



# OEA Legislative Watch

September 23, 2011

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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## Voucher Bill Narrowly Clears Education Committee

House Bill 136 passed by the House Education Committee on Wednesday, September 21, 2011 by a vote of 12-10. The bill, sponsored by Representative Matt Huffman (R-Lima), would create a new statewide voucher program that would divert even more funding from Ohio's public schools. The bill would create the "PACT scholarship" to provide taxpayer-funded vouchers for students to attend private schools. Students would be eligible for vouchers based solely on household income (with a cap of \$95,000). OEA strongly opposes this bill. Under HB 136, every school district would potentially lose students and funding to private schools regardless of how well the public schools perform. Further, the bill would allow students already enrolled in private school to be eligible for the voucher program. The potential fiscal impact on public schools, where the vast majority of children are educated, could be devastating.

Wednesday's hearing featured several hours of testimony in opposition to HB 136. OEA member Greg Mild of the Columbus Education Association offered powerful testimony about the negative effects of HB 136 as did several school board members, superintendents and school treasurers from throughout Ohio. Representatives Dan Ramos (D-Lorain), Teresa Fedor (D-Toledo) and Denise Driehaus (D-Cincinnati) offered amendments to change key aspects of the bill. Those amendments were tabled on party line votes. The committee vote of 12-10 saw the vast majority of Republicans supporting HB 136 with only Representatives Nan Baker (R-Westlake) and Marlene Anielski (R-Walton Hills) joining the Democrats on the committee voting against the bill. Representative Bill Patmon (D-Cleveland) was not present for the vote.

Voice your opposition to HB 136. [Click here for more information and to take action.](#)

**Bill Sets New Congressional Districts and March 2012 Primary**

The legislature adopted HB 319 which establishes the boundaries for Ohio Congressional districts for the next ten years. The bill also sets March 6 as the date for the 2012 primary election and makes an appropriation of \$2.75 to assist county boards of election to prepare for the election. Previous legislation (HB 194) had changed the primary from March to May in presidential years, but that bill is being challenged by a referendum campaign due to provisions that served to suppress voting.

As a result of the 2010 census, Ohio will lose two seats in Congress. The new lines were drawn to establish 16 Congressional districts. Because of Republican majorities in the legislature, the lines are drawn in a way that favors Republican candidates. Despite Ohio being considered a “swing state,” 12 districts are believed to favor Republicans and four favor Democrats. Only two districts are believed to be “competitive.”

A number of district boundaries include two current members of Congress. Steve Austria (R-Springfield) and Michael Turner (R-Dayton) share a district as do Marcia Kaptur (D-Toledo) and Dennis Kucinich (D-Cleveland) setting up potential primaries. Additionally, Betty Sutton (D-Copley) and Jim Rennaci (R-Wadsworth) share a district that seems to favor the Republican.