May 21, 2026 - 6 p.m. - 7 p.m.	379 W. Longview Ave., Mansfield, OH 44903
Twinsburg Chapter 7760	April 14 & May 12, 2026 - 12 p.m. - 1 p.m.	Ohio EPA - NEDO Conference Room ABC, 2110 E. Aurora Rd., Twinsburg, OH 44087

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*.

Submit notices online: ocsea.org/meetingnotices

Magazine Notice Deadlines:

Spring 2026: Submit no later than March 30, 2026
Election must be held on or after June 1, 2026

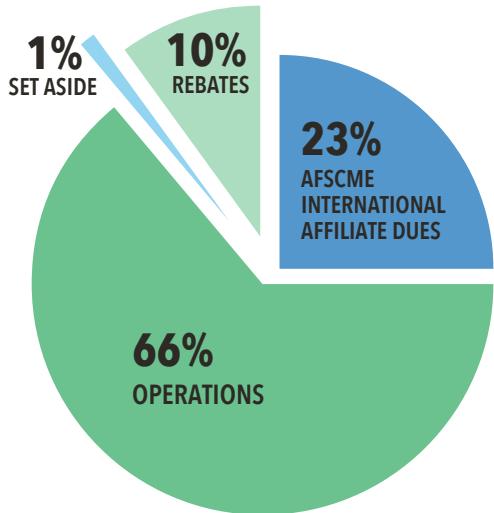
Fall 2026: Submit no later than Sept. 14, 2026
Election must be held on or after Nov. 19, 2026

Subordinate Body Meeting & Election Notices

SUBORDINATE BODY ELECTIONS			
BODY	DATES/TIMES	LOCATION	POSITIONS TO BE ELECTED
Chapter 2545 State Office Tower	Election: March 16, 2026 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting: 5:30 p.m. Nominations: 6 p.m.-6:15 p.m. Voting: 6:30 p.m.-7 p.m. Run-Offs (as needed): 7:30 p.m.-7:45 p.m. 	Rhodes State Office Tower, 30 E Broad St., Columbus, OH 43215	President, Vice President, Recording Secretary Correspondence Secretary, Treasurer, E-board (3), Trustees (2) and the following delegates: Taxation Assembly DBH/DODD/OVH Assembly, District 6, and AFL-CIO (2)
DBH/ DODD/ OVH Assembly	Election: March 20, 2026 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nominations: 10:15 a.m.-10:30 a.m. Voting: 10:30 a.m.-10:45 a.m. Run-Offs (as needed): 10:45 a.m.-11:00 a.m. 	OCSEA - Bowman, 390 Worthington Rd., Westerville, OH 43082	President, Vice President, 2nd Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary & Executive Board (3)
Ohio EPA Chapter	Election: March 26, 2026 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nominations: 12:15 p.m.-12:30 p.m. Voting: 12:30 p.m.-12:45 p.m. Run-Offs (as needed): 12:45 p.m.-1 p.m. 	Ohio EPA Central Office, 50 W. Town St., Suite 700, Columbus, OH 43215	President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary & Executive Board (5)

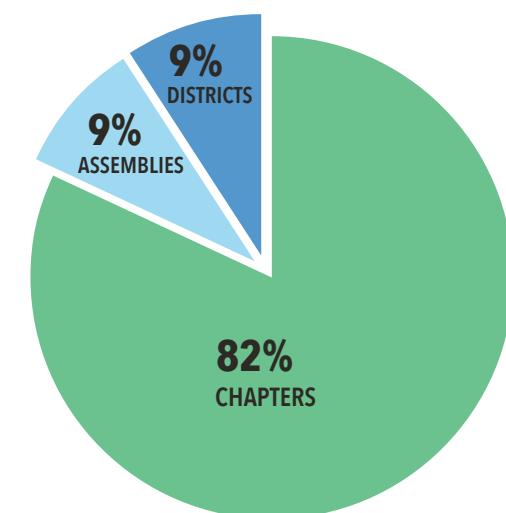
OCSEA's budget comes entirely from membership dues.

Here's how that money is used:



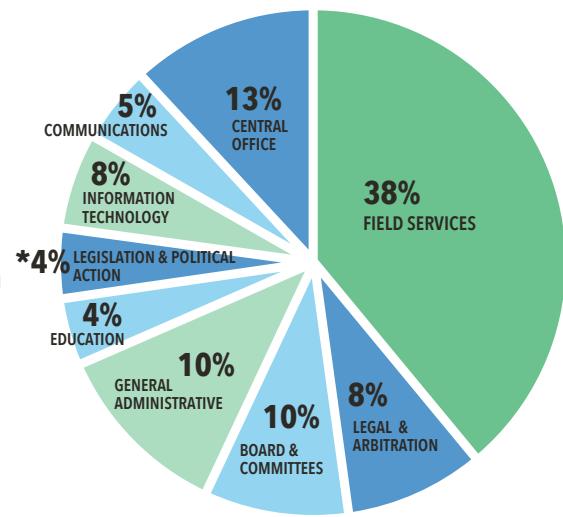
TOTAL BUDGET

OCSEA dollars are divided among four categories, the biggest of which—the operations budget—provides direct services to the members. The balance of OCSEA's chapters, district councils and assemblies; national representation and services provided by AFSCME; membership in the Ohio AFL-CIO; affiliations with various coalitions and legally-required set-asides.



REBATES

A portion of members' dues goes directly to fund the union's front-line organizational bodies, specifically its chapters, district councils and assemblies. These "rebates" account for 10% of OCSEA's total budget. The largest portion of the rebates goes to the union's 132 chapters. Chapter funds are used to purchase office supplies, provide trainings, attend workshops, print flyers and postcards, take care of union-related grievance expenses and cover any other needs the chapter may have. OCSEA's assemblies and district councils use their funds for similar expenses.



OPERATIONS BUDGET

The operations budget covers 66% of OCSEA's total budget. It is used for services such as contract negotiations, arbitrations, lobbying on issues that directly affect public employees, legal services, education programs, conventions, conferences, publications, websites, rent, utilities and supplies.

**No OCSEA dues money is given to political candidates. Political action funds raised through voluntary donations are distributed through AFSCME's PEOPLE program and OCSEA's political action committee.*



LOCAL 11 AFL-CIO

Ohio Civil Service
Employees Association

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



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OCSEA

PUBLIC EMPLOYEE MAGAZINE | WINTER 2026

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Apply at OCSEA.org/LesBest

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