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REFORMS IN SENATE BILL 5 NEEDED TO HELP GOVERNMENTS MANAGE COSTS, WORKFORCES DURING DIFFICULT ECONOMIC TIMES

Many of you have contacted my office to express your opinions on Senate Bill 5, and I sincerely appreciate your participation in the process. Your opinions were noted, and I welcomed the many constructive suggestions for improvements in the bill. As I said in my speech on the Senate floor, Senate Bill 5 is a much-needed reform of Ohio's public sector collective bargaining laws. Passed in 1983, these laws have remained unchanged despite major changes in Ohio's economy. Today, reform is necessary to adjust to the new economic realities of 2011 and to better equip government at all levels to deal with our current economic situation.

Senate Bill 5 is simply about empowering state and local governments to better manage their workforces and control costs to live within the taxpayers' means. Just two key provisions, asking public workers to pay 15 percent of their healthcare insurance costs (most private sector workers pay 23 to 30 percent of their healthcare expenses) and their own share of their own pension (the government employer will still pay the full employer share) will save millions of dollars and thousands of jobs. In fact, the Columbus Dispatch estimated that these two provisions alone would save roughly \$74 million for central Ohio local governments. That equates to roughly 1,500 policemen, firefighters and teachers whose jobs could be saved when budgets are trimmed just by bringing these two benefits more in line with those of average Ohioans.

One of the most difficult aspects of addressing the concerns of my constituents has been fighting myths that have risen out of a fear of change and the unknown. Many of these concerns are driven by the same financial considerations that impact every day Ohioans, 400,000 of whom have lost jobs and countless more who have had wages, benefits, and hours cut due to Ohio's economic woes. It is precisely this economic situation that this bill and other reforms to state government are directly aimed at addressing. We must reform and transform Ohio to help create the environment for Ohio businesses and companies to create jobs Ohioans need.

I understand change is hard and it is even more difficult when various interests take to distorting or misleading people for their own purpose. For this reason, I encourage everyone to seek out more than one source for information. If the claims are extreme, they probably are aimed at motivating by fear more than fact.

Here are just some of the myths we have gotten based upon calls, emails, or other questions to our office.

Myth: *The bill will hurt the middle class.*

Fact: Senate Bill 5 will empower the middle class in Ohio by restoring the ability of local governments to control their budgets. A common misconception is that this bill will so drastically affect wages that local economies will be devastated. This is simply untrue and does not reflect the fact that money used to pay for public servants' salaries comes directly from the taxpayers. The common sense reforms in Senate Bill 5 will prevent layoffs and keep more teachers, firefighters and police officers on the job. It will help state and local governments better manage their work forces by using some of the same tools that have allowed significant productivity improvements in the private sector.

Myth: *This is a politically motivated reform that would "strip away collective bargaining."*

Fact: Senate Bill 5 does not eliminate public employee unions and does not prohibit collective bargaining over wages, hours, or terms and conditions of employment. It does try to balance the previously one-sided negotiations that were slanted towards the unions when the law was first passed by increasing transparency and preserving certain management rights.

Myth: *This bill was "rammed through" and the unions and Democrats could not participate.*

Fact: The process for Senate Bill 5 has been more deliberative and has taken longer than the Democrats allowed for consideration of the 1983 collective bargaining bill. The Senate spent roughly a month on this bill held numerous hearings and took testimony from 70 plus witnesses who were asked hundreds of questions by Senators for and against the bill. I spent over 20 hours listening to testimony, both for and against this bill. Furthermore, I pleaded with the unions and Democrats to offer constructive suggestions for this bill, but all I was told was, "Kill the bill." Throughout the process, and despite comments from the Democrat Senate members that the current system needed improvement, not one change to Senate Bill 5 was offered by the other side.

Myth: *The Senate has exempted themselves and their staff from the provisions of this bill.*

Fact: When the Democrats passed public worker collective bargaining in 1983, they exempted their legislative employees from collective bargaining. Nevertheless, all Senate employees and elected officials pay 15% or more of their healthcare premium and 100% of their employee contribution to the retirement system. This is exactly what is required by Senate Bill 5. The pay for Senators has been frozen at the 2008 level and no increase is in the foreseeable future. I have been clear that I would be supportive of legislation to reduce the salaries of members of the Senate and House of Representatives.

Myth: *Senate Bill 5 will cut teachers salaries in half or lower teachers' salaries to \$17,300.*

Fact: This is simply not true. There is nothing in the bill that reduces any salaries. Teachers, firefighters, police officers and other public workers will still be able to negotiate on wages, benefits, and the terms and conditions of the workplace.

Senate Bill 5 will not be a sole fix of Ohio's \$8 billion projected budget shortfall, as some have suggested we are trying to do. This bill will, however, level the playing field during future negotiations

and will give local governments much needed flexibility when addressing future budgets crunches. This bill will follow the guidance of both FDR and Ronald Reagan by prohibiting strikes by public servants and allowing for the consistent delivery of service to the taxpayers. The bill will require that public employees pay a reasonable portion of their healthcare premium. This bill will increase transparency and allow the public to know exactly what negotiating parties are demanding. This bill will bring Ohio one step closer to having a competitive edge over the rest of the states, territories, and countries we compete with for jobs.

At the end of the day, I believe Senate Bill 5 will have a positive impact on the State of Ohio and that is why I voted in favor of it. I understand that this bill will affect many public servants financially, including many of my closest family and friends, so I do not hold any zealous pride in my vote. However, I believe this vote was the right thing to do for the State of Ohio and the constituents of the 12th Senate District.