

Prison overcrowding gets governor's attention

Prison overcrowding is weighing heavily on the mind of Governor Strickland these days. Not only did he mention the problem at a recent Faith Vote Columbus event (see photos next page), now he's approached House and Senate leaders with a proposal to bring in a third party to evaluate the situation and even earmarked money to evaluate the structure that once was Lima Correctional Facility.

Gongwer News Service reported that the governor would like the Council of State Governments to assist the state in coming up with solutions to the overcrowding. According to Gongwer, the Council will help only if the House, Senate and governor agree they are needed. Senate President Bill Harris and House Speaker John Husted have not yet made a commitment.

At the Faith Vote event in Columbus where the Governor presented a status report on his first 11 months in office, he mentioned there are too many young men incarcerated in the state's prisons and that rehabilitation

and success upon release are all but unattainable. It's been reported that 60 percent of the state's adult prisoners are being held for non-violent offenses or are being held for less than a year.

Meanwhile, OCSEA is still waiting for information about the creation of a separate panel that would be appointed by Strickland to prepare recommendations for the prison system. The union has been mentioned as one of the stakeholder groups that would be part of the panel.

As for reopening Lima Correctional Institution to address the problem, Strickland is cautious, but has not ruled it out. In public statements he indicates that while everything is still on the table, the solution to more prisoners shouldn't just be opening more prisons. ♦

AFSCME endorses Clinton, heads to Iowa

Recently, AFSCME International announced that the union is endorsing New York Senator Hillary Clinton for President.

According to a press release, AFSCME's Executive Board endorsed Clinton after an extensive process that included candidate interviews and membership polling.

"We've looked at these candidates closely, and we've drilled down deep into the union to see who was inspiring our members, who has what it takes to take back the White House and who can govern effectively when they get there," AFSCME International President Gerald McEntee said. "We looked for the candidate who will fight for working families and who has the greatest ability to win, the candidate who will motivate our members to make calls, knock on doors and talk to their co-workers like never before."

The announcement included a pledge to mobilize a volunteer army to help the Senator across the country. Recently, AFSCME volunteers were called up to go to Iowa for the January caucus where AFSCME represents 30,000 workers.

OCSEA and the other Ohio AFSCME affiliates, Council 8 and OAPSE, all stepped up to the plate to send activists to Iowa for a six week campaign. ♦

Sick leave accrual dips last pay day

Union members should be reminded that sick leave accrual during the last payroll period of the year decreases slightly.

For the first 25 payroll periods, sick leave is accrued at 3.1 hours, but for the last payroll period, sick leave is accrued at 2.5 hours. That way, the total number of hours accrued is exactly 80 hours per year, the amount negotiated in OCSEA's contract with the state. To see the policy regarding it, go to <http://das.ohio.gov/hrd/prltr/prltr731.pdf>. ♦

FYI: High Performance Initiative Award deadline extended to Jan. 25! Go to ocsea.org/hpi to nominate.

Bush cuts in WIA could affect JFS

Cuts by the Bush administration to a spending package could have a direct impact on jobs in Ohio. The Workforce Investment Act line item, funded through the Labor-Health and Human Services-Education budget, could be cut by as much as \$20 million for Ohio alone.

President Bush vetoed increases in the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill that both parties had agreed to. Then Congress came up short on the number of votes needed to override Bush's veto.

Bush's stance on spending bills, which has been to veto anything (except defense spending) that increases funding, could have extreme negative consequences for programs like WIA in the near future.

AFSCME is working hard to ensure that WIA is protected and the programs preserved. ♦

Hold Feb. 15-17 for CMCA

Next year's CMCA conference named, "Change is Going to Come," will be held in Columbus at the Doubletree Hotel on Feb. 15-17.

Call the hotel directly at 614-885-3334 or toll free at 800-870-0349 to make your reservation by Feb. 1 and receive the special room rate of \$99.23, including tax.

A fun gospel drama called "I Don't Want No Corny Man" will round out the weekend's activities.

To register, go to www.ocsea.org/cmca. ♦

UET tackles retirement

UET is sponsoring another free pre-retirement training Fri. and Sat., Jan. 11-12, 2008. This is a day-and-a-half of training with breakfast and lunch being served. Some of the topics include: PERS, Deferred Compensation, Financial Advisor, OCSEA retiree information and health and wellness. To sign up members can call OCSEA at 800-969-4702, ext. 2645 and talk to Beth Lowe. ♦

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Quality: Agency Review Teams get training

The Agency Review Pilot Teams from DAS, ODOT and Public Safety recently attended a training to help prepare them once the Governor's Employee and Stakeholder Suggestion Program is up and running.

The three teams reviewed real-life suggestions for work process improvements from their individual agencies. The exercise gave the team insight into how difficult it can be to problem-solve and the enormous scope of some of the suggestions. More than 90 suggestions have been received statewide in the three weeks the program's website has been on-line.

Union members for ART teams at ODJFS, DYS and the Industrial Commission have also been identified. The leaders at all other agencies continue to seek members who possess the qualities necessary to participate in this program.

To submit process improvement suggestions go to <http://efficiency.ohio.gov> or to OCSEA's site at www.ocsea.org/quality. ❁

Corrections to HT Series info

Please note the following corrections regarding the ODOT Highway Technician series as stated in the fall 2007 issue of the OCSEA *Highways and Byways* newsletter.

A statement in the story indicating that employees can use Union Education Trust money to take a course elsewhere instead of waiting for ODOT slots to open up needs to be clarified. Art. 38 of the OCSEA contract requires management to provide training by seniority. As a result, employees cannot bypass the seniority list by taking classes elsewhere using their UET Professional Enrichment funds. Employees must first exhaust their ODOT "attempts" before using their UET funds. However, if employees have exhausted their attempts and still have not passed a course, they can choose to use their UET PE Funds.

It was also incorrectly stated that an employee's name will automatically go to the bottom of the HT seniority list if forced to give up an HT course due to operational need. This is not true. If an employee is unable to attend a course due to operational need, the employee will automatically be scheduled in the next available session.

ODOT employees are advised to never voluntarily waive out of a course or any opportunity to advance through the series. If asked by management to miss a course because of operational need, the employee should ask management to contact the HT Coordinator and cancel the opportunity due to operational need. ❁

MR/DD Future's Committee holds hearings

The MR/DD Future's Committee has recently been taking public testimony as well as written comments about the future of MR/DD services in Ohio.

MH/MR/OVH President Monty Blanton and Regional Vice President of the Ohio Association of Public School Employees Davida Russell serve as the two labor representatives appointed by Gov. Strickland on the panel.

OCSEA is making recommendations to the committee that include creating intake units for dual-diagnosed individuals at each developmental center, developing waiver residential programs at each DC (similar to the Gallipolis pilot) and creating regional programs in each of the seven DC catchment areas for the training of community providers.

Other recommendations can be submitted to the committee through Feb. 2008. To submit recommendations, email Blanton at wmb0001@yahoo.com. ❁

Ohio Labor 2008 trainings

Union politicians from around the state recently took part in the first regional trainings sponsored by the AFL-CIO for the start of Ohio Labor 2008. More trainings will be scheduled for next year.

To attend future trainings in your area contact Jeanette Mauk at 614-224-8271. ❁



Below: OCSEA Board of Director member Derek Collins MCs the Faith Vote Columbus event at Trinity Baptist Church in Columbus where over 500 labor activists, elected officials and people of faith gathered.



Above: Governor Strickland speaks at a Faith Vote Columbus event. The Governor was invited to give a report of his first 11 months in office. Below: A children's choir performs.

