



OEA Legislative Watch

May 16, 2011

House Passes Budget on Party Line Vote

On Thursday, May 5, 2011, the Ohio House of Representatives passed House Bill 153 (the budget bill) by a vote of 59-40. All of the House Republicans voted in support of the budget bill, and all of the House Democrats voted against it. OEA opposes the bill based on a number of critical issues. Of chief concern are the following:

Funding for Public Education: In a tough economy facing a large budget deficit, it is time to focus on the essentials. Nothing is more essential than investing in public education to prepare students for jobs and life as productive citizens. Unfortunately, the budget calls for sizeable cuts in funding for public education. Based on all funds, K-12 education is cut by approximately \$3.1 billion over the course of the biennium. Reductions of this magnitude will lead to a loss of educational opportunities for students, job losses, and increased pressure for local taxation to make up the difference. [To take action and contact your Senator about education funding, click here.](#)

SB 5 Provisions: The budget bill includes a number of provisions related to the teaching profession that are the same or similar to some language contained in Senate Bill 5. Language that is the same or similar to provisions in Senate Bill 5 should be removed from the budget bill. Adding portions of SB 5 to other pieces of legislation would serve to circumvent the voice of voters in the “citizens’ veto.” [To take action and ask your Senator to remove these provisions from the bill, click here.](#)

The aspects similar to SB 5 included in the budget are:

- **Teacher compensation** - Requires teachers to be paid according to a “performance-based” schedule.
- **Evaluations** - Requires at least 50% of teacher evaluations be based on student academic growth. Other factors include quality of instruction; communication and professionalism, and; parent and student satisfaction. This evaluation policy supersedes future collective bargaining agreements.
- **Contractual Protections** - Prohibits awarding a continuing contract to teachers initially licensed after January 1, 2011.
- **Layoffs** - Requires districts to lay off teachers in order of their evaluation rankings and prohibits giving preference in retention based on seniority.

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

Take action —
Become an OEA
Member Lobbyist

Questions?

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Charter Schools and Vouchers: In spite of proposing deep cuts to public education, the budget calls for a rapid expansion of charter schools and vouchers. HB 153 removes the cap on charter schools and allows charter school operators to reap huge profits despite the lack of academic results. Further, the bill would more than quadruple the number of vouchers in the EdChoice program despite the lack of any evidence they improve student performance.

Vouchers and charter schools drain scarce resources from our public school districts where the vast majority of Ohio's students are educated. To do this at a time when practically every district is having its funding cut is irresponsible.

The following OEA-supported amendments were offered in committee and on the House floor but were tabled on party-line votes:

- remove SB 5 provisions from the bill
- restore some education funding
- increase accountability for charter schools
- eliminate the expansion of vouchers.

HB 153 is now receiving hearings in the Senate Finance Committee. OEA testified before the committee on Wednesday, May 12, 2011 to voice these concerns and ask for key changes to the bill.

We continue to need all OEA members to make their voice heard on these critical issues. Funding for our schools, opportunities for students and vital education policy decisions hang in the balance. The stakes could not be higher. Take action today!

Voucher Bill Undergoes Changes

The House Education Committee adopted a new version of House Bill 136 but has yet to hold a vote on the legislation. The bill, sponsored by Representative Matt Huffman (R-Lima), would create two new statewide voucher programs in Ohio. The bill would create a special education voucher program that would be available for up to 5% of Ohio's students with an individualized education plan (IEP). The bill would also create the "PACT" voucher program. Eligibility for the PACT program would be based solely on meeting household income guidelines. The substitute version of HB 136 made no changes to the special education voucher program as proposed, but there were a number of changes to the PACT voucher program.

The major changes contained in the new version of HB 136 are:

- The bill retains the EdChoice and Cleveland scholarship programs. In the earlier version both programs were eliminated and replaced by the PACT program.
- A cap on the number of vouchers is applied to the PACT program. Under the bill, any unused slots under the maximum number of EdChoice vouchers would be available for

PACT scholarships. At introduction, the number of vouchers proposed by HB 136 was unlimited. The current budget bill proposes to increase the number of EdChoice slots from 14,000 to 60,000 over the next two years.

- The PACT scholarship would not be available to students currently enrolled in private schools.

OEA is fundamentally opposed to taxpayer funded voucher programs that subsidize private school tuition and drain resources from public schools where 90% of Ohio's students are educated. HB 136 would be a departure from current voucher programs in Ohio in that it would allow students in any district, even those public schools with a designation of "Excellent," to receive a voucher.

Bill Proposes Elimination of Special Elections

On Thursday, May 12, 2011, a substitute version of election reform legislation surfaced with the inclusion of a proposal to eliminate special elections in Ohio. The proposal is contained in Senate Bill 148, sponsored by Senator Mark Wagoner (R-Ottawa Hills). Current law allows special elections in February and August. Elimination of these elections would reduce the number of attempts a school district can go to the ballot to pass a levy when needed to ensure the operation of the school district and maintain academic programs. Under current law, school districts can go to the ballot three times a year if needed. Unfortunately, it often takes three or four attempts to pass a levy. Ohio's schools would be adversely affected by reduced access to the ballot to secure needed funding. This is especially true in light of proposed cuts to public education and local government in the state budget.

Bus Service Privatization Bill Clears Committee

On Tuesday, May 3, 2011, Senate Bill 116 was voted out of the Senate Education Committee. SB 116 would permit non-Civil Service school boards of education to outsource school district transportation services for reasons of "economy and efficiency." The OEA has testified in opposition to the bill. OEA believes that transporting children to school is a critical part of K-12 education, not a peripheral service that should be detached from other public school functions. Further, outsourcing this important public education service can undermine student safety, reduce accountability for taxpayer dollars and can often result in increased costs. The bill was passed on a party-line vote with the Democrats on the committee voting against the measure. SB 116 has not yet been scheduled for a vote by the full Senate.