



Senator Keith Faber
12th Ohio Senate District

GUEST COLUMN

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2011 SPARKED A TIME FOR RENEWAL IN OHIO

Members of the Senate Majority helped in sparking job creation and economic growth

The past twelve months saw Ohio forge a new path toward economic expansion and growth. From the onset of the 129th General Assembly, Senate Republicans introduced a slate of policy proposals fixed on bringing real relief to the state's residents while also overhauling the way in which government operates. Thanks to a series of responsible and balanced reform measures, Ohio is beginning to realize many of the possibilities that lay ahead.

We knew from the start that job creation would need to be the centerpiece of any true and lasting recovery and that is what led to the groundbreaking *JobsOhio* initiative. Proposed by Governor Kasich, the private-public partnership to attract business and spark job creation received bipartisan support from the legislature and is already having an impact across the state. Thus far, the program has been involved in over 240 business projects and has allowed for more than 82,000 jobs to be either retained or created. In our area alone, *JobsOhio* has been responsible for 560 new jobs and has retained nearly 3,000 existing, at-risk positions.

In all, Ohio's unemployment rate dropped from 9.6% to 8.5% in the past year and more than 45,000 new jobs took root throughout our state. Most importantly, 69,000 unemployed Ohioans from a year ago are now back at work and I look forward to seeing that number rise in the coming months.

In addition to growing our workforce, Ohio reopened its doors to business in 2011. Thanks to a number of innovative tax reforms, job creators are finding a welcomed home in Ohio. The *InvestOhio* program, which I helped to craft, encourages entrepreneurship statewide by offering a 10 percent tax credit to Ohioans who make a two-year investment in a small business with less than \$50 million in assets or \$10 million in sales. Also, a new job retention tax credit passed by the Senate in February is now available to companies that are being lured away by other states. Under the plan, companies who choose to stay in Ohio are able to apply for credits after agreeing to invest a minimum of \$25 million in our state while also retaining at least 1,000 employees here.

Also underway is a renewed effort to ease the tax burden felt by so many of our families. The most recent state operating budget was highlighted by a series of measures aimed at putting more money in the pockets of hard-working Ohioans. Republican lawmakers approved more than

\$800 million in property tax relief for our residents, as well as a 4.2-percent income tax reduction that had previously been halted by the Strickland administration two years ago. Perhaps most significantly, the budget bill finally did away with the job-crushing estate tax that has been driving family-owned farms and businesses out of Ohio for four decades. I know that by freeing ourselves from the constraints of high taxes, the coming years will see local proprietors and families experiencing greater financial stability and more reliable security.

Any foundation for future prosperity would be incomplete without evaluating the way in which government operates. For too long, state government has been a bureaucratic mess that misuses your tax dollars and sometimes works against the best interests of our local communities. Senate Republicans recognized this problem and wasted no time in proposing bold initiatives geared toward creating a more efficient government. Last year saw the passage of legislation that will now require the state Auditor to conduct performance audits of various state agencies. The added oversight tool will help to ensure that public funds are being used in a manner that is both effective and worthwhile in handling interests of the state.

Comprehensive regulatory reform also became a reality in 2011. As chairman of the Regulatory Reform Task Force in 2008, I led a bipartisan panel in reviewing and evaluating the countless regulations that businesses must deal with in order to operate in our state. We found that Ohio's regulatory landscape was saturated with duplicative rules, bureaucratic red tape, and too many wasteful processes that inhibited the ability for businesses to prosper. Our recommendations for reform have finally been enacted into law. I am pleased to report that these changes are already making a welcomed impact throughout our state and businesses now have the ability to operate more freely.

With every new year comes new opportunities, and my colleagues and I remain determined in building on the successes of 2011. Recovery is no simple task and a great deal of work remains at all levels of government. However, I am quite confident that bright days are ahead for Ohio and that 2012 will be a time of continuing progress.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact my office if you have questions or concerns about any of the matters we are considering at the Statehouse. I can be reached by phone at (614) 466-7584, by e-mail at SD12@senate.state.oh.us or by writing me at State Senator Keith Faber, Ohio Statehouse, 1 Capitol Square, Columbus, Ohio 43215. I look forward to hearing from you.

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Senator Faber represents Ohio's 12th Senate District which includes Allen, Champaign, Mercer, Preble, and Shelby Counties, as well as portions of Auglaize and Darke Counties. He currently serves as President Pro Tempore of the Ohio Senate.