



Senator Shannon Jones
7th Ohio Senate District

GUEST COLUMN

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**START OF 129TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY BRINGS BOTH CHALLENGES
AND OPPORTUNITIES**

This past week, legislators gathered in Columbus to mark the beginning of the 129th General Assembly. As part of the opening ceremonies, I was sworn in as the State Senator for the 7th Senate District and was also selected by my peers to serve as Majority Whip. I am humbled and honored to serve you. I would like to thank the many family members, friends and supporters who made the trip to Columbus to see me take the oath of office – your love and support are much appreciated.

Now, however, the pageantry and ceremony of Opening Day gives way to the work that lies ahead. Ohioans sent a clear message last fall on Election Day that they want leaders who will operate the state efficiently and spend its resources wisely. The downturn in the economy has forced many families and businesses to make tough decisions about their own finances, and they expect the state to now do the same.

One of our biggest challenges is undoubtedly the upcoming state budget, but my colleagues and I will also be working to implement policies that will encourage economic development and job creation, improve our education system and ensure the continued health and safety of families and children. In addition, the Legislature must redraw Ohio's congressional districts to reflect the results from the 2010 census.

As you can see, the weeks and months ahead will be busy ones for members of the General Assembly, but in the midst of all these challenges are also a number of opportunities. We have the chance to completely rethink the way Ohio government operates and serves its citizens – such as by privatizing certain programs and services or encouraging government agencies to work more collaboratively in an effort to reduce costs. It will not be easy to change the way that Ohio has done business in the past, but if we truly want to move our state forward in these difficult times, innovation and a willingness to do things differently are required.

If you have any suggestions or ideas about how we can achieve cost-saving in Ohio or improve the way regulations and services are administered, please share them with me. As I travel throughout the district and meet with business owners, government officials and other individuals, I am always looking at how we can improve the way Ohio operates.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact my office if you have questions or concerns about any state-related matter. You can reach my office by phone at (614) 466-9737, by e-mail at SD07@senate.state.oh.us or by writing State Senator Shannon Jones, Ohio Statehouse, 1 Capitol Square, Columbus, OH 43215. I look forward to hearing from you.