



Senator Tim Schaffer
31st Ohio Senate District

GUEST COLUMN

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RESTORING A HEALTHY, PROSPEROUS FREE-MARKET ECONOMY

BY STATE SENATOR TIM SCHAFFER

For the past year, lawmakers have pursued their legislative duties with two primary goals in sight - growing Ohio's workforce and rebuilding its economy. Though much progress has been made, I assure you that the same pair of economic development goals will remain our focal point in the new year.

In order to bring Ohio back to a place of prosperity and strong fiscal footing, it is crucial that the legislature makes good on its commitment to create an environment where small businesses and lending institutions can thrive. Recent efforts to attract outside industries and relieve the tax burden on employers have done just that, and a newfound confidence is beginning to take root throughout our state.

As a life-long fiscal conservative, I am proud to have played a role in the formulation of numerous policies that are now creating a more business-friendly Ohio.

In my current role as Chairman of the Senate Ways and Means and Economic Development Committee, we are working to identify the real causes as to why businesses have left our state over the past several years. To blame Ohio's economic slide solely on the national recession would be irresponsible, and the charge of our committee is considered vital in restoring Ohio's competitive edge over other states. A crucial part of the process is studying Ohio's tax expenditures. Such an examination helps to determine the effectiveness of current tax policies in relation to retaining businesses and jobs in Ohio.

Last year, the General Assembly set the stage for this process by passing a series of landmark tax reforms as part of our biennium state budget bill. The legislation included the restoration of a 4.2 percent income tax reduction for working Ohioans, as well as the elimination of the decades-old estate tax, or "death tax." The death tax is probably the single most onerous policy that has driven capital out of Ohio for years. We are finally eliminating it in January 2013.

I am confident that reform initiatives like these provide families and small businesses with more financial freedom and, in turn, allow lending institutions to play a significant role in the cultivation and growth of our area's businesses.

We know that local businesses and lending institutions are partners in making Ohio's economic woes a thing of the past. As our work continues in Columbus, I remain eager to support sound proposals that will help to strengthen our state's economy and even the playing field for our entrepreneurs.

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State Senator Tim Schaffer was elected to the Ohio Senate in 2006 after serving in the Ohio House of Representatives for six years. His legislative accomplishments include enacting anti-corruption reforms, income tax indexing, and stronger penalties on sexual predators. He and his wife reside in Lancaster.