



Senator Larry Obhof
22nd Ohio Senate District

GUEST COLUMN

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IMPROVED EMPLOYMENT NUMBERS ROUND OUT YEAR OF PRO-GROWTH REFORMS

When 2011 began, it was more important than ever that the General Assembly take decisive steps to improve the state's economy. Ohio had lost more than 400,000 jobs in four years, and we approached the biennial budget cycle facing a multi-billion dollar shortfall. It was clear that Ohio could not continue down the path it was headed. We needed pro-growth reforms that would foster job creation and economic prosperity, rather than burying Ohio's employers in unnecessary red tape.

The past year showed significant improvements for our state. Perhaps the most underreported fact of the year is Ohio's marked increase in jobs. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the state's total nonfarm employment has increased by roughly 79,000 jobs since December 2010. That includes increases in key industries such as construction and manufacturing. During that time, Ohio's unemployment rate fell from 9.5% to the current 8.5%.

The Ohio legislature passed a number of important pro-growth reforms in 2011:

- **JobsOhio** – In our first major piece of legislation, House Bill 1, the General Assembly created a non-profit entity that will focus exclusively on job creation and retention. We removed the bureaucracy and chose experienced business leaders – people who have created thousands of jobs in the private sector and who understand how the economy works – to head up the effort.
- **Public-Private Partnerships for Infrastructure** – I helped craft provisions of House Bill 114, the biennial transportation budget, which provided for public-private partnerships for infrastructure projects. That provision received bipartisan support and was even lauded by the Senate's Democratic leader as a "jobs bill" that "puts people to work."
- **Regulatory Reform** – Senate Bill 2 reformed the regulatory process in Ohio. By cutting through the bureaucratic red tape, we have enabled small businesses to once again focus on creating jobs. The measure also helps to ensure that regulations are enforced consistently and fairly.

- Job Retention Tax Credits – I served as the Senate floor manager for House Bill 58, which included job retention tax credits that were crucial in keeping companies like American Greetings and Diebold in Ohio, saving thousands of jobs.
- InvestOhio – The state operating budget, House Bill 153, created the InvestOhio program, which provides tax credits for investments in small businesses. To date, the program has received more than 1,200 applications for credits on small business investments totaling more than \$250 million.
- Tax Reforms – The General Assembly has repealed the death tax, beginning in 2013. We also restored the final phase-in of a 21% income tax cut for working Ohioans that was first approved in 2005. These reforms will help make our state more competitive, keep small businesses here in Ohio, and let Ohioans keep more of their hard-earned dollars.

I firmly believe that the government does not “create” jobs – employers do that by creating and expanding opportunities. However, in 2011 the General Assembly set the stage for economic growth by creating a better business climate. We have pursued an agenda that promotes growth, encourages investment, and gets people working again. Ohio is now a place where people want to do business, and that means there are more job opportunities for Ohioans. We have a lot more work to do, but for the first time in years, Ohio is headed in the right direction.

Please do not hesitate to contact my office if you have questions, concerns, or ideas about any issue facing Ohio. I can be reached by phone at (614) 466-7505, or by e-mail at SD22@senate.state.oh.us. You may also reach me by mail at State Senator Larry Obhof, 1 Capitol Square, 1st Floor, Columbus, OH 43215.

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State Senator Larry Obhof represents the 22nd Ohio Senate District, which encompasses Medina, Holmes and Wayne counties and portions of Ashland County. For more information, please visit www.ohiosenate.gov/larry-obhof.