



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **State employee layoffs not the answer to budget hole**

Columbus – Union officials of the largest state employees union were stunned at the news that as many as 12 state facilities could be shuttered as a result of \$7 billion gap in the state's budget, as reported in a document released by Gov. Ted Strickland's office yesterday.

Leaders of the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association were all but speechless to learn that six Correctional Institutions, two Department of Youth Services Facilities, one Mental Health Facility and five Developmental Centers for the Mentally Retarded could be closed that would effectively decimate Ohio's prison system as well as the state's "last resort" services for individuals with severe mental health illness and developmental disabilities.

Union officials were apprised of the situation by Strickland's office and have indicated OCSEA's support for a \$5 billion package of federal aid to bolster Ohio's budget.

"While the magnitude of the fiscal crisis is of such proportions that every means necessary must be utilized to stem the tide of red ink," said OCSEA Executive Director Andy Douglas, "laying off thousands of state employees will jeopardize the health and safety of every citizen in every community in Ohio."

"Even if you laid off every state employee, from the governor on down, you couldn't come close to filling Ohio's budget gap," said Douglas.

Until now, Ohio's prison system had been off the table in discussions regarding budget trimming due to historically high inmate populations. Ohio's state prisons house over 51,000 inmates and staff-to-inmate ratios have skyrocketed.

"We are treading on dangerous ground here. We are already well above our capacity to handle the historic inmate population Ohio already has. We're not just talking about throwing our prison system into chaos, we're talking about endangering whole communities of Ohioans," warned OCSEA President Eddie L. Parks.

The union has been at the receiving end of cuts over the last decade that have closed Orient Correctional Facility, Lima Correctional Facility as well as Springview Developmental Center and Applecreek Developmental Center. Department of Youth Services facilities have been consolidated, Job and Family Service centers have closed and ODNR's Division of Parks has been cut by 60 percent.

"While obviously we are concerned with the jobs of our members, we are more concerned about what will happen to communities of Ohioans who rely on the safety and security our Correction Officers provide. We are more concerned about what will happen to the son or daughter who relies on the life-giving services we offer in our state facilities for individuals with severe developmental disabilities and mental illness." said Parks. "We are joined by thousands of stakeholders who receive safety-net services from state government who will face devastating consequences if these cuts go through."

OCSEA / AFSCME Local 11 represents about 35,000 state employees, 10,000 of whom are state prison employees.

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