



NEWS RELEASE

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Union files lawsuit against private prison contractors

The Ohio Civil Service Employees Association has filed a lawsuit on behalf of over 270 members who were laid off or otherwise negatively affected by the privatization of North Central Correctional Institution in Marion and the sale of Lake Erie Correctional Facility in Conneaut.

The complaint, filed in the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas on Monday, names 11 employee plaintiffs who have lost their jobs, been uprooted from their communities or were wrongfully excluded from employment because of the privatization of these prisons.

The union is seeking an end to the prison contracts and full reinstatement of the affected employees.

Tucked into Ohio's budget bill (House Bill 153) last year were numerous changes to Ohio law that would allow for the first-ever outright sale of a state prison as well as the expansion of the number of leased prisons in Ohio.

The complaint filed by OCSEA indicates that the sale of Conneaut and the leasing of NCCI are in violation of numerous Ohio constitutional laws, including one that prohibits the state from lending its credit to private companies. The lawsuit also questions the constitutionality of privatizing prisons on the basis of closing a budget gap. More than \$72 million from the sale of the Conneaut prison that was supposed to offset a hole in the state budget remains in a state retiree bond fund.

"While we believe that privatization is unlawful, our bigger concern is the impact that privatization has on our members' lives," said OCSEA President Christopher Mabe. "Not only is privatization unsafe and bad public business, it's devastating for the lives of these employees. These public servants did nothing wrong and now are being punished for these bad policies."

Besides working as a Correction Officer at NCCI, Daniel Karcher headed up the training of a volunteer fire department in Leesburgh Township. However, after his layoff from NCCI and subsequent transfer to the Ohio Reformatory for Women, he was no longer able to continue training and the township's volunteer fire department program dwindled. Rebecca Sayers, a laid off Correction Officer who transferred to Toledo to retain employment, travels twice a week to Toledo and must stay each week away from her family. Clair Crawford and her husband have a daughter with an intensive medical condition. After being laid off from NCCI, they both took jobs at ORW in Marysville. As a result of the commute, the Crawfords now depend on relatives to care for their disabled child.

OCSEA represents approximately 33,000 public 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).