

March 11, 2011

Dear OCSEA Member:

You are making history! Four weeks ago, Senate Bill 5 was introduced in the Ohio legislature to take away the rights of public employees to collectively bargain. And, four weeks ago, we started a campaign like no other.

With your help, we mobilized thousands of public workers – correction officers, highway workers, teachers, nurses, direct care workers, customer service representatives, secretaries, firefighters, police officers, maintenance repair workers, fiscal specialists and more. You name it – public employees came out in droves! They called; they wrote; they swarmed the Statehouse; they picketed; they stood side by side with private sector unionists; they rallied; and they drove hundreds of miles to fight this fight and let their voices be heard.

Because of this massive effort, we changed the unchangeable. When it came down to the final vote, six Republican senators sided with us against S.B. 5. No one could have predicted we would lose by just one vote (17-16). And even though we lost the battle, we are far from losing the war.

Under the original bill, state employees had NO collective bargaining rights at all. But, under unrelenting pressure from OCSEA's rank and file – who contacted senators daily – amendments offered last week put us back in the bill with some limited rights.

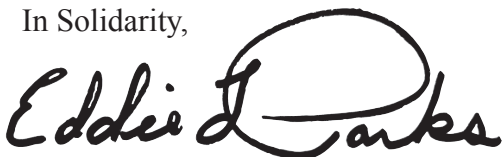
However, now the bill makes criminals out of public employees and slaps them with fines, terminations and even jail time if they participate in or even support a strike. It gives the legislature final decision-making power in any contract disputes and allows the state to declare a fiscal emergency to unilaterally open up union contracts mid-stream. *(See the fact sheet included that explains what is in the current bill.)*

So the fight continues. For the next couple of weeks our focus will be on the Ohio House of Representatives. In the weeks ahead, we need the same commitment and concentration you just showed. The odds are still stacked against us. In fact, it is believed getting support from members of the House will be even harder than it was in the Senate.

However, we will not go down without a fight! In addition, under Ohio law, there are legal options we can pursue if our elected leaders continue to ignore the will of the people. Some of you might be aware that a statewide referendum could be an option for us down the road. I've included some information about that as well.

This is an historic moment. The outcome of this fight will affect not just OCSEA members or public workers but middle class families in Ohio and around the nation. I have been truly moved by the outpouring of activism and support from our members over this last month. ***But we must remain strong and persistent, because this is not a sprint. It's a marathon.*** Thank you again for your hard work and commitment.

In Solidarity,



Eddie L. Parks

OCSEA President