



OEA Legislative Watch

March 25, 2011

Do you know that the political process affects virtually everything in your school day?

Take action —
Become an OEA Member Lobbyist

Questions?

Contact your Governmental Services Team

Ron Rapp
Director
rapp@ohea.org

Melissa Clark
Lobbyist
clarkm@ohea.org

Robert Davis
Lobbyist
davisr@ohea.org

Matthew Dotson
Lobbyist
dotsonm@ohea.org

Pete Hackeman
UniServ Political
Advocacy Consultant
hackemanp@ohea.org

Russ Harris
Education Research
Development
Consultant
harrisr@ohea.org

OEA Member Lobby Day Scheduled for March 29

OEA members and Ohio's students face critical challenges this General Assembly. Ohio faces an \$8 billion deficit and at stake are school funding, key education reforms, collective bargaining and pension benefits. Now more than ever you must make sure your voice is heard! Educator Lobby Days provide an opportunity to meet with state legislators to discuss key education issues.

Join your colleagues at the OEA Headquarters' Media Center on Tuesday, March 29, 2011, located at 225 E. Broad Street in Columbus, Ohio at 9 a.m. for a short briefing. We strongly encourage you to schedule your meetings with legislators prior to lobby day. Registration for Lobby Days will be available online at <http://aces.ohea.org>. If you need further information or would like to attend Educator Lobby Day, please contact Julie Parsley at parsleyj@ohea.org or 1-800-282-1500 ext. 3170.

Senate Bill 5 (R-Jones) - Collective Bargaining Bill Scheduled for Possible Committee Vote on March 29

The House Commerce and Labor Committee has scheduled Senate Bill 5 for amendments and a possible vote at 9 a.m. Tuesday, March 29, in Hearing Room 114. The OEA and its members continue to fight the passage of Senate Bill 5, which is an outright attack on collective bargaining rights in Ohio.

With the support of the recently elected Republican majority in the Ohio General Assembly, Senate Bill 5 is moving through the state legislature with great speed. At this point, it is likely Senate Bill 5 will be passed by the House and signed by Governor Kasich before the end of the month. Senate Bill 5 strikes at the heart of OEA's efforts to protect the rights of our members and the students they serve; however, it is only one of the numerous legislative attacks on the rights and benefits of OEA members and public education.

OEA and its coalition partners are preparing a statewide referendum in opposition to Senate Bill 5. A referendum is a method by which a law or section or item of a law passed by the General Assembly can be submitted as a statewide ballot issue to the voters for approval. A referendum petition must be filed with the Secretary of State within ninety (90) days after the law or section of law has been filed with the Secretary of State by the Governor. At this time, the coalition estimates approximately 250,000 valid signatures will be needed to get this petition on the ballot. These signatures must include at least 3% of the registered voters voting in the last governor's election in at least 44 of Ohio's 88 counties.

House Bill 153 (R-Amstutz) - STATE BUDGET Hearings Continue; School District State Foundation Aid Figures Released Bill Language Not Yet Available

The school district level state foundation funding figures for FY 2012 and FY 2013 have been released by the Ohio Office of Budget and Management. The Kasich Administration is stating that it plans to develop a new approach to state support for education over the next year. In the interim, the funding proposal is being called a “bridge formula” that allocates state foundation funding based on a district’s reliance on state support for education, as measured by its property valuation per pupil and the number of students who reside within the district.

The formula purports to ensure that districts which are the most reliant on state assistance not receive the largest cuts because of the non-replacement of federal stimulus funds. However, the formula is not linked to any analysis of what school districts actually need to provide high quality education programs for students.

The school district level funding figures represent state foundation money only and do not tell the whole story of how school districts will be impacted over the biennium. Most districts will lose money from significant reductions in special education funding, gifted funding, reductions in tangible personal property (TPP) tax revenue “hold harmless payments,” and the non-replacement of federal dollars. When non-state foundation aid funding cuts are considered, the statewide “all funds” reduction from FY 2011 over the biennium is \$3.1 billion. With \$3.1 billion less, local communities will experience larger class sizes, reduced course choices and less individual attention for students in nearly every district in Ohio.

