



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WIDENER, SAWYER INTRODUCE STUDENT TRUSTEE VOTING RIGHTS BILL

BILL WOULD GIVE STUDENT TRUSTEES AT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES EQUAL VOTING RIGHTS

COLUMBUS—State Senators Chris Widener (R- Springfield) and Tom Sawyer (D- Akron) today introduced bipartisan legislation that would grant full voting powers to student members of university boards of trustees at Ohio’s public institutions of higher education.

“Every decision made by a university’s trustees affects students and it is important that students have an equal seat at the table,” Widener said. “If we are going to ask students to pay higher tuition and take on greater amounts of debt then we should grant them full powers on the board.”

“Over the years, issues that student trustees have typically participated in are often difficult and sometimes unpopular,” Sawyer added. “But the quality of their contributions to campus governance will bring a constructive new dimension to shared decision-making in Ohio’s higher education.”

Under current law, each of Ohio’s 14 public universities have two student trustees that are appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. These students are selected from a pool of five candidates recommended by procedures adopted by each university’s student governments and board of trustees. However, student trustees do not have voting powers, do not count towards a quorum, and cannot attend executive sessions. This legislation would make student trustees full and equal members at each university

Senator Widener and Sawyer’s bill is a companion measure to HB 377, which was introduced by Representatives Duffey and Stinziano in the Ohio House of Representatives on November 15, 2011. The bill has support from Ohio State President E. Gordon Gee. Currently, more than 30 other states give full voting powers to student trustees at their public universities.

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Senator Chris Widener serves the people of the 10th Senate District, which includes Clark, Greene and Madison counties. He is chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, and a member of the Senate Ways & Means & Economic Development, Government Oversight & Reform, and Rules & Reference committees.

Senator Tom Sawyer represents the 28th Senate District covering Portage County and portions of Summit County. He serves as Ranking Minority Member on the Senate Education Committee, and as a member on the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee, Finance Committee, and Insurance, Commerce, and Labor Committee.