

“Fire sale” of state assets means less accountability, little savings

WESTERVILLE – Leaders of the state’s largest public employee union say putting state prisons and other state resources up for bid amounts to a “fire sale” of Ohio’s assets that will give taxpayers even less say over the operation of state government.

“They say taxpayers need to be at the table on collective bargaining contracts, that there needs to be increased transparency,” said Eddie L. Parks, President of the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association. “But by selling off state assets like prisons or the Lottery you’ve completely closed the door on transparency. Taxpayers will have no idea how their money is being spent or where it is going.”

“This amounts to nothing more than a “close out sale” of state government that will leave Ohio’s taxpayers holding the bag in the end,” said Parks. “It’s a quick fix that sells the future of Ohio to the highest bidder.”

“This also demonstrates why Senate Bill 5 must be opposed. Drastic measures like selling off five state prisons is only netting \$200 million? OCSEA saved more than that in *one* year of our contract by sitting down with the Strickland administration,” said Parks. “We did that *because* of collective bargaining, not in spite of it.”

Additionally, the proposal to sell Grafton Correctional Institution, North Central Correctional Institution, the vacant Marion Juvenile Correctional Facility and the two private prisons will put taxpayers in the hole for corporate profits and jeopardize security, say union Corrections employees.

OCSEA Corrections Assembly President Charlie Williamson says private prison companies have a track record of cutting corners that diminish prison safety. “Their first obligation is to their shareholders, not to the taxpayers of Ohio. And to their shareholders, the bottom line is profit--not security.”

Research has shown private prisons cut corners by hiring fewer staff and lowering wages. A security breach in Arizona last year where inmates escaped and hostages were brutally murdered called into question the ability of private prison companies to keep communities safe at all. In Youngstown, Ohio a similar incident happened at a federal prison owned by Corrections Corporation of America where six inmates escaped and others were killed.

OCSEA represents approximately 34,000 state employees who work in a wide range of security, regulatory, administrative, direct care, maintenance, customer service and other positions. For more information, contact Sally Meckling, 614-865-2602 or 614-404-3881 (cell).