Senate Bill 86 (D-Sawyer) - OEA SCOPE Members Testify in Opposition to Prison Charter School

Senate Bill 86 would authorize a drop-out prevention charter school in Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (DRC) institutions. The OEA and its members in the State Council of Professional Educators (SCOPE) oppose the bill. SCOPE teachers Jack Rosenberry and Todd Dygert gave opponent testimony before the Senate Education Committee on March 22. They stated that “currently, these educational services are being met by the Ohio Central School System (OCSS) and SCOPE educators serving in DRC.” GED programs are available in every DRC institution, and “any inmate within the DRC is eligible to pursue a high school diploma through the high school options program or through the Ohio Central High School at London and Madison Correctional Institutions.”

Senate Bill 81 (R-Cates)/House Bill 21 (R-Combs) - Teach For America Bills **Pass Senate and House**

The first bill introduced this General Assembly impacting the Teacher for America (TFA) program was House Bill 21. This bill originally proposed to provide TFA participants with 2 years of experience in the classroom with a five-year professional educator license. The OEA opposed this proposal, as it provided no quality control for entry into the teaching profession and allowed TFA participants to “leapfrog” individuals coming out of traditional teacher preparation programs and bypassing the Ohio Resident Educator Program. The OEA advocated for significant improvements in strengthening the requirements for TFA individuals and strongly opposed providing any individual a five-year professional educator license based only on TFA experience.

In line with OEA advocacy, House Bill 21 and Senate Bill 81 now require that TFA participants do the following:

- Enter and successfully complete the four-year Ohio Resident Educator Program before being granted a professional license (with two years credit if they have been in the classroom for two years)
- Complete a bachelor’s degree from an accredited institution of higher education
- Maintain an undergraduate GPA of at least 2.5
- Pass a State Board of Education prescribed subject area examination (Praxis II), and
- Successfully complete the summer training institute by Teach for America.

Based on the strengthened language in these bills with regard to quality control standards for TFA participants seeking to enter the teaching profession, the OEA has taken a “neutral” position but will continue to monitor both bills. Both bills were amended on the House and Senate floors, respectively, to 1) require each TFA participant licensed to teach grades K-6 to complete coursework in the teaching of reading required under Ohio law, and 2) require the TFA program to enter into an agreement with one or more accredited four-year public or private universities to provide optional training for TFA participants.

Calamity Day Bill Passed

House Bill 36, sponsored by Representative Casey Kozlowski (R-Pierpont), will increase the number of excused calamity days for the 2010-11 school year from three to five. The bill also extends the ability of school districts to make up calamity days by adding time to the school day. The bill has passed both the House (82-5) and Senate (32-1). However, because the Senate made amendments, the House will need to vote to concur with those changes before the bill is sent to Governor Kasich for his signature. Because HB 36 contains an emergency clause, it will go into effect upon his signature and the changes will be effective for this school year.

HB 36 would require school district contingency plans to make up at least five days, but allow additional flexibility to make up the first five unexcused days by adding time to the school day in half-hour

increments. The bill continues current law that such a plan cannot conflict with an existing collective bargaining agreement.

An amendment was added in the Senate that allows districts to make up as many as five days by allowing students to complete lessons posted online. Such a plan is optional and must include written consent by the local bargaining unit representing teachers.

House Passes Photo ID Bill Placing Additional Burden on Some Voters

On Wednesday, March 23, 2011, the Ohio House passed House Bill 159 (R-Mecklenborg). HB 159 would require those who vote, in person on Election Day or through early voting to provide a state issued photo ID or passport. Under current law, alternative forms of identification such as a utility bill can also be used. The bill was voted out of committee one week after introduction and brought to the House Floor the following day. The bill passed by a vote of 56-38 with Representative Kirk Schuring (R-Canton) and House Democrats voting against the bill.

OEA opposes HB 159 as an unnecessary restriction on the voting rights of Ohioans. Ohio currently has strong requirements in place, and HB 159 places an additional burden on those who wish to execute their most basic right. This position is consistent with OEA legislative policies and resolutions calling for fair and open elections that encourage voter participation in the election process. Hundreds of thousands of eligible voters do not currently have a photo ID. This disproportionately includes low-income Ohioans, minorities, students and the elderly. Restrictive identification requirements may lead some voters to be disenfranchised. OEA believes that additional hurdles should not be placed in the path of Ohio's voters.