



# OEA Legislative Watch

April 8, 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

## House Bill 153 (R-Amstutz): OEA Testifies Before House Finance Primary and Secondary Education Committee

House Bill 153 (R-Amstutz), the state budget bill, continues to receive hearings in House Finance subcommittees. The current version of the bill contains Governor Kasich's budget proposal, which would cut public education funding by \$3.1 billion over the biennium (FY 12/13), take away the right of teachers to collectively bargain salaries and require "merit pay," increase public employee pension contributions by 2%, and expand charter schools and vouchers. The OEA is strongly opposing these and other provisions. The Ohio House is expected to make changes to the bill by the end of April and pass the bill the first week of May.

The OEA testified in opposition to many provisions of the House Bill 153 before the House Finance Primary and Secondary Education Committee on April 7, 2011. The OEA will provide more testimony in front of the full House Finance Committee the week of April 11, 2011. This will include testimony on K-12 education, higher education, developmental disabilities and correctional education issues.

To urge your legislators to oppose the budget provision removing teacher salaries from collective bargaining go to ([link to Action Alert](#)).

### Members of the House Finance Committee: 20 Republicans – 12 Democrats

#### Republicans:

Ron Amstutz (R-Wooster)- Chair  
John Carey (R-Wellston)- Vice Chair  
Richard Adams (R-Sidney)  
Marlene Anielski (R-Walton Hills)  
Troy Balderson (R-Zanesville)  
Peter Beck (R-Mason)  
Dave Burke (R-Marysville)  
Mike Duffey (R-Worthington)  
Randy Gardner (R-Bowling Green)  
Cheryl Grossman (R-Grove City)  
Dave Hall (R-Millersburg)  
Richard Hollington (R-Cleveland)  
Ron Maag (R-Lebanon)  
Jeffrey McClain (R-Upper Sandusky)  
Ross McGregor (R-Springfield)  
Robert Mecklenbourg (R-Cincinnati)  
Bob Peterson (R-Sabina)  
Barbara Sears (R-Sylvania)  
Lynn Slaby (R-Copley)  
Gerald Stebelton (R-Lancaster)

#### Democrats:

Vernon Sykes (D-Akron)- Ranking  
Michael Ashford (D-Toledo)  
John Patrick Carney (D-Clintonville)  
Kathleen Clyde (D-Kent)  
Denise Driehaus (D-Cincinnati)  
Nancy Garland (D-New Albany)  
Jay Goyal (D-Mansfield)  
Matt Lundy (D-Elyria)  
Debbie Phillips (D-Athens)  
Alicia Reece (D-Cincinnati)  
Stephen Slesnick (D-Canton)  
Carlton Weddington (D-Columbus)

### **Legislation Authorizing Charter School in DRC Facilities Passes Ohio Senate**

Senate Bill 86 (D-Sawyer) would authorize a drop-out prevention charter school inside Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections facilities to provide instruction towards a high school diploma. The bill passed the Ohio Senate 31-0 on April 6, 2011. OEA-SCOPE members Jack Rosenberry and Todd Dygert testified in opposition to the bill before the Senate Education Committee. OEA and SCOPE worked to secure three amendments that will improve the bill, although opposition to the bill will continue. The amendments will do the following: 1) make the charter school authorization a pilot program and require that it meet the parameters of an evaluation process; 2) prohibit the charter school from providing instructional services towards a GED inside a DRC facility; 3) require appropriate security training for employees hired by the charter school. House Bill 164 (R-Blessing) is a similar bill in the House.

### **Calamity Day Bill to Become Law**

House Bill 36, sponsored by Representative Casey Kozlowski (R-Pierpont) has cleared the legislature and is heading to Governor Kasich for his signature. The bill would increase the number of calamity days for the current school year from three to five. Additionally, the bill extends the option for school districts to increase the regular school day in half-hour increments in order to make up missed days. Because HB 36 contains an emergency clause, it will take effect once signed by the Governor.

HB 36 was briefly stalled due to objections over amendments added in the Senate regarding the posting of make-up lessons online and transportation of charter school students. To speed passage of the bill, the Senate receded from its amendments, and those provisions are not a part of HB 36. Governor Kasich has indicated he will sign the bill and released the following statement:

“I commend the members of the General Assembly for acting in a bipartisan manner to increase the number of snow days from three to five and allow schools to make up missed time through extended school days. This takes some financial pressures off of schools and frees them to always act cautiously when deciding whether or not to close school because of the weather. This winter was harsh and many schools reached their snow day limit early in the season. I look forward to signing this not only for the relief it provides but also because, let’s face it, kids love snow days.”

### **Pension Bill in Holding Pattern**

Legislation dealing with pension reform has not had hearings in the House or Senate for the past two weeks while legislators contemplate a substitute bill. House Bill 69, sponsored by Representative Lynn Wachtmann (R-Napoleon), and Senate Bill 3, sponsored by Senator Keith Faber (R-Celina) each deal with the issue of changes to pension benefits under the five public retirement plans. To date, hearings on the bills have centered on the plans approved by the retirement boards of the systems.

This week, it was announced that Senator Bill Seitz (R-Cincinnati) has been removed as Chair of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee. This is the committee to which SB 3 is assigned. A spokesperson for the Senate President indicated that the change was made because Senator Seitz considered adopting a substitute bill, one that aligned with the changes proposed by the retirement systems, without consulting with the bill’s sponsor. Senator Faber has been named as the new chair of the committee.

Pension reform remains one of the top issues facing the legislature and our members. The retirement benefits offered by STRS, SERS and OPERS represent economic security in retirement for our members and hundreds of thousands of Ohioans. It is important that changes be made to ensure the long-term solvency of the plans, but that this be done in a way that is fair and equitable. OEA has testified in support of the plans proposed by SERS and OPERS but that the STRS recommendations go too far. The STRS plan places too great a burden on active teachers, fails to account for economic recovery, does not have an adequate phase-in for retirement eligibility changes and may lead to a “rush to the door” in retirements.