

General Assembly pushes through last minute private prison mandate

As we go to press, it's likely that the Republican-controlled General Assembly will push through capital appropriations bill language that locks in statute that Ohio must maintain two private prison contracts.

This eleventh hour mandate comes, despite nearly 300 letters of opposition to the Ohio House and Senate, as many GOP legislators try to make their mark before their term ends with the new year.

According to new language that surfaced from the House in mid-December, the deal would cement in law the contracts of no less than two private prisons, regardless of how well the contractor performs and regardless of the need for the facilities. The language would also exempt the private prisons from ever being considered for closure.

"This is just bad government getting worse," said OCSEA DR&C Assembly President Tim Shafer. "We have always been opposed to the two private prisons. We've had a history of vendors with contract violations, public safety

Learning from TBO; pushing for change

As a direct result of having a labor-friendly Governor elected in November, OCSEA has been able to bring forward several issues to the Strickland/Fisher team regarding the transition to the new administration.

Agency transition teams are speaking with stakeholders now, including OCSEA, about topics such as labor/management relationships, agency budget concerns, how former policies have affected state services, what strategies should be used to improve state government and how to plan for the future to Turn Around Ohio.

In addition, assembly and district presidents, OCSEA Board of Directors members and chapter presidents attended an event Dec. 16 at OCSEA HQ to discuss their top priorities with the new administration.

Help us make it better: fill out TBO survey

In an effort to look back on our Take Back Ohio successes and to help us make improvements going into 2008, OCSEA has mailed out a TBO survey. The survey asks activists what they think worked and what didn't work to mobilize members and get them voting for labor-friendly candidates.

Surveys are due back to OCSEA HQ by Dec. 29. Please return the survey to OCSEA, Attn.: Debbie Davis, 390 Worthington Rd., Ste. A, Westerville, OH 43082.

If you or someone you know did not get a survey and would like one, contact Debbie Davis at 800-266-5615, ext. 2608 or ddavis@ocsea.org. ♦

issues, cost overruns and understaffing. Now Ohio could be forever stuck with a vendor that fails to provide a quality, efficient service. That's not bad government, that's horrible government."

"This will result in a private prison contractor essentially hijacking state government and leaving the taxpayers holding the bill," said OCSEA Executive Director Andy Douglas. "Why should the state decrease its flexibility to

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Victory on civil service shows members really do make a difference

Thanks to hundreds of letters and calls sent to their legislators, OCSEA union activists were victorious in fighting off a civil service "deform" bill that would have brought back political paybacks and cronyism.

Despite November's voter referendum to clean up political corruption, OCSEA predicted that outgoing lawmakers would attempt to fast track bills during this lame duck session that could harm union members and working families. And we were right.

However, the union successfully convinced lawmakers to strike the damaging provisions from the civil service bill that was destined for passage before the end of the year. House Bill 187 moved out of a House committee without any language referring to furloughs or reduced work schedules, thanks to the union's careful monitoring and hard work.

The union was also able to restore the requirement that the state submit a written rationale to justify a layoff, and was successful in eliminating language that would have expanded the use of temporary employees.

Perhaps most important, the union secured language that
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House weakens minimum wage bill; Fight looms in Senate

The Ohio House recently passed a bill that attempts to rewrite parts of the newly passed Constitutional Amendment to raise Ohio's minimum wage. HB 690 excludes certain groups of employees who were recently given a pay raise by Ohio voters, like home healthcare workers and firefighters. It also weakened other worker protections specified in the voter-approved amendment.

Now it's up to the Senate, but whether or not the Senate will right these wrongs remains the question. OCSEA members are being asked to call their state senator and urge them NOT to support HB 690 because it 1) rewrites the voter-approved amendment to deny the new minimum wage to some workers; 2) protects "bad apple employers" from having to repay unpaid minimum wages to their employees; 3) Eliminates the current Ohio rule banning agreements to work for less than the minimum wage,

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Ohio



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Union brings to light 36.05 inconsistencies

OCSEA has brought to the attention of OCB numerous inconsistencies in the administering of the findings of the 36.05 classification review. For instance, some agencies have not been including overtime or holiday pay in the calculation of an employee's back pay. Others were wrongly placing some employees in step 1. To clear up these matters, OCB recently distributed a memo to all Labor Relations Specialists that in effect says:

1. Affected employees should be placed in the step of the new pay range that gives the employee a wage increase of approximately 4 percent.
2. The employee's step indicator (the anniversary for any future step increases) will be reset as of July 1, 2006.
3. Any employee who has completed probation can not be placed in step 1. Employees who were on probation on July 1, 2006 should not have their step indicators reset.
4. When figuring back pay, the agency must include overtime worked and holiday pay in the calculation.

If affected OCSEA members continue to have concerns or problems, they should contact Sandi Friel at OCSEA at 800-969-4702, ext. 4713. ❁

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manage its resources by locking itself into a contractor relationship?"

Besides decreasing the state's ability to make choices about good government, many believe the bill is an obvious pitch to reward supporters of the current administration. "This is tantamount to rewarding your friends with a blank government check," said OCSEA President Ron Alexander. "The language rewards these contractors with a statutory requirement that the State of Ohio do business with them."

Also according to the bill, the state can only take over operation of the private prisons if there are no willing private vendors who bid on the job.

OCSEA is currently monitoring this language and taking steps to eliminate it from the bill. In the event that that mandate is maintained, OCSEA will pursue ways to reduce the impact of the language. ❁

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guarantees the legislation would not modify any collective bargaining agreement.

"We are heartened at the response from our members who wrote and called their legislators with their concerns. By the legislature's reaction and our victory, it's obvious the kind of political clout this union carries," said OCSEA Executive Director Andy Douglas.

Thanks to all those activists who responded so quickly to the union's call to action. ❁

Wood County chapter hosts Toys for Tots at zoo



Hundreds of OCSEA members and their friends and families took part in this year's Holiday Party Lights at the Toledo Zoo, sponsored by Wood County Chap. 8700. The chapter's annual holiday party included a dinner and a collection for Toys for Tots.

Pictured (left) with Wood County and ODOT Assembly Pres. Kate Callahan (left) are Marines collecting Toys for Tots and Bob Foltz (ODOT, D-2) dressed as Santa Claus.

CMCA registration, hotel deadlines near

The Committee for Minority & Community Affairs conference will be held in Cincinnati at the Hilton Netherland Plaza Feb. 9-11.

The hotel reservation deadline is Jan. 19. The conference room rate is \$112.32 (price includes tax). Reservations must be made by calling the hotel directly at 800-445-8667.

The deadline to register for the conference is Feb. 2. The registration fee is \$110.00 and includes the program, meals, and admission to the production of *Crowns—A Gospel Musical with Attitude*. Extra meal tickets are available for accompanying guests and should be indicated on the registration form. Browse ocsea.org/CMCA for more details.

A conference packet was recently sent out. Contact Debbie Davis at 800-266-5615, ext. 2608 or ddavis@ocsea.org with questions. ❁

Union Power: BUP7 conference is April 20-21

The seventh Building Union Power conference will take place at the Hyatt on Capitol Square in downtown Columbus April 20-21.

The event is open to all members. Members can find more information in the coming months on their union bulletin boards, in this and other union publications and on the OCSEA website at ocsea.org/bup. ❁

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creating a "back door" provision which could eliminate the minimum wage altogether.

To leave a phone message for your Ohio Senator or get his or her number, call 800-282-0253 OR go to www.senate.state.oh.us/senators/ for senator contact information